

Proverbs

A Letter to My Son

Proverbs Chapters 1-9, 30, and 31

JLSParaphrase

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Index

Introduction			pg. 1
Chapter 1	Solomon's Childhood		pg. 6
Chapter 2	Solomon's Reign		pg. 20
Chapter 3	The 4 steps to learning	Prov. 1:1-6	pg. 28
Chapter 4	Two choices in life	Prov. 1:7	pg. 55
Part One	What is a <u>genuine</u> fear of the <u>LORD</u> ?		pg. 56
Part Two	Who is <u>the LORD</u> in Proverbs?		pg. 64
Part Three	What is <u>knowledge</u> in Proverbs?		pg. 78
Part Four	What is a <u>fool</u> ?		pg. 85
	<03684> fool		pg. 88
	<0191> fool		pg. 103
	<05036> fool		pg. 109
	<0200> folly		pg. 113
Part five	What is <u>wisdom</u> ?		pg. 116
	<02451> wisdom		pg. 122
	<07919> acts wisely		pg. 130
	<08454> sound wisdom		pg. 134
	<02449> to learn wisdom		pg. 137
	<02450> wise man		pg. 143
Part six	What is <u>instruction</u> ?		pg. 152
Part seven	Commentary on Proverbs 1:7		pg. 154
Chapter 5	Rejecting undesirable friends	Prov. 1:8-19	pg. 157
Chapter 6	Rejecting wisdom	Prov. 1:20-33	pg. 167
Chapter 7	How to acquire a fear of the LORD	Prov. 2	pg. 177
Chapter 8	How to practice wisdom	Prov. 3	pg. 195
Chapter 9	Why practice wisdom?	Prov. 4	pg. 231
Chapter 10	The adulterous woman	Prov. 5, 6, 7	pg. 246
	2:16-19	Delivered from immoral women	pg. 247
	7:1-27	The tricks of her trade	pg. 248
	6:20-33	Hurt by a jealous husband	pg. 260
	9:13-18	Satan's imitation	pg. 264
	5:1-23	How to adultery-proof a marriage	pg. 266
Chapter 11	Don't cosign for anyone	Prov. 6:1-5	pg. 281
Chapter 12	Laziness and the work ethic	Prov. 6:6-11	pg. 284
Chapter 13	Wisdom's testimony of herself	Prov. 8	pg. 295
Chapter 14	God's best vs. Satan's imitation	Prov. 9	pg. 319
Chapter 15	Agur rebuking his sons	Prov. 30	pg. 334
Chapter 16	A bachelor's shopping list	Prov. 31	pg. 386
	The virtuous woman		pg. 394
	Negative aspect of alcohol		pg. 416
Chapter 17	Prov. 10-29 logic explanation		pg. 420

Introduction

Gregory,

I love you, and I'm so glad that you are my son. Out of all the young men in the world, I could not have chosen better than the LORD in selecting you to be a part of our family. Solomon had 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 hope that utilizing its truths will make your tender heart a wise and tender heart. My desire for you is that you will come to know the LORD Jesus Christ in a close, personal, friendship relationship. This will cause you to walk before God and men in a worthy manner. As a result, they will see your love, 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 love you as you grow in the LORD. Then, when I've gone to be with the LORD, you can look back at this letter of love and find a reminder of my gratefulness to the LORD for allowing me you love you. You are one of my best friends, and I love you for who you are.

Please, read Proverbs often and make it yours in practice and in the desire of your heart. It will guide you through the difficult and trying times that may come upon you in the future. Remember, though, that it will take time to digest and acquire the truths of Proverbs, but when you do understand, you will be much better prepared to handle the hard knocks of life. Give the LORD ample opportunity to teach you, and He will teach you well.

Matthew 22:37-40 tells us, *"Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."* Whereas Psalms teaches us to love the LORD with all our heart (a vertical look and the first commandment), Proverbs teaches us to love our neighbor as ourselves (a horizontal look and the second commandment). The whole of Proverbs is aimed at teaching us to learn the best way to interact with others in a good and godly manner based upon our relationship with the LORD. I firmly believe that a man or woman cannot successfully live Proverbs until he is born again. Living the way the book teaches is a spiritual exercise, and spiritual exercises are foreign to an unsaved man or woman. Gregory, you know the LORD and are learning to love him. You can do what Proverbs teaches if you want to study, learn, and then do what Solomon taught. It is solely up to you. If you choose to do so, you can be all that Proverbs teaches. It will be a lot of work, but the whole process is worth all the effort you will exert.

As I sit here, I am overwhelmed with the depth of God's love. I read a book that was written by Francine Rivers entitled *Redeeming Love*. It is about a young man who married a prostitute and loved her to Christ. The story was taken from Hosea where God told him to marry a harlot. Reading this book was an act of spiritual worship for me because throughout the whole of it I could picture God loving a vile, wretched man like me and bringing me to a point where I would love Him in return. What a thrill it is to know that God loves us that much. His love was ordained before time began, and it was demonstrated in the person of Jesus Christ when He came to earth to live and die for us.

As I write this commentary on Proverbs, I understand that the emphasis needs to be on living the book so that you and I can be the kind of people that love others to Christ as a way of saying thank you to the God who loves us. Since Proverbs is a book that teaches us how to interact well with our neighbors, it ought to be something we do as an expression of our love for the Savior with the hope that living and loving others like He wants will bring them to a saving knowledge of Christ. And that is exactly what I want to do in writing this commentary. Throughout this work I have attempted to learn and practice Proverbs and then write it for your benefit. I am not a people person, and I have often said, "I wouldn't mind working with the public if it weren't for people." All

the same, I need to love people in a way that they perceive as genuine love. I pray that both you and I can do just that every day of our lives.

This work is an expression of my love for you, but it is also a labor of love from my heart to the LORD. I offer it to you and to Him expecting nothing in return. Hopefully it will last longer than me because after I am dead and gone no one will remember who I was anyway. That's alright, though, because my goal is to write something that will exalt the LORD and bring honor to His name. Please understand, I am not so naïve as to think that many people will read this work, but if only you are helped, then this endeavor will have been worth all the labor and sacrifice.

Son, I pray that in time you will read what I have written to you and develop the same hunger for the Word as I have. It is so sweet to understand the Scriptures and in the process, understand more about the heart of God. It is so wonderful to walk with Him in an intimate way. For the first 35 years of being a child of God I could not comprehend such a personal walk with the LORD. I knew the LORD as savior, but there was nothing personal about it. Ah, but now that I have come to know Him better, I never want to go back to being a mere academic believer. The kind of relationship I have found with the LORD is simply too sweet. I pray that in time you too will experience this sweet relationship with the LORD that I have found. I want to share with you a poem I wrote before coming to know the LORD intimately. It tells of the desire of my heart back then.

*I serve the LORD each passing day from duty as I should,
but it would be so nice to know the LORD the way I could.
There is no depth of friendship there, the kind I'd like to know.
He is to me a distant God, at least it seems He's so.*

*There must be more to knowing God than duty can convey,
and it would be so sweet to hear Him speak to me today.
I long so much to hear His voice, to call me to His side,
and be with Him and share with Him and there with Him abide.*

*It's sad to say that through the years I've never known the LORD
in such a sweet and friendly way that friendship can afford.
I want a chance to tell my LORD the burdens that I bear,
and be assured that He is there to hear and feel and care.*

*I know the Bible says He's there to meet my every need,
He sees my thoughts, my motives, and my every single deed.
Oh sure He's there upon His throne in majesty sublime,
yet where is that sweet fellowship that ought to come in time?*

*His Word is such a comfort in this world of sin and greed,
but fellowship with God above is really what I need.
I want to walk so close to Him that there is just no doubt
that He is there to show His love within me and without.*

*I hear Him speak through men who preach the word with fervent
heart, and joy in God for saving me and calling me apart.
There is no doubt that when I die, I'll be with Christ above,
so why is there this nagging need to feel the God I love?*

*Dear LORD, I want to know you as a friend so close to me
and feel your touch upon my life as real as it can be.
Please draw me close beside yourself and show your love to me
and keep me there for time and then for all eternity.*

How did I find this sweet relationship? It was by immersing myself in Scripture and meditating upon it for hours each day. It came slowly, but after thousands of hours of meditating upon the Scriptures, it came. You see, I am a slow learner, but I simply hung in there as long as it takes to make the truth become clear. Hopefully, someday you will learn to do the same and when you do, it will change your life.

Son, I give you my heart. I offer it to you hoping that you will gain valuable insight from Proverbs and the accompanying Scriptures contained in this commentary. When you read it years from now, remember me, and most of all, remember the dear Savior who loves you and gave Himself for you. Give Him your life, your future, and your dreams. He will take them and make the very best out of them. Like Jim Elliot once said, "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." I love you, son. I have since you were born, and I always will. Remember that as long as you live.

With my love,

Dad

Solomon's childhood

Son,

A long, long time ago there lived a man named Solomon. Not much is known about his childhood or teen years, but there is a detailed record of his life and accomplishments after he turned twenty years old. He grew up as the son of a king and had all the training and refinement one would expect of royalty. Once he became king his life was filled with wisdom, power, possessions, and passion. He eventually became the richest and wisest man ever to rule in Israel. His glory and fame reached to the ends of the known world of his day, and even the queen of Sheba travel all the way to Israel to hear his wisdom. He was truly a great man in his own right. From a strictly human standpoint he had everything any man could ever want, but these things did not produce lasting satisfaction. Although he possessed and experienced everything a man could ever hope for in this life, in the end he found that all these things were empty pursuits. He was never content with what he had done or acquired, so he was always looking for something new or greater to acquire or experience. The book of Ecclesiastes is Solomon's own testimony about that truth. Exactly who was this man Solomon, what made him tick, and how did he look at life when he was by himself where he could seriously contemplate where life had taken him? I would like to take you on a journey into what Solomon might have been like as a child and what the Scriptures say about the wisest man who ever lived aside from Christ Himself.

Most men lead an ordinary life, but a few men in each generation seem destined for greatness. Solomon was one such man in his generation, and he will be remembered as long as the sun rises and sets. Remember, though, that had it not been for the Scriptural record of this man, his name would have passed into obscurity a thousand years before the time of Christ. The LORD knew that Solomon's life, with all its successes and failures, would be of benefit to others for centuries to come, so He included the record of Solomon's life and writings as part of the Scriptures. Solomon was indeed a great man. He was extremely wealthy and powerful, but he is best known for his great wisdom. God gave him more wisdom than anyone in the world of his day, but in the end his great wisdom did nothing help him learn the lessons he sought to teach others.

Solomon wrote most of the book of Proverbs. In order to help you gain an appreciation for who this man was and where life took him, I have written an overview of Solomon's life. The first part (chapter one of this commentary) covers his childhood, and the second part (chapter two of this commentary) covers his years as king. As you read, imagine being a fly on the wall listening to Solomon as he shared the events of his life with his best friend, Zabud. Try to put yourself in Solomon's shoes as he watched his family make disastrous decisions and reap devastating consequences. Try to imagine during his adult years the thrill of success, the exhilaration of prosperity, and the frustration of failure. As you read, remember that Solomon was a real man with flesh and blood like you and me. He had real fears, real aspirations, and an immense appetite for learning new things. His hunger for passion drove him to acquire 700 wives and 300 playthings called concubines. No doubt he had a photographic memory because I doubt I could even remember the faces of a thousand women, let alone put the right name with the right face for more than a hundred women or so. That must have been a tremendous feat in itself.

Both the childhood and adulthood of Solomon have been written as monologues depicting Solomon talking to his friend Zabud. You may be asking yourself, "Who is Zabud?" The answer is simple. First Kings 4:5 is part of a list of Solomon's officials, and right in the middle of the list we are told, *"and Azariah the son of Nathan was over the deputies; and Zabud the son of Nathan, a priest, was the king's friend."* The King James version states it, *"And Azariah the son of Nathan was over the officers: and Zabud the son of Nathan was principal officer, and the king's friend."* For the sake of this discussion, it doesn't matter whether Zabud was a priest or a chief officer. What does matter is that he was the only one I can find in Scripture who was specifically called

Solomon's friend. I would like to assume for the sake of our discussions that Zabud was Solomon's friend in early childhood. That may not have been the case, but I believe that approaching our discussion from this perspective will give you more insight into the man Solomon.

Before we dive into the childhood of Solomon, it will be necessary to explain where we are going. I believe Solomon was a bright young man with a keen mind and large appetite for learning. I say this because of what king David said to Solomon just before he died. David said to Solomon in First Kings 2:5-10,

Now you also know what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me, what he did to the two commanders of the armies of Israel, to Abner the son of Ner, and to Amasa the son of Jether, whom he killed; he also shed the blood of war in peace. And he put the blood of war on his belt about his waist, and on his sandals on his feet. So act according to your wisdom^{<02451>}, and do not let his gray hair go down to Sheol in peace. But show kindness to the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be among those who eat at your table; for they assisted me when I fled from Absalom your brother. Behold, there is with you Shimei the son of Gera the Benjamite, of Bahurim; now it was he who cursed me with a violent curse on the day I went to Mahanaim. But when he came down to me at the Jordan, I swore to him by the LORD, saying, 'I will not put you to death with the sword.' Now therefore, do not let him go unpunished, for you are a wise man^{<02450>}; and you will know what you ought to do to him, and you will bring his gray hair down to Sheol with blood. Then David slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of David. (Text colored magenta for clarity).

As you can see, David affirmed that Solomon was a wise man even before God gave him great wisdom. Since Solomon was a wise man before the age of twenty, I feel that he was most likely bright, intelligent, and quick to learn new things. With this in mind, I have tried to imagine how Solomon might have viewed the situations his family faced as he was growing up and what he would have learned from those situations that would help him when he became king. Therefore, at the end of each major event I have tried to state what I believe Solomon would have learned and how he might have intended to use that understanding in the future. I hope this will give you some insight into the man we call Solomon.

As we proceed, my goal is not merely to share facts with you, but to help you understanding a little bit about the man. Please keep in mind that this discussion is in no way intended to be an exhaustive look at Solomon, but rather an overview. Once you have an elementary understanding of the man, you will more fully appreciate the proverbs he shared. Seek to gain knowledge and discernment from Proverbs, but always remember that although knowledge is good, it accomplishes little without the discernment to practice what you learn. Hopefully this commentary will help you gain the kind of knowledge, understanding, insight, and discernment that will ultimately lead you to real wisdom.

Details surrounding Solomon's birth

Second Samuel 12 records a tragic incident. It tells how one day king David laid down to take a nap, but couldn't sleep. So, he got up and took a stroll around the roof of his palace. As he walked, he happened to look down and saw an absolutely beautiful woman named Bathsheba taking a bath on the roof of her house. Just the sight of her naked body immediately incited him to lust after her. Without hesitation or considering the consequences of his actions, he had her brought to the palace and committed adultery with her. His lust was so strong that he didn't even consider the fact that he was sinning against a holy God by doing such a thing. Not too long afterwards, Bathsheba discovered that she was pregnant and immediately sent word to the king. This unwelcome news made him feel trapped by his sin, so he formulated a plan to cover up the

whole incident. David wanted her husband, Uriah, to think the baby was his own and not David's, so he sent word for her husband to return to Jerusalem from the battlefield. David tried everything he could think of to get Uriah to sleep with his wife, but when nothing worked, he ordered his commander Joab to have Uriah abandoned in battle so that he would die. Of course, this was nothing short of murder. Shortly after Uriah's death, David married Bathsheba, but all did not go well. Since David had sinned against God by committing adultery and murder, God sent Nathan the prophet to confront him about his sin. David readily admitted his wrong and repented of his sin, but God required the death of their firstborn son as retribution for their sin. This punishment was not only to show the people of Israel that sin must be punished, but it was also necessary to show the nations around them that the God of Israel will not tolerate sin. Not only was David punished in this way, but in the years that followed, his kingdom was plagued by problems that were a direct result of his sin with Bathsheba. Within his own family Absalom raped David's 10 concubines in broad daylight, Amnon raped Tamar, and Absalom killed Amnon for raping his sister. These are but a few examples of the results of David's sin.

When their first child died, Bathsheba was heartbroken. Second Samuel chapter twelve tells how David comforted her by having sexual relations with her again so that she would conceive another child. The offspring of this second union was Solomon. By the time Solomon was born, David knew that the LORD had forgiven him personally, and the LORD affirmed His forgiveness by giving Solomon the name of Jedidiah, which means "beloved of Jehovah." If environment and circumstances were the determining factors as to what a child would become when he grows up, Solomon would not have had a chance. His whole family was dysfunctional and filled with murder, rape, adultery, and insurrection. Fortunately for Solomon, external things do not make the man. His father had taught him as a small child to love and fear the LORD, and the things he learned sustained him until his old age. David wanted Solomon to be well-educated, so he placed him under the tutorage of a man named Jehiel, the son of Hachmoni (2 Chron. 27:33).

For purposes of this discussion, I am going to assume that Solomon became friends with Zabud when Solomon was quite young (1 Kings 4:5). I cannot help but think that Zabud was a positive influence on Solomon during those formative years. The rest of the discussion of Solomon's childhood and youth will be illustrated as a one-sided conversation between Solomon and his friend Zabud. The Scriptures do not say how old Solomon was at any particular point in his childhood, but they do mention periods of years between major events in David's life. For purposes of illustration in this discussion, I have taken the liberty of placing him at the oldest possible age for each major incident discussed.

Solomon at approximately seven years of age (2 Samuel 13:1-21)

Hi Zabud. I just finished today's lesson with Jehiel. He is very strict teacher, and I had to complete all of my schoolwork before he would let me come outside to play. I really do like to learn new things, and he makes learning easy for me. He is rough on me at times, but deep down inside I know he really cares that I learn. He wants my half-brothers to learn the material well too.

After school yesterday, my father had another session with me, just the two of us. He has been teaching me how to become a wise man and love God. Here is what he taught me:

"Son, please 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. Please do not disregard it as being unimportant and do not give up on it without giving it a chance to work for you.

Son, my teachings will direct you to wisdom, so master them with the intent of obeying them. If you are faithful in doing this, you will live a long and full life. Take advantage of every opportunity to find wisdom, and work as hard as you can to gain understanding. Don't ever forget them or turn away from following them. If you continue to pursue wisdom, she will guard you so that no evil will take control of your life, and if you love her, she will watch over you as a mother hen cares for her chicks.

Work hard at gaining understanding, but remember that wisdom is the most important thing you can ever find. Search diligently for her, and as you gain understanding, God will give you wisdom. This is the only way you can ever acquire her. 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. 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. (Proverbs 4:1-9, JLS Paraphrase)

What he told me sounds good, but it also sounds pretty hard. I just hope I can live up to his expectations. I do love the time my father spends alone with me because it seems like I have him all to myself during those times. Most of the time I feel like just another one of his many sons, and during those times, I feel so distant from him and unloved. Father has so many wives and sons that sometimes I feel lonely when I cannot be with him. Do you ever feel that way about your father? Oh that's right, I forgot. You only have one mother, so you don't have brothers from another mother vying for you father's attention. It must be nice.

Several days later

Zabud, I knew I didn't like Amnon's cousin Jonadab (2 Samuel 13:32). The evil thing he encouraged my brother to do has convinced me that I was right about him. My half-brother Amnon desperately wanted to lie with Absalom's sister, Tamar, so Jonadab told him to pretend to be sick and ask permission from my father for Tamar to bring lunch to him in his own bedroom. Father allowed her to do so, and when she did, he grabbed her, pulled off her clothes, and did something terrible to her. I know because I overheard my mother talking to some of the other women about it. To make matters worse, after Amnon had raped her, he told her he hated her and had his servants throw her out of his house. Now Tamar is at Absalom's house, and all she can do is cry. She keeps saying that no one will ever marry her now because no man would have her after Amnon had raped her. I also heard that Absalom is hopping mad. In fact, he's so angry he just might try to kill Amnon. My father is angry with Amnon too, but he doesn't seem to care enough about the whole matter to punish Amnon for his evil deed. What has my family come to anyway? I can't believe all this is happening. One thing is certain, if dad really loved Amnon he would discipline him. If I were king I certainly would.

I feel sorry for Tamar because none of this was her fault. I am never going to mistreat a woman, because I have seen how much it hurts her and everyone else in the family. Amnon hates Tamar, Absalom hates Amnon so much that he will not say a word to him, and Tamar's future is ruined. Now I am afraid of both Amnon and Absalom. When I become king I am going to punish anyone who commits such an evil deed, even if the guilty one is my own son. Father made a big mistake by not disciplining Amnon, and I am afraid it will come back to haunt him in the future.

Solomon about nine years old (2 Samuel 13:22-39)

Hello my friend. I'm glad to see you because I really need to talk to someone. Absalom has invited all of my brothers to a party at his tent where he pastures his sheep. I feel bad because I was the only one he didn't invite. I don't understand why I can't go. I think I am old enough to be part of the celebration. Father was reluctant to let my brothers go at first, but Absalom pressed the issue. Father finally said yes. It sounds like a really fun party. I wish I could go.

The next day

Oh Zabud. Do you remember what I told you yesterday about Absalom throwing a big party for all of my brothers? Well, I'm so glad now that I was not invited. I knew that Absalom was still angry with Amnon for raping Tamar, but I really didn't think he would do anything drastic about it. Was I ever wrong. The party got under way and all went well for a while, but after everyone had drunk enough to start feeling pretty good, Absalom and his servants attacked Amnon and killed him. All of my other brothers ran for their lives and rode their mules back to Jerusalem as fast as they could. They were afraid they would be killed too.

Do you remember me telling you about Amnon's cousin, Jonadab? He was the one who told Amnon how to go about raping Tamar. Well, this same guy had the nerve to tell my father not to worry about the rumor that Absalom had killed all of my brothers. He said, "Don't worry, your majesty, because Amnon is the only one that is dead." He said it like it was no big deal that Amnon had been murdered. I can't understand how my father didn't see through Jonadab's flippant attitude and punish him for his part in Amnon's sin. At any rate, Absalom ran away to Geshur to live with a friend so that father couldn't punish him. It just goes to show you that if dad had punished Amnon for his sin in the beginning, Absalom would not have felt the need to take matters into his own hands. Come to think of it, I cannot remember a single time when father has disciplined Amnon, Adonijah, or Absalom for anything they have done wrong. When I become king, I am going to discipline my children and see that justice is administered swiftly, especially when it comes to my own family. It is the only way to see that bad people fear being caught and punished. Otherwise, people will sin without any restraints. I also intend to be more discerning of any undesirable attitudes and actions of people in my kingdom so that I can stop potential problems before they get out of hand.

Solomon about twelve years old (2 Samuel 14:1-27)

Good to see you, Zabud. I am always glad to spend time with you. Have you heard what Joab did to my father? That man is a shrewd one for sure. He hired a wise woman of Tekoa to go before my father and tell him a sob story about how her sons were being mistreated and really needed his help. She told him that he was *"as an angel of God and quick to discern good and evil"*. Boy, she sure buttered him up. She was very persuasive, but it was all a ploy to get my father to allow Absalom back into Jerusalem. It didn't take long for dad to figure it all out, so he dismissed her and called for Joab. When Joab arrived, he bowed before my father, and after they talked, the king told Joab to find Absalom and bring him back to Jerusalem. Personally, I think it was a big mistake, but I have to hope that my father knows what he is doing. Anyway, Joab has gone to bring Absalom home.

A few weeks later

Thanks for coming, Zabud. Have you seen Absalom parading around the city? He appears to be quite at home in Jerusalem again. He is living in his old house, and his whole family is here with him. It does seem odd, though, that my father would allow Absalom back in Jerusalem but refuse to meet with him personally. I don't understand how father could mourn so intently over Absalom when he had run away and then not even allow Absalom to come into his presence now that he is living in the city again. In spite of my father's response, Absalom struts around town like he is really somebody important. I have noticed that he is a very proud man and is especially proud of his long, flowing hair. I must admit that he is rather impressive, but I am not at all impressed with his sons. I just wonder how the people of Israel are perceiving all of this. Even though father has allowed Absalom back in Jerusalem, I don't feel comfortable around him nor do I trust him.

Solomon about fourteen years old (2 Samuel 14:28-20:26)

Oh hi Zabud! I need to talk to you. I don't quite know what to think about what has happened lately. Absalom has been back in Jerusalem for about two years now without talking to my father one time, and now he is demanding to meet with the king face-to-face. Joab wouldn't listen when Absalom sent a message asking him to be a go-between for him to the king so Absalom burned Joab's grain field. That little trick got Joab's attention all right. I would not have had the nerve to do something like that to the commander of the king's army, but Absalom didn't even give it a second thought. Joab would normally have been angry enough to kill another man for doing such a thing, but he didn't seem to care after Absalom explained why he did it. Joab even agreed to ask my father to have a personal audience with Absalom. I don't know how Joab did it, but dad agreed to see Absalom. Boy, was that a switch from the attitude dad had before. I have been told that my father not only talked with Absalom, but he kissed him too. I am glad that they have reconciled their differences, but even so, I don't trust Absalom.

Some months later

Oh Zabud, I'm really concerned and confused! My father is king and judge over Israel, but it seems like Absalom is going around Israel telling people that he can do a better job of leading and judging Israel than the king. I am afraid that many of the people are starting to believe him. He is stealing the hearts of the people away from the king, and dad is either unaware of what he is doing or just plain doesn't care. How can he let Absalom get away with this? I know that father has never reprimanded Absalom or Adonijah, but I am afraid that if he lets this continue, it will end up as a full-blown insurrection. I really am concerned.

A few weeks later

Zabud, Absalom is up to something. I know it. He asked my father for permission to leave on a trip to Geshur supposedly to fulfill a vow he made there. Father was somewhat suspicious, but after some discussion he let Absalom go. Well, he acted like he was leaving town, but he came right back. He quickly gathered hundreds of people and conspired against the king. Most of these people were innocent because they didn't know what Absalom was about to do. Even dad's trusted advisor Ahithophel has joined Absalom, and he offered burnt offerings to God before the people. It appears an insurrection has started, and I am fearful of how it will turn out. If he does succeed in becoming king he could have all of us killed, and it doesn't make sense that my father is doing nothing to stop it.

Later that day

Oh Zabud, he has actually done it. Absalom has proclaimed himself king, and my father has said that we are all leaving Jerusalem to go into the wilderness. We have to go because if we don't, Absalom will have us all killed. I will be travelling with my mother, but we will be close to my father. Six hundred well-trained men of Gath have sworn allegiance to my father, and they will be coming with us to fight for him. I was afraid this kind of disaster would happen, but I feel better knowing that all of those seasoned fighting men are coming along to protect us. A valiant soldier by the name of Ittai has convinced dad that he is loyal to him, and even though he is a foreigner, dad has allowed him to come along. I have heard good reports about this man, and I am glad he will accompany us. I knew Absalom was up to something sinister, but I really didn't think he would try something so bold. I hope you will be able to come with us too, my friend, because I really want you to be there with me. Father has decided to leave ten of his concubines in Jerusalem to care for the palace while he is away, but everyone else is leaving. We are going to assemble on the other side of the brook Kidron since it is just outside the city wall, and once everyone is there we will start the trip to the wilderness. I will look for you there.

Later that day

Hi Zabud, am I glad you came. I watched Zadok and all the priests carry the Arc of the Covenant to the brook Kidron so that they can escort us to the wilderness, but there seems to be a problem. Oh no, I don't believe it. Dad is sending them all back to Jerusalem. I know that your father is a prophet, and that means you will have to go back with them too. I am going to miss you, my friend. Pray for me while we are apart, and I will pray for you. Father has talked with Zadok and Abiathar, and they have agreed that their sons Ahimaaz and Jonathan will be runners to bring important news to the king in the wilderness. Pray that Jehovah God will bring us back safely to Jerusalem and that my father will be able to get the kingdom back. Until then, goodbye my friend. I'll talk with you when we return.

Many months later

Well, Zabud, it is so good to see you again. We were in the wilderness for many months, but in some ways it seemed much longer. I have really been looking forward to the day when we would be together again, so I could share with you all the things that have happened while we were apart. Where should I begin? I know, I'll begin with what happened immediately after you and the priests were told to returned to Jerusalem.

Not long after you were out of sight, my father and the rest of us walked up to the top of the Mount of Olives to sacrifice to our God. Father had heard that his former counselor, Ahithophel, was now loyal to Absalom, and as we climbed the mount, he was praying that somehow the LORD would cause Absalom to find this man's advice unacceptable. Dad had not even finished his prayer before we ran into his old friend, Hushai, descending from the top of the mountain. It was obvious that this man was burdened with grief over the whole insurrection affair, and when they met, father asked him if he would be willing to return to Jerusalem and act as counselor to Absalom on my father's behalf. Hushai heartily agreed and said he would be glad to communicate whatever he heard to Zadok the priest. Zadok would then send word to David by the hand of Ahimaaz and Jonathan. I was absolutely amazed at how the LORD had answered my father's prayer before he had even finished asking it. Jehovah certainly showed Himself awesome that day, and I will never forget it.

After coming down from the mountain, we returned to the brook Kidron. Everyone was ready to move out for the wilderness when Ziba, the head servant for Mephibosheth, arrived. He had brought donkeys for us to ride and enough provisions for everyone. He told father about how his master Mephibosheth was glad that Absalom was now on the throne and how that he himself was still faithful to David. In his haste, father told Ziba that everything Mephibosheth owned was now his. Well, Ziba thanked father profusely and went on his way. I was apprehensive about what Ziba had claimed, but my father seemed to believe him. We discovered later that Ziba had slandered his master Mephibosheth.

Well, we finally set out for the wilderness. As soon as we started moving, some crazy man named Shimei appeared and started cursing my father, the king. I was afraid of the man, but my father didn't seem overly concerned about him. This man's actions were a very serious crime against the king, so Abishai, Joab's brother, offered to kill the man. To my surprise, father said no. He said that someday the LORD would repay him for his error. Father didn't want to do anything harsh because he was hoping that the LORD would somehow allow him to return to Jerusalem and once again sit on the throne where he belonged. Well anyway, this man cursed and yelled at us while we traveled and finally went his way shortly before we stopped for camp later that day. I was never more glad to see a man leave our presence.

For several more weeks we traveled toward the wilderness, but we didn't stop for long at any one place until we were more than sixty miles from Jerusalem. Father stopped to make camp several times, but each time we stopped, we would get word that Absalom was following us. So, we would quickly move on. Father would not allow us to make permanent camp until we got to the wilderness where he knew we would have a good fighting advantage over Absalom and his

army. This is where dad had lived while Saul was chasing him, and he knew this area like the back of his hand.

A few days after we had left Jerusalem word came to us through Ahimaaz and Jonathan that Absalom had entered the city and had taken his place on my father's throne. Shortly afterward, Hushai arrived in Jerusalem and was able to convince Absalom that he would be a faithful advisor. Amazingly, Absalom believed him. Then Absalom asked Ahithophel what advice he would give. Up to that point in time, Ahithophel was viewed as an angel of God in the eyes of both the people and Absalom. Without hesitation, Ahithophel advised Absalom that in order to show the people of Israel how much contempt he had for David, he should have sexual relations with the ten concubines dad left behind and do it in broad daylight for all to see. It took a couple of days for him to lie with all of them, but after he had raped these women, all Israel knew that Absalom hated and despised his father. This act was a literal fulfillment of what your father, Nathan, had prophesied to my dad when he confronted dad about his sin with my mother, Bathsheba. God certainly kept his word by allowing Absalom to do such a thing. I found the record of Nathan's rebuke in 2 Samuel 12, and you will be interested to read it. It states,

⁷ Nathan then said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the LORD God of Israel,

'It is I who anointed you king over Israel and it is I who delivered you from the hand of Saul. ⁸ I also gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your care, and I gave you the house of Israel and Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added to you many more things like these! ⁹ Why have you despised the word of the LORD by doing evil in His sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the sons of Ammon. ¹⁰ Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.' ¹¹ "Thus says the LORD, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you from your own household; I will even take your wives before your eyes and give them to your companion, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight. ¹² 'Indeed you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, and under the sun.'" (Underlining added for clarity.)

After Absalom had finished his evil deed with father's concubines and was once again seated on the throne, Ahithophel asked permission to lead Absalom's army in a campaign to find and kill my father. Fortunately, Absalom also asked Hushai for advice. He suggested that Absalom lead his army against David himself. He apparently liked the advice of Hushai better than that of Ahithophel, so he made arrangements to lead his army into battle. After leaving Absalom's presence, Hushai immediately sent word to Zadok, and his sons warned us of Absalom's plans. We immediately broke camp and moved over the Jordan to camp in a place called Mahanaim which is on the way to the wilderness. It was only God's goodness that Ahimaaz and Jonathan were not killed trying to get word to us because a young lad had seen them running and told Absalom of their whereabouts. Soldiers came to arrest the two men, but a maid had hidden them in a well. The maid told the soldiers that the men had already left her home, and when the soldiers were gone Ahimaaz and Jonathan left a different way to come to us. By the time Absalom reached our old camp, there was nothing left but cold ashes. Hushai had indeed saved our lives that day. Something else good happened. Once Ahithophel realized that Absalom no longer valued his advice he committed suicide, and father was so relieved when he heard the news.

Absalom set out again to find us, but he stopped to make camp in Gilead. While there, he made Amasa the captain of his army. He is the one who had raped Joab's relative, Abigail. When

Joab heard about Amasa's promotion, he could hardly wait to fight against him, and it seems certain to me now that he had intended for some time to kill Amasa. Anyway, there was some good news at the same time because Shobi, Machir, and Barzillai brought enough supplies for our people for several more weeks. It is good to have real friends when you need them.

After we made camp in the wilderness, father called his officers together and chose three men to lead his army. These men were Joab, Joab's brother Abishai, and the man named Ittai. When the time came to go out and fight against Absalom and his men, our men demanded that David stay in camp while they went out to fight. If one of his soldiers was killed, it would be no big loss, but if father was killed, all would be lost. My father didn't like the idea, but he let them have their way. Then he said something that didn't make any sense. He commanded Joab and the other leaders to be gentle with Absalom. I am a little confused. How can soldiers be gentle with a mortal enemy who will do anything necessary to kill my father? He certainly wasn't thinking straight when he gave that command, and I am sure the soldiers didn't like it either.

As soon as the battle started, dad's men quickly gained the upper hand. Many of Absalom's men were killed, and the rest ran away. It was said that twenty-thousand men of Israel died that day, but most of them died trying to escape through the forest. It seems odd to me that the LORD would slay most of them in the forest instead of in battle, but either way, it was a great victory. Afterward, all the men of Israel who were left fled to their tents. During the battle Absalom happened upon a patrol of father's men and tried to run away. Unfortunately for him, his donkey ran under a tree, and a branch caught his hair so that he was left hanging from the tree while his donkey kept on going. It must have been an odd sight to see him hanging there by the very hair in which he took such pride. One of dad's soldiers told Joab about Absalom's predicament, and this was just the kind of news Joab was waiting to hear. Immediately, he found Absalom and killed him with a spear. Joab and the men who were with him threw Absalom's body into a ravine and covered it with stones. Since Absalom was so proud of his hair, it certainly seems appropriate that his hair was the very thing that brought about his demise. This was bad enough, but he was proud in other ways too. I saw the monument he built to himself in the Kidron valley. He dedicated it to himself because he didn't feel his sons were worthy of his name. His whole life was such a waste. When I become king, I will be careful to perceive adverse attitudes and actions that could lead to an insurrection. I want to stop that sort of thing before it has a chance to build into something dangerous.

After killing Absalom, Joab knew that sooner or later he was going to have to tell my father what he had done. Ahimaaz asked Joab if he could run to tell the king the news of Absalom, but Joab didn't want a man so dedicated to my father delivering such an unwelcome message. Obviously, Joab had to be very careful, because he had purposely defied the king's command. Even though killing Absalom was for David's own good, the king could have Joab executed for disobeying a direct order. As a precaution, Joab selected a Cushite runner to take the news of his son's death to the king. When the runner told my father about the news, dad broke down and cried like a baby. He kept saying that he wished he had died instead of his son. How is it that he had so soon forgotten that Absalom was determined to kill him? His response didn't make any sense, and it made even less sense when he spent the next several days mourning for my brother, the enemy.

Dad's weeping over the loss of Absalom created a very serious problem. Men were deserting his army at an alarming rate. They were leaving because they thought the king loved his dead son more than he loved those valiant men who fought for him against their enemies. As soon as Joab realized what was happening, he confronted my father and told him that if he ever wanted to return to Jerusalem as king, he had better get his act together. Father understood what Joab was saying, and he immediately went out and assured the people of his devotion to them and thanked them for their faithfulness. I am so grateful to the LORD that the plan worked. Men started returning from their tents, and he was able to rally his men. I have no doubt that the whole thing would have ended in disaster if my father had not responded so quickly.

Within a few days we were ready to start back for Jerusalem, and I was so eager to get home again. Father had sent Zadok and Abiathar ahead to rally the men of Israel who had fought with Absalom. He wanted them to receive him back in Jerusalem as their king too. He even made

Amasa commander of his army. I understand why father would be angry with Joab, but I think he gave Amasa the position primarily to appease the men of Israel. Even so, father had underestimated Joab's resourcefulness. In a few minutes I will tell you why. Anyway, it was not long before all Israel assembled to escort dad home. Those people were such a welcome sight. They escorted us almost to the Jordan river, but that was when the fireworks started. The men of Judah met us there to help escort us to Jerusalem. It was a sweet reunion when all the people of Judah and Israel first got together, but things turned ugly in a hurry. A big argument ensued, and part of the people angrily went home leaving the rest to escort us on to Jerusalem.

The first individuals to meet us on our way home were Shimei and Ziba. Boy, was Shimei ever humble now. He quickly admitted that he had sinned against my father by cursing him and asked the king to forgive him. Abishai offered once again to kill the man, but to my surprise dad let Shimei live. After father had finished with Shimei, Ziba was about to say something when Mephibosheth appeared. Father asked Mephibosheth why he came since he was a traitor. Mephibosheth confessed that he had been tricked. Ziba had convinced him to stay in the city and then slandered him to the king. It was obvious to me that Mephibosheth was telling the truth, but father hesitated for some reason. Instead of reprimanding Ziba, my father told the two men to split the properties between themselves evenly. That was not a very wise decision, but regardless of my father's poor judgment, Mephibosheth declined. He merely said, "I don't want or deserve any of those things. I'm just glad that you are back home safely." Wow, my father sure missed the truth on that one! When I become king, I will take care of Mephibosheth the way he deserves. In the future, I always want to hear both sides of a story before making a decision on the matter.

As we approached the Jordan river, Barzillai was waiting for us. He had come to welcome us home. Father tried to convince him to come to Jerusalem and live with us for the rest of his life, but Barzillai said that he didn't want to be a burden. I somewhat understand why he would say such a thing because he was already eighty years old and had some major physical problems. Although he could not be convinced to come with us, he did allow his servant, Chimham, to come live with us in his place. Father was more than happy to bestow favor upon Chimham because of the generosity of his master.

After leaving Barzillai, we crossed the Jordan river and came to Gilead. All of Judah and half of Israel crossed over with us to escort us home, and I felt safe with all our people supporting us. I was afraid of Absalom while he was still alive, but now we were safe and almost home. I really enjoyed the trip from that point on. I thought all of our troubles were behind us, but we didn't even get all the way home before a really heated argument broke out between the men of Judah and the men of Israel. Judah was more vocal than Israel, but in the end, the men of Israel abandoned my father and returned to their tents. I still don't completely understand why they left, but they were dissatisfied with the way Judah and my father were treating them. If that was not bad enough, a scoundrel named Sheba got all worked up and started another insurrection right then and there. He was so vocal that the people tried to make him king over Israel in my father's place. I am amazed how capricious the Jews can be. Sheba left with the others, and Judah escorted us all the way back to Jerusalem. Once in the palace, father located the ten concubines that Absalom had defiled, and he shut them up by themselves as widows for the rest of their lives. I feel sorry for them since it was not their fault, but father wanted to be sure that the people of Israel did not mistake compassion for acceptance of Absalom's defiance.

Even after father was back on the throne, there were a couple of important things he needed to do. First, he needed to get rid of Sheba before the man started another war, and the second was to gain the allegiance of the men who fought with Absalom. Father had already made Amasa captain of his army, and although the news made Amasa happy, such was not the case with Joab. Keep in mind that Amasa had raped Joab's relative, and Joab had vengeance in mind. It wouldn't be long before Joab got his chance.

Father instructed Amasa to assemble all the men of Judah in three days to go after Sheba, but Amasa took longer than instructed. My father was angry when Amasa procrastinated, so he told Joab and his brother to go after Sheba. On their way, they met Amasa and his men. To make a long story short, Joab murdered Amasa right then and there. Then he and his men rode off to fight against the city where Sheba was hiding. They surrounded the city, and once the people of

that city knew what Joab wanted, a wise woman convinced the men of the city to kill Sheba and throw his head over the wall. Joab took the head and returned to Jerusalem. Thus, the insurrection was ended. Now Joab was once again commander of father's army, and dad had no choice but to let Joab have his way in the matter. Father was afraid to do anything else at the time.

Well, my friend, a lot has happened since we parted company several months ago, but all of that is behind us now. I'm so glad to be home and spend time with you again. Thanks for praying for us throughout this whole ordeal. I have certainly learned some valuable lessons during these past several months. If father had paid more attention to Absalom's actions and attitudes, he could have stopped this whole insurrection before it got started. If he had set aside his sentimental longing for Absalom in favor of fulfilling his responsibilities to his people, he could have avoided the whole problem of the division between the men of Israel and the men of Judah. Then too, Sheba would not have had a platform from which to rebel, and the kingdom would have been at peace. When I become king, I am going to be more discerning about any signs of an insurrection before things have a chance to get out of hand. These have been hard lessons to learn, but they will be invaluable in the future.

Solomon about seventeen years old (2 Samuel 21:1-23:39)

Zabud, did you hear what my father and I have done? No? Well, let me tell you. Yesterday he spent most of the day telling me about the details of building the temple. He reminded me that someday I will be king in his place and that I will be the one to build the temple to our God. Jehovah had told dad that He didn't want him to build the temple since he had shed so much blood in battle. The LORD wanted someone who was pure to do the work, so the LORD chose me to build it in my father's place. Father tried to explain everything that he had done to gather materials for the construction, and even though I understood most of it, there is just a lot to remember. At any rate, he has been collecting materials for some time, and they will be used in the construction process. He said it would take several years to gather all the materials I would need to construct the temple, so he started while I was still young in order to be able to finish his part before he surrenders the throne to me. It sounds like a big job, but father said the LORD would give me all the strength and abilities I would need when the time comes. Besides, there will be a lot of good people helping with the work. That will make the whole job easier. I sure hope he is right.

Later

Hi Zabud. Do you remember when we came back to Jerusalem after Absalom was killed? Doesn't it seem like it all happened just yesterday? It is hard to believe that it has been three years now. It is interesting that this famine has ravaged our land since shortly after that time. My father doesn't understand why the LORD has sent the famine, but maybe God will tell him soon.

A few more days later

Oh, good to see you Zabud. Well, the LORD finally told my father why the plague was sent. It was the result of king Saul's cruelty toward the Gibeonites. I don't understand why this famine has happened now because Saul's cruel acts took place long before I was even born. My father has gone to talk with the Gibeonites to see if something can be done to end this dry spell. I sure hope they can find a workable solution.

The next week

Hello again, Zabud. Well, what do you think of all this rain? Isn't it nice to know that the famine has ended? By the way, did your father tell you how the drought ended? Oh, he didn't? Well, let me tell you. During my father's trip to Gibeon, he learned that the famine was sent as retribution for the way Saul had been so cruel to the Gibeonites years before. The Gibeonites agreed that father would give them seven sons of Saul, and they would hang them by the neck before the LORD. They had no desire to do such a thing at first, but father persuaded them to do it. He gave them seven men who were descendants of Saul, but he spared Mephibosheth's life. I was glad to see him show such kindness to Mephibosheth. I hated to see innocent men killed, but immediately after the executions took place the rains started. The LORD was very kind to end the famine for Israel. The sad part about the whole matter is that the mother whose sons were executed was seen mourning in sackcloth and ashes. When father heard about her grief, he sent some of his men to Gibeon to retrieve the bodies of these boys, the bones of Saul, and those of Jonathan, Saul's son. They will receive a proper burial here in Jerusalem. I feel sorry for the mother, but it sure is easy to see how sin has far-reaching and devastating effects on people even years after it is committed. Sin always costs more than a man wants to pay. When I become king, I will never resort to cruelty. I will rule in justice, but I will always do it in a humane way.

About a year later (1 Chron. 20:1-8 also)

Hey Zabud! This is the time of year when kings go out to battle. Did you hear about the way father's army, under the leadership of Joab, whipped the Philistines? They started a war with us, and the LORD delivered them into our hands, including the second son of Goliath. My father was victorious. Actually, his faithful men killed the Philistines and the giant, but the victory belongs to the king. I am a little concerned though, because Abishai had to kill the giant when my father became tired. He is apparently too old to go out to battle any more. I knew he was getting older, but the thought that he is an old man had never crossed my mind until now. I hope he will use good judgment in the future.

A few months later

Well, Zabud, I am amazed. Those Philistines just don't know when to quit. Goliath's third son, Sibbecai, started another war with Israel, and this time our army whipped not only him but the rest of his men too. It was such a sweet victory for the king, and we owe a hearty thank you to the LORD. I hear, though, that Goliath has two more sons. I hope they don't get any bright ideas about going to war with us again.

More months later

Hey Zabud, can you believe the nerve of those Philistines? They tried to go to war with Israel again, and my father and his army whipped them soundly. This time Elhanan killed Goliath's fourth son and Jonathan, the son of Shimei, killed the fifth son. The LORD has indeed brought about a great victory for Israel. Now all the sons of Goliath are dead, and maybe the Philistines will live at peace with us. I certainly hope so. Isn't it fascinating how far-reaching the results of one man's sin can be? It is too bad that Goliath taught all of his sons to hate both us and our God.

By the way, were you there to hear my father's prayer of thanks to God for His great deliverance? It seemed like all Israel was there. He prayed for a long time, and it sounded so sincere. I wish I had the same kind relationship with the LORD as my father. I believe in God and love Him, but it just isn't the same. Just today father gave what appears to be his last public address to the people of Israel. He is getting so old, yet he needed the people to remember how

good God is at keeping His promises. Father even prayed to the LORD for me not long ago, and he asked God to bless me more than He had blessed my father or anyone else before me. A scribe recorded the prayer, and father suggested that I include it in the book of Psalms for posterity. I think I will do that after I become king. (see Psalm 72)

Solomon about 19 years old (1 Chron. 21:1-30)

Well, my friend, it is so good to see you again. It seems like we don't have as much time to spend together now that we are approaching adulthood. My father has met with me again to share more about what I will do when I become king. I love my dad, but he is getting so old. I am afraid it won't be many more years before he will have to step down from the throne. I'm not even twenty years old yet, but he tells me that God will give me all the abilities I will need to rule Israel when the time comes.

But this is not why I wanted to talk with you. It appears my father has ordered his commanders to count all the able-bodied fighting man of Israel. The commanders knew God had forbidden such a thing, and they were opposed to the idea. Nonetheless, my father would not be persuaded to abandon the idea. I hope this doesn't backfire on him. He is older now, and sometimes I'm not sure his thinking processes are in good working order.

About ten months later

Oh Zabud, what has my father done? People are dying everywhere, and this plague has already killed seventy thousand men. I don't know what to do because any one of us could be the next one to get sick. My father has been talking with your father, Nathan the prophet, and apparently a sacrifice must be made for my father's sin of numbering the people. His commanders tried to warn him, but he simply would not listen. Father is on his way to talk with Araunah. He must make arrangements to buy the man's threshing floor as the place to build an altar and offer a sacrifice to God. I am going there and watch. Do you want to come with me? Good! Let's go right now.

Well, it didn't take long to get here. It looks like father and Araunah have already agreed to make the transaction for the property, and father's men have already started building the altar. Let's stand over here out of the way where we can watch everything.

After the sacrifice was made

Wasn't that amazing? As soon as the sacrifice was completed people started getting well. It had to have been the hand of God. Father has talked with me many times about his God, but this is only the second time in my life that I have seen God work in a way that clearly shows His direct intervention in our lives. Father has believed so sincerely in Jehovah, and now I see that he has good reason to do so. I will look into trusting Jehovah more in the future. Well, thanks for being here with me, my friend. I appreciate you. Goodbye for now.

Some months later : (1 Chron. 22:1-19)

Hello again Zabud. Some time ago my father spent time talking with me about what I need to do when I become king. He prayed that God would bless me and give me good ability to judge the people of Israel, but lately he doesn't seem to care about anything. He is too old. I know you have heard about how the king's servants have been searching the whole kingdom for a beautiful young virgin to be my father's nurse. He is so old that he cannot stay warm at night. Someone suggested that a young woman be found to sleep with him in order to keep him warm. Well, a woman named Abishag has been selected, and she is already at the palace ready to take her place with my father. I have not met her yet, but she sounds nice enough. I have not seen my father much lately either. It seems he doesn't care about me or the kingdom now that he is old.

Since he is not aware of things going on in the kingdom, I hope he doesn't let anything happen that will cause trouble for all of us in the future. I sense that my brother Adonijah is getting ideas about becoming king in my place. I hope I am mistaken. At any rate, it is father's place to squelch that kind of thing. It is not for me to do. Goodbye for now, my friend.

This ends the discussion of the childhood of Solomon. Everything that transpires beyond this point in Solomon's life will be discussed in the chapter two where we will discuss his reign. Up to this point, Solomon has been a quiet, submissive son, pretty much staying in the background. All of that changed when he was thrust into a place of leadership and authority.

Solomon's reign

Although there is nothing in Scripture that directly discusses Solomon's childhood, there is plenty that deals with his adulthood and reign. Follow along as we get a glimpse of what Solomon experienced during his adult years. Be sure to notice the times he did things right as well as the times when he made mistakes. Hopefully you will learn from both. As we go through this discussion keep in mind that Solomon is talking to his friend Zabud.

David requires Abishag

1 Kings 1:1-4

Hi Zabud. I'm sure you've heard about the search for a nurse for my father, but have you met her yet? Her name is Abishag. She is a beautiful young woman, and she is already caring for my dad. I feel sorry for him because he is so old that he cannot stay warm at night. Abishag sleeps with him to keep him warm, but they don't have sexual contact. She is not only beautiful on the outside, but she is a beautiful person on the inside. I am convinced that she really cares about his welfare. I don't understand why he didn't just have one of his wives or concubines sleep with him for warmth, but I guess he knows what he is doing. I know he is in his late sixties, but I am still amazed that he has aged so much over the past few years. I really feel sorry for Abishag in one sense though. Because of her relationship with my dad, she will probably never be given in marriage to anyone. Since she belongs to the king, it is highly unlikely that she will ever know the love of a husband or hold children of her own. Too bad too, because she would have made a good wife—maybe even for me!

David is old, and Solomon is made king

1 Chron. 23:1, 1 Kings 1:5-53

Hi Zabud! Things don't look good around the palace these days. Dad seems to be totally oblivious about the affairs of the kingdom, and the people of Israel are extremely anxious about their future. They are looking for a new king who will do a better job of ruling the kingdom. My mom reminded me just today that I am going to be king someday, but we don't have any idea when dad will decide to step down and put me on the throne. I do have some serious concerns about my half-brother Adonijah though. He has been acting strangely the past few months. I hope he doesn't do something stupid like Absalom did when he started an insurrection to place himself on the throne instead of me. I know him all too well, and he just might try something that bold. I still remember when Absalom attempted the same kind of stunt many years ago. The big problem with an insurrection is that once it gets started, it is awfully hard to stop. My mom is planning to talk with my father soon to see if he can be persuaded to step down and put me on the throne. I know it will be hard for him to let someone else take control of the kingdom after all these years, but his usefulness as a ruler has long since passed. He's not even aware of important matters of the kingdom, nor does he care about all that is going on in and around Israel. He is just too old. I hope he doesn't wait too long to decide.

Later that day

Oh Zabud, I'm glad you came along, because I really needed to talk with someone, and you are just the right person. A lot has happened since we talked this morning. Joab has decided to join

Adonijah in order to help make him king in my place. Joab always has been a man of action, and I guess he cannot bear to see the kingdom fall apart through my dad's apathy. Even Ahithophel, dad's trusted counselor, has joined with Joab in support of Adonijah's bid for the throne. Adonijah has gathered two hundred men of Israel to meet with him so they can plan their strategy for his campaign. These people don't really understand what they are getting into, but Adonijah knows full well. As we speak, your father, Nathan, and my mom, Bathsheba, are trying to persuade dad to let me take my place on the throne before Adonijah succeeds. Hopefully they will be able to convince him that I need to be crowned today because with all that Adonijah is doing, tomorrow may be too late. Besides, if Adonijah succeeds in becoming king, he might have all of his brothers put to death, including me. He may not, but I have good reason to be concerned. Will you stay with me today while I wait to find out what is going to happen? Oh, thanks a lot. You are such a good friend. I do appreciate your help and concern, and your being here is a real encouragement.

Within the hour

Zabud, did you hear the news? Dad has actually told mom and your father to make me king today. Would you like to come along and see the festivities? Great. I am looking forward to having you there. To be quite frank, I'm a little apprehensive about being in front of all those people. I am only 20 years old and won't be considered a man for ten more years. Since I am so young, I'm not sure how the people of Israel will receive me. Please pray that Jehovah will help me during the inauguration. Thanks. We'll talk more after it is all over. Come to my room later tonight, and we'll talk about all that transpires.

Late That evening

Well, Zabud, what did you think of all the proceedings? The people seemed pleased when your dad led me around the city in the King's clothes, wearing his crown, and riding his donkey. I was also pleased with the people's response when they took me to the palace and formally made me king. It was somewhat of a private ceremony, but dad told me there would be a grand public inauguration in a few days so that all of the people can feel like they had a part in the festivities. I know I'm just a young man, but I will do my best to fulfill all of my responsibilities. Adonijah must have been totally devastated when he heard that I had been crowned king, but I am glad he humbled himself instead of fighting against me. I really did not want to have him executed, so I allowed him to live. Even though he is my brother, I will have no choice but to have him put to death if he gives me even the slightest indication that he is trying to take the throne away from me again. Hopefully he won't be so stupid as to try such a thing in the future. But for right now, let's revel in the thrill of my being king. Thanks so much for being there for me during all of this. You are such a good friend, and I appreciate you.

A Few Days Later

1 Chron. 28:1-29:20 David prepares the people for Solomon's reign
1 Chron. 29:21-30 The people made Solomon king a second time
1 Kings 2:1-11 David's charges Solomon to act according to his wisdom

Hello, my friend. Were you among the crowd when my dad addressed the elders and the rest of the people? Oh, that is unfortunate. Let me tell you what happened. My father knew that he needed the people's approval to make me king, so he prepared them for the transition by rehearsing with them how God had said I was to be the next king. He told them that I was the one God had chosen to build the temple of Jehovah. He told them how God had said that dad couldn't build the temple because he had shed too much blood. Instead, God wanted me to build it because I am innocent. Dad told them about all of the preparations he has made toward building

the temple, and he encouraged all of them to fully support me throughout the project. It was a masterful presentation, and he must have said the right things because the people were very glad to publicly inaugurate me and install me as their king. It was a beautiful ceremony, and I am humbled at the privilege of leading this people. Actually, I am a little apprehensive about being their leader because I am so young. Be that as it may, I will do my best to lead my people well.

After speaking to the people, dad took me aside and told me everything I would need to do in order to build the temple. What he told me was very detailed and sounded like an immense project, but he assured me that I can do the job. He also instructed me to use my wisdom to repay Adonijah, Abiathar, Joab, and Shimei for the wrongs they did against him. I will have to be very careful when I deal with them because they turned against dad when circumstances were convenient for them. I don't want them turning against me too. But, for tonight, let's revel in the way Jehovah has worked on my behalf. Dad's God has certainly been good to Israel and to us. Good night, my friend.

Several weeks later

Hello Zabud, come in my friend. Have you heard that my dad is about to die? We are sure he will not last many more days. He is seventy years old now and has lived a long and full life. He has such a sweet confidence in Jehovah and seems ready to meet his LORD. I never have trusted Jehovah to the extent dad trusts Him, but I wish I did. I am a religious man, and I have tried to live a good, moral life. I am always ready to offer the sacrifices the law requires, but I don't feel the same closeness to the LORD he felt. Maybe someday I will gain the kind of personal relationship with the LORD that dad enjoyed. Do you have that kind of relationship with the LORD? Oh, you do. I envy you. Well, I know this much. Dad can't last much longer. I guess we'll just have to wait and see.

The next day

Thanks for coming, Zabud. I assume you have heard that dad has died? There will be a big funeral service, and all the people will want to be a part of the ceremony. I am going to miss dad. He has been such a good example to me as a leader. With him gone I am completely on my own. It will be hard, but I think I can do it. Well, my friend, let's go to the service for my dad.

Months later

1 Kings 2:12-46 Adonijah, Abiathar, Joab, and Shimei rewarded

Hello, my friend. I am so glad that the hard decisions of the past few days are behind me. Adonijah persuaded my mother to ask me if I would give permission for him to marry Abishag, but when she asked me, I immediately recognized his plot to gain the throne. If he had been allowed to marry a woman that had belonged to the king, he would have had grounds to show the people that he should be king. I couldn't let that happen, could I? No way. Well, enough is enough. I had Adonijah executed. Then I dismissed Abiathar from the office of priest for his part in Adonijah's insurrection and had Joab executed for his support of Adonijah. Now I can rest easier. Oh, I also had Shimei brought before me, and I told him that if he ever crossed the brook Kidron, I would have him executed. He said that was fine and agreed to stay in Jerusalem. Well, we'll see whether he keeps his part of the agreement. If not, he will sign his own death warrant. Like I said, I'm very glad that all of those matters are out of the way.

About Three Years Later: Thus, the kingdom was established in the hands of Solomon (2 Chron. 1:1-12)

Hello, Zabud. You came just at the right time. Sit over there and watch what happens next. Shimei has crossed over the brook Kidron, and he has been summoned to come before me. Ah, here he comes now.

Shimei, did I not tell you that if you ever crossed the brook Kidron that you would sign your own death warrant? Well, you did so, and now you will have to pay for your sin against my father. Guards, take him away and put him to death.

Zabud, come here. You have just witnessed justice being performed speedily. I am convinced that judging the people with truth and justice gives the nation stability. I am going to do my best to be a just and fair ruler. Now that the kingdom is firmly in my hands, I do not anticipate any more opposition. Well, goodbye for now. Oh Zabud, I may not have much time to spend with you for a while because before long, I must start building the temple. So, take care, my friend.

(4 Years into His Reign) 2 Chronicles Solomon marries Pharaoh's daughter

1 Kings 3:1-4

Song of Solomon 3:11 "Go forth, O daughters of Zion, and gaze on King Solomon with the crown with which his mother has crowned him on the day of his wedding, and on the day of his gladness of heart." NASB

Well, my friend, welcome to my wedding ceremony. Isn't she beautiful? Oh, you are concerned about the fact that she is not a Jew. Don't worry. I know the Scriptures teach that we should not marry foreign women, but this is different. I am a wise man, and I am a king. As you can see, I am wearing the crown my mother gave me as a wedding present. I am confident that I have enough wisdom to handle my new wife so that she will not cause me to turn away from the living God. Trust me, Zabud, I know what I am doing. Now, my friend, relax and enjoy the festivities. This should be a day of rejoicing, not one of sorrow.

God Grants Solomon Wisdom and Riches

2 Chron. 1:1-12, 1 Kings 3:5-15 (God Speaks to Solomon the 1st Time)

Oh Zabud, I wish you could have been there to experience what it is like when God talked to me personally. Last night while I was sleeping, God came to me in a dream, and He asked me what I desired from Him. Well, I asked Him to give me the wisdom I will need to lead the nation of Israel in justice and righteousness. In response He told me that since I did not ask for long life nor for the life of my enemies, He would give me long life, riches, and honor far above any ruler of Jerusalem. He also said He would make me the wisest man ever to live in Jerusalem. I am so excited I can hardly stand it. The future looks so bright, and I am eager to see what the LORD has in store for me.

1 Kings 3:16-28 Then two women arguing over one baby
1 Kings 4:29-34 Solomon's wisdom surpassed every man of his day.

Excuse me Zabud, there seems to be an urgent matter that needs my attention. Come with me, and you can watch the proceedings. Ladies, ladies, quiet down, and state your case in order. Well, you both say that you are the mother of this one child. We shall see. Guard, bring a sword to me at once. Now, use this sword to cut the baby in two and give half to each of the women. Ah, as I suspected. One of the women does not wish to see the baby die while the other does not seem to care. Therefore, give the baby to the one who could not stand to see the baby die. She is the real mother. Now, go, and say no more about the matter.

Well, Zabud, were you sufficiently impressed with the wisdom the LORD has given me? Did you see the response of the people standing around the court? They were amazed at my wisdom. I am thrilled with the understanding Jehovah has bestowed upon me. Now I am not afraid to judge the people of Israel. I am glad you were here to witness the whole event. Isn't the LORD wonderful?

2 Chron. 1:13-17 Solomon amassed vast possessions
1 Kings 5:1-6:38, 2 Chron. 2:1-4:22 Solomon Started Building the Temple

Oh, hello Zabud. What do you think of all the wealth and possessions I have gained? They are quite impressive, are they not? The LORD has made me wealthy beyond my wildest imagination. No man could ask for more. Well, my friend, you always have been frank with me, but you needn't be concerned about how the Scriptures state that I should not gather large numbers of horses for myself. After all, God Himself said he would bless me with riches and wealth beyond anyone who lived in Jerusalem before me. I am an extremely wise man, and I can handle it. Trust me, I will do okay. Oh, by the way, I have started working on the temple so I'll be so busy. We probably won't be able to spend much time together. Take care, my friend. Goodbye for now.

For purposes of this discussion, I suspect that Solomon may have gone on with his life without his friend. Later in life he worshipped the gods of his wives, and God told Solomon that he would lose everything he had worked so hard to gain. It was then that he called for his old friend Zabud. Solomon had reached the peak of his glory, and as a result of abandoning the God who made him great, that same God was going to take everything away from him. Here is the account of his life as he might have told it to Zabud. He was an old man now, and he realized too late that he had truly been a failure. Unfortunately, the regret he harbored had pushed him into depression and despair. His condition and confession are recorded in the book of Ecclesiastes.

Hello Zabud. It's hard to believe that it has been almost 30 years since you and I have had a serious one-on-one conversation as friends. I have been a foolish man, and now I must live with the result of my foolishness. Please allow me to ramble on and explain what has transpired in my life since I turned my back on you as a friend. I really hope you can forgive me for doing so. I realize now that it was a poor decision on my part. Will you forgive me? Oh, thank you so very much. Thank you for being my friend. You are the only one I feel I can confide in, so please listen to my sad tale.

2 Chron. 5:1-6:11 The temple is finished (11 years into his reign)
2 Chron. 6:12-42, 1 Kings 8:1-66 Solomon's prayer of dedication
2 Chron. 7:1-11 When Solomon finished praying, fire came down from heaven

As I recall, it was right after I started building the temple that I thought I was really somebody special. I got so immersed in the work of building that didn't need or have time for anyone else. I had my wives and concubines, and they were all I needed. Man, that was a big mistake. Anyway, I worked hard to finish the temple, and it was completed in seven years. It is beautiful, and I hope that one day it will be considered one of the seven wonders of the world. I held a tremendous dedication service and prayed a really good prayer for the people. After the prayer was finished, fire came down from heaven and consumed the sacrifice. That incident should have caused me to realize how I needed to spend my energies serving the LORD instead of seeing what I could get out of life, but I was already starting to feel puffed up because of my glory and honor.

7 Chron. 7:12-22, 1 Kings 9:1-9 The LORD appeared to Solomon the Second Time

After the dedication was completed and the sacrifices were offered, the LORD appeared to me a second time in a dream. He reaffirmed His promise to keep my descendants on the throne if I would remain faithful to Him, but He said He would take everything away if I abandon Him. I should have taken more stock in what He said because God always keeps His word.

2 Chron. 8:1-18, 1 Kings 7:1-12 Solomon took 13 Years to Build His Own House (24 Years into His Reign)

Well, years passed, and I had acquired a lot of things and experienced a lot of pleasures. I finished my both house and the temple by the twenty-fourth year of my reign, and I was really something to behold. The LORD had made me wealthy beyond anything I could have imagined; He made me wiser than any man alive in my day, and He made me most desirable to women. Man, I had 700 wives and 300 concubines. Even the queen of Sheba traveled all the way to Jerusalem to hear my wisdom. I'll tell you about it in a few minutes. I was really living. These things were nice, but there was always this nagging emptiness deep down inside of me that no one knew about outside of the palace walls. Everyone else thought I had it all together, but I knew something was missing. I thought that if I learned more, I would be contented. It didn't happen so I started acquiring more and better possessions. They didn't bring contentment either, so I threw my whole self into experiencing life's pleasures thinking they would make me happy. Nothing I did for myself brought joy and contentment. Oh, I gained some temporary happiness, but it didn't last long. Then it wasn't long before I began looking for something new to experience or own. I now know that my life has been wasted. I wrote the book Ecclesiastes to share what happened to me so that others won't have to experience the same mistakes. I'll get a copy of it for you to read. I worshipped the LORD three times a year, but it was mostly out of obligation. I still don't fully understand how my dad could worship the LORD three times a day like he did.

2 Chron. 9:1-12, 1 Kings 10:1-13 Queen of Sheba Visits Solomon (Probably Near Year 30 of His Reign)
2 Chron. 9:13-31, 1 Kings 10:14-29 Description of Solomon's great Wealth and Greatness.

Somewhere near the peak of my greatness, the queen of Sheba came to Jerusalem to visit with me. She was so impressed with my wisdom and the wealth that she praised the LORD. She said,

“How blessed are your men, how blessed are these your servants who stand before you continually and hear your wisdom. Blessed be the LORD your God who delighted in you, setting you on His throne as king for the LORD your God; because your God loved Israel establishing them forever, therefore He made you king over them, to do justice and righteousness.”

Here again, I should have given God the glory, but I was too busy giving myself the glory to be concerned with God. I was the richest man alive. I had the most impressive palace, the most possessions, the most gold, the most women, and the most contented servants of any man alive at the time. I had everything any man could ever want, and I knew it. If I had it to do all over again, I would live my life for the LORD and help other people. As it was, I lived my life for myself and for what I could get out of it. It was kind of dumb, wasn't it? Read the book of Ecclesiastes. It explains my wasted life.

**1 Kings 11:1-13 Solomon Loved many Foreign Women
(Probably Around Year 35 of His Reign)
He Worshipped Their gods with Them.
The LORD Appears to Him a Third Time.**

All of the things I have mentioned so far are bad enough in themselves, but I did something that was far more devastating. Do you remember the warning you gave me about foreign women when I married Pharaoh's daughter? I certainly do because that warning haunts me today. Well, I developed such a taste for beautiful, foreign women and sexual pleasures that I threw caution to the wind. Had I heeded your warning in the beginning, I could have avoided the disaster in which I find myself today. You see, after I had reached the peak of greatness, I became proud, and in that state, I thought I didn't really need God. I had forgotten Who it was that made me what I had become. My pride drove me to think I had done it all myself. In that arrogant state, I allowed my wives to convince me to build places of worship for their foreign gods. I had not succeeded in converting them to the one true God, but they finally succeeded in converting me to the worship of their foreign Gods. The LORD had said in the Scriptures that it would happen, but I thought I was stronger and wiser than the average man. I really thought I could handle it. I now see that I am a mortal man with all the weaknesses of other men.

God saw the way I had abandoned Him by worshipping the false gods of my wives, and He came to me in a dream to tell me that since I had rejected Him, He was rejecting me. He said He was going to take away everything I had worked so hard to gain throughout my lifetime of labor. I was devastated and still am. My life is ruined and all of my efforts to become someone great have been wasted.

1 Kings 11:14-43 The LORD Raises Up Adversaries to Solomon

In addition to all of this trouble, God has raised up three men who are wreaking havoc on my kingdom. All three of them want to take my throne. I lived at peace while I was faithful to the LORD, but as soon as I turned my back on Him, He allowed these evil men to surface and become my adversaries. Oh, my sin has carried such a high price tag. Now Hadad, Rezon, and this Jeroboam are all trying to take my kingdom from me. It takes a lot of my time just trying to stay on the throne. In addition, God is going to give most of my kingdom to my servant, not to my son. I can't bear the thought of giving all my hard-earned possessions to a man who probably will not appreciate their value and may squander them all. It bothers me so much that I want to die. Zabud, when I die will you preach my funeral? Oh thanks, my friend. That makes me feel better.

Thank you for being such a good listener. I know you cannot do anything to make my situation better, but it did help to talk about it. I feel better just getting it out in the open. Well, my friend, it is late in life, but I have finally learned what is really important. It is to love and fear God and keep His commandments. These are the things that really matter. I wish I had learned this earlier in

life, but it is too late for me to do anything to salvage my dilemma. I only hope that you will do your best to teach young people what I have learned so that they won't have to experience the same hurts and heartaches I am enduring. So, for now, my friend, goodbye.

2 Chron. 9:13-31 Solomon Dies (Year 40 of Solomon's Reign)
Zabud's eulogy of Solomon

Hello. My name is Zabud, and I would like to tell you about my friend Solomon. He is now dead and gone, but his memory will live on for generations to come. He will not be remembered so much as the great man that he was, but he will be remembered as the man who had all the wisdom and wealth this world has to offer and then lost it by rejecting the God who gave it to him. Throughout his life, he sought to teach others the truth, but unfortunately, he didn't learn the truth he taught others. Had he done so he would have loved the LORD with all of his heart and lived his life with eternity in mind. As it was, he lived for what he could get out of this life and enjoyed the little bit of pleasure those earthly things afforded. In the end, he experienced the unhappiness and dissatisfaction that every worldly person feels when they approach death. His was such a tragic life, but you can learn from him so that you don't have to make the same mistakes he did. You can choose to live your life for the LORD and for the benefits you will receive in eternity. I hope you will do so. Choose to serve the LORD. He will never let you down.

Goodbye my friend. I will miss you.

Zabud

Proverbs 1:1-6

Son,

Most of the commentaries I have read on Proverbs agree that Solomon wrote or collected many of the proverbs in the book of Proverbs while others were added later. It doesn't really matter how many he wrote personally. What does matter is that they are included in the Scriptures for our admonition and benefit. There are precious treasures to be found in the pages of Proverbs, and as we study them together, I hope you will make all of them your own. It will take time to understand and acquire them, but the benefits are worth all the work.

Most of chapters 1-9 and 30-31 contain sequential paragraphs that follow a logical sequence, and each of those paragraphs will be dealt with separately. I will build a text layout for you as we discuss each particular paragraph, and a finished layout will be shown at the end of each completed discussion. The sequence should be self-explanatory, so let's get right into the study.

¹The proverbs of Solomon
the son of David, king of Israel:

Verse 1 *"The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel:"*

Gregory,

Solomon was king David's son and became the third king to sit on the throne of Israel. I will not repeat here what you learned in chapters one and two of this commentary on Solomon's childhood and adulthood other than to say that Solomon was truly a great man who aspired to true greatness. It is unfortunate, though, that in the end he lost everything he had worked so hard to gain. Regardless of what Solomon was or what he had become, he was a teacher of the truth. He thought he was wise enough and strong enough to marry foreign wives without allowing them to drag him down into idolatry, but he found out too late that the Scriptures are true. In the end his foreign wives convinced him to worship their foreign gods, and God took his kingdom away from him at his death. Even though he made this terrible mistake, this does not invalidate the value of the truths he taught in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. I would admonish you to learn from both his successes and his failures. I have often said that it is unfortunate when I do not learn from others' mistakes, but it is unforgivable when I do not learn from my own. Son, please pay close attention to the lessons Solomon learned and benefit from them instead of having to go through the same school of hard knocks yourself. You will be much better off, and life will be so much easier for you. Now let's look at the first few instructions Solomon shared. I cannot overemphasize how important it is for you to understand them. You must if you are to gain maximum benefit from Proverbs. Keep in mind that Proverbs is primarily a book about how you should act and react toward those around you based upon your relationship with the LORD. Proverbs calls these people your neighbors.

Verses 1-6 of chapter one comprise a single paragraph and contain four foundational steps you must follow if you want to learn and live what Proverbs teaches. Solomon wrote the book, so he ought to know the best way for you to learn its truths. These steps are not only valid for learning Proverbs but are applicable for almost any field of endeavor. Pay close attention as we discuss these steps. If you follow them properly you will make great strides toward becoming a

wise and godly man. The four steps to learning and living Proverbs can be briefly summarized as 1) to **know**, 2) to **discern**, 3) to **receive**, and 4) to **give**.

During this discussion you will see layouts of the Scripture. When reading them, keep in mind that they are intended to be read from left to right and from top to bottom just like you would a book. Reading them this way will sound exactly as it would if you were to read them directly from the New American Standard Version of the Bible.

Step one: To **Know**

Learn **WHAT** an instruction is telling you to do
(Learn it well enough to perform it accurately)

Proverbs 1:1-4

¹The proverbs of Solomon
the son of David, king of Israel:
²To **KNOW** wisdom and instruction,

Verse 2A *"To know wisdom and instruction..."*

What does "**Know**" mean?

The word "*know*" in this phrase carries with it the idea of fully understanding what an instruction is telling you to do and how to carry it out correctly. Since this is the first step of the learning process, it is not important at this time to understand why an instruction was given or what obeying it will produce. The important thing here is that you must learn a Scripture well enough to be able to perform it accurately and in the manner the author intended. With some things, it is not critical to understand every detail of an instruction, but with others it is absolutely essential to follow the instructions precisely. For example, if you were to make a glass of lemonade, you could easily sweeten it to taste. You don't need a recipe. But if you were going to make a batch of nitroglycerin, you would want to have every step of the process written down and follow the instructions carefully and to the last detail. If you are not familiar with the instability of nitroglycerin you might ask, "Why is it so critically important to follow the directions so precisely?" The answer is quite simple. Nitroglycerin is an explosive. If you make one mistake, you may blow yourself into eternity. That doesn't sound like a very good idea. I am not recommending you make any of this stuff, but it is a very appropriate illustration.

Son, if I were to give you a map of California and ask you to drive from the Navy base in San Diego to your grandmother's home in Hemet, you would have to know what the symbols on the map mean in order for them to be useful to you. The map is comprised of visual symbols. A major freeway is one thickness of line, and a country road is another. Rivers and lakes are usually marked in blue, and north is normally at the top of the map. What am I saying? Simply this: if you cannot understand what the map is conveying to you, you cannot accurately follow the map to your destination. You may finally get there by asking people for directions, but it is much easier and less nerve-racking to know what the symbols mean and follow the map directly to your destination. If you do, you will enjoy your time with grandma instead of being frustrated by losing your way and missing out on the fellowship with family.

Whereas a map guides you through its symbols, lines, and numbers, Proverbs guides you through words, word pictures, and thoughts. It is important for you to understand accurately what is being taught in each verse or paragraph so that you can know exactly how to follow the

instructions given. In order to accomplish this task, you must first understand what each word means and what the writer intended for you to do. For example, Proverbs 26:4 states, *"Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him."* The very next verse states, *"Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit."* (Both of these verses are taken from the KJV). Without any explanation as to what these verses are instructing you to do, it would seem like they are contradicting each other. My question to you is this: how would you perform these two instructions with any sense of certainty that you can accurately accomplish what Solomon was telling you to do? If you are like most believers, you would have to say, "I don't know. Show me."

Consider some of the words used in these two verses. You can read a thorough discussion of the fool in chapter four of this commentary, but for now let's take a briefly look at the word *"fool."* If a fool walked up to you and looked you squarely in the eye, how would you know that he was a fool? You have been instructed to respond to him in a certain way, so it would certainly help to be able to recognize him for what he is. So, how would you define a fool? In this case, a summary of Strong's Concordance definition for this particular Hebrew word is *someone who is bull-headed, immature, and stubbornly insists upon doing whatever it is he has decided to do even if doing so ruins his life or causes his death.* This person is highly opinionated, acts and reacts on emotions, and once he makes up his mind to do something, no one will change it. Next, what do the words *"according to"* mean? The first verse states "do not answer" a fool *according to* his folly. This phrase is equivalent to saying, *"in the same way or from the same perspective."* In other words, you are not to answer a fool by agreeing that he is right about what he believes and asserts to be true. The second verse is much more straightforward. It says that you should answer him with good logic that supports what is morally, ethically, and legally right and fair instead of how the fool feels about a certain thing. So *"according to"* in this phrase is equivalent to saying, *"in a manner that his foolishness deserves."* With these thoughts in mind, let's put these two verses in today's vernacular so that they make sense to both of us. As you read, think of the blue phrase in parenthesis as the single word *"fool."*

Prov. 26:4 could be stated,

"When (*someone who is bull-headed, immature, and stubbornly insists upon doing whatever it is he has decided to do even if doing so ruins his life or causes his death*) tries to get you to accept his foolish words and ideas, don't encourage him by answering him *in the same manner or from the same perspective* as he spoke to you, otherwise, you will be just like him."

With this kind of understanding, the verse becomes something you can accurately perform.

Prov. 26:5 could be stated,

"When (*someone who is bull-headed, immature, and stubbornly insists upon doing whatever it is he has decided to do even if doing so ruins his life or causes his death*) tries to get you to accept his foolish words and ideas, answer him *in a manner that his foolishness deserves* so that he doesn't walk away thinking he was right all the time."

These verses now make good sense, so let's replace the definitions in blue with the single word *"fool."*

Verse 4 would now read,

"Don't answer a fool in the same way or from the same perspective as he would answer you, otherwise you will be a fool just like him."

Verse 5 would read,

"Answer a fool in a manner that his foolishness deserves so that he doesn't walk away thinking he was right all the time."

From what you now know, you should be able to carry out these two instructions accurately as they were intended. Now that these verses make sense, it is obvious that they do not conflict with one another as they appeared before they were explained. My purpose in dissecting these two verses is simply to show you the importance of understanding what the words of an instruction are conveying. After doing so, the instruction becomes substantially more clear and doable. The key thing to remember here is that you need to **learn what a verse says well enough to perform it accurately**. This is what it means to **KNOW** and is step one of the four steps to learning and living the book of Proverbs.

What does “Wisdom” mean?

Wisdom is the underlying goal of the book of Proverbs. We read in Prov. 9:10a that, *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.”* Most all of the commentaries I have read on Proverbs agree that this is the key verse for the book. As you study, try to pay close attention to what a given passage teaches about wisdom. It is the one thing, above all else, that you really need to find. Here in verse two, the word *“wisdom”* includes both the knowledge and the skill to live a godly life¹. As will be seen in our discussion of Prov. 1:7, wisdom is not merely good decision-making based upon trustworthy knowledge and sound, godly understanding. No, it is more than that. It is also the performing of that good decision you made based upon trustworthy knowledge and sound, godly understanding. We will do a thorough study of wisdom in chapter four of this commentary.

¹ MacArthur Study Bible, copyright © 1997, Word Publishing, pg. 877

What does “Instruction” mean?

Strong’s defines *instruction* as discipline, chastening, correction. Dictionary.com defines discipline as training that develops self-control, character, or orderliness and efficiency; it defines chastening as to punish in order to correct or make better; and it defines correction as to affect a change that corrects a mistake; change from wrong to right, or from abnormal to normal. So, the goal of instruction is threefold: 1) to train young men so that they will have more self-control and character, 2) to punish them so that they will become better people, and/or 3) to correct them so that they will abandon wrong practices and do good instead. It is obvious that all three aspects of instruction are designed to be of benefit even though it may be painful when they are applied.

The word *“instruction”* as used in this verse is referring to a direct or indirect teaching as to what you should or should not do. You see, even though some of the verses in Proverbs do not actually give a direct instruction, the truth being taught is an implied one. For example, Proverbs 25:11, *“Like apples of gold in settings of silver is a word spoken in right circumstances.”* Although it does not tell us the specific words to say, we are to choose our words carefully and make them the most appropriate for the particular occasion. Please don’t read a verse like this and pass over it as though it had nothing to do with you personally. You can benefit from all of what Proverbs teaches, and you will gain the most benefit by personalizing each verse. Remember, though, that **the goal in step one** of your study is to **understand each instruction in Proverbs well enough to perform it accurately**. So, once you have mastered this step for a given verse or paragraph, you need to proceed to step two.

Step Two: To Discern

Learn **WHY** an instruction was given

Verse 2b *“to discern the sayings of understanding,”*

Proverbs 1:1-4

¹The proverbs of Solomon
the son of David, king of Israel:

²To **KNOW** wisdom and instruction,

To **DISCERN** the sayings of understanding,

What does the word “Discern” mean?

The word *“discern”* as used in this verse conveys the idea of **figuring out why God gave the verse or passage, recognizing the blessings that come from doing what it says, and realizing the security that comes from avoiding what the verse says not to do.** Blind obedience can get a job done, but understanding the reason behind an instruction gives the doer more incentive for doing it. Consider Solomon’s warning in the early part of chapter seven where he warns against getting involved with an adulteress. Some folks might say, “Yeah, but you just don’t want us to have any fun.” I’ll admit that from a purely fleshly standpoint the initial time in bed with an adulteress or prostitute would be a thrill, but the end of such a relationship is almost always painful and costly. The last few verses of the chapter talk about how this kind of woman creates all sorts of hurts and heartaches for her sexual partner. Those hurts and heartaches would include loss of property, all kinds of frustrations, and possibly a premature death. This applies to men of any age. That is why Solomon instructed his son to avoid this kind of woman. It must be remembered, though, that a proper understanding of **why** you should or should not do a certain thing (step 2) can only come after you accurately understand how to carry out that instruction (step 1).

Son, what I am asking you to do in these two steps is not necessarily easy. It takes time to gain a proper knowledge and understanding of Scripture. Don’t be shocked, but it took about a year and a half before I started getting a good handle on the truths contained in many of the verses in Proverbs. After another year and a half, I had a better and more comprehensive understanding of what they were teaching and how they tied together. About three or four years later, I learned more about how parts of the puzzle came together. What am I saying? It is simply that a valuable knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures takes time and effort. Most people are not disciplined nor determined enough to stick with a consistent study of a particular Scripture longer than a few weeks. Consequently, they never gain a solid understanding of what a particular portion of Scripture teaches. Let me give you an example.

Several years ago, two coworkers allowed me to bounce ideas off them regarding what I was learning from Proverbs. We fellowshiped together as often as we could, and most of the time, it was centered around what the LORD was showing me about Proverbs or Ecclesiastes. One of those men once asked me if I would teach him to study like I do. I told him it would take months of doing the same thing over and over again in order to gain a good understanding, and he agreed that he would discipline himself to stay with it. After about four weeks, he told me he was not learning as much as he would have liked, so he abandoned the method I showed him in favor of going to commentaries to learn what other people had to say about a given passage. He learned

some good things that way, but many months later I mentioned to him that I had learned the deepest things from Scripture by taking the time to major on the basics. When I showed him what the LORD had given me as a result of thousands of hours of meditation and study, he agreed.

Studying Scripture in order to really know it is a lot of hard work, but the rewards are tremendous. Understanding the Bible is important, but learning it so that you can do what it teaches should be the key element of your study. Knowledge alone puffs up, but the kind of wisdom that comes from trustworthy knowledge and sound, godly understanding of the Scriptures is profitable in everything. True wisdom never makes a person proud because a truly wise man has learned humility whether or not he even knows he is humble. Just knowing what the Scriptures say is of no real value except to give its owner reason to boast about what he knows. On the other hand, obeying what the Scriptures teach will change his life and make him a better person in the sight of God and men.

Always remember that understanding is based upon a knowledge of the subject at hand. What do I mean by this? Let me explain by sharing the learning process I went through to become a fairly confident mechanic when troubleshooting the production machines where I worked. These machines are rather complicated pieces of equipment that are automated by the use of several computers called programmable logic controllers. These are merely fancy computers that make machine parts move. The machines I maintained had several of these devices communicating back and forth with each other, and they tell the electric motors, brakes, hydraulic and pneumatic cylinders what to do and when to do it. When I first started becoming familiar with the machines, I had to learn what the individual parts were, what they were called, and what they did in a normal and correct cycle of the process. (This is the same as step one in Proverbs.) I wouldn't say it was an overwhelming task, but it was a big job. After learning how a machine was supposed to run, I then started to learn why a tire moved from one point in the process to another. (This is the same as step two in Proverbs.) One device had to tell the computer it was finished, while another had to tell the next computer it was ready for the tire to move into the new position. When the machine stops running, it may be a device three or four processes earlier or later that actually caused the problem. Once I learned how the machine should operate if everything works properly, I then had to learn what happens if it doesn't. Knowing the proper function of a device allowed me to understand what happens if that device does not work properly. It was only after I had gained this kind of understanding that I could walk up to a machine and determine with any sense of confidence what was keeping the machine from running. You see, knowledge alone helped me understand what the machine was supposed to do if everything worked right, but it did little to help me understand what generated the problem when the machine didn't run right.

Now, you might say, "Well, what does fixing a machine have to do with understanding what the Scriptures are telling me to do?" Consider Proverbs 3:5-6, "*Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.*" You can clearly see that the LORD is asking you to trust Him in everything that occurs in your life. The question becomes, how do you respond when things really get tough, and hope seems to vanish into thin air? Let me give you a personal example that happened to your mother and me. Keep in mind that I share this story in order to help you understand why an instruction is given and God's purpose behind giving it.

In March of 2000, your mom and I were part of a group from our church touring the Holy Land in and around Jerusalem. The first several days went quite well, but near the end of the tour, your mom started getting seriously ill in a very short period of time. Within an hour she was in the emergency room in Jerusalem fighting for her very life. At one point she turned toward me and said, "I think I am going to die." I watched as she lost her ability to speak and finally lost her ability to breathe. What could I say in response because it was certain that the doctors didn't know what was wrong with her? They were good doctors, but the symptoms were not the kind that gave the doctors a clear indication of what was wrong. To make a long story short, I stood by her side, and for all I knew at the moment, I watched her die. At that instant in time, I had lost my dearest friend in this world. Yet, the LORD gave me the sweetest peace I had ever experienced just at the moment I needed it. Throughout the whole ordeal, I didn't feel the need to pray one time asking

the LORD to do something differently. In my mind and heart, the LORD had not done anything wrong in taking her. As it turned out, the doctors whisked her away and put her on a ventilator. Praise the LORD, she made a full recovery, and I thank the LORD for giving her back to me with no lasting disabilities. But the thing I want to share with you here is the sweet peace I had when I thought I had lost your mother. It was several days later before I realized why I had that overwhelming sense of peace in such a difficult time. Let me explain.

Son, I have been studying Proverbs for 27 years now, and that period of time comprises close to 15,000 hours of study and meditation. Somewhere near the 2,500-hour mark, I was meditating upon all of the verses in Proverbs that deal with the sovereignty of the LORD. It was during this study that I finally understood what Romans 8:28 meant. I had been saved for over thirty-five years, but during all those years I merely had a head knowledge about what the verse meant. It states, *“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”* I touched on this subject in the introduction to this commentary, but up to that point in my life, I had followed the LORD out of duty in an academic sort of way. He was not a personal God to me. I knew He was out there somewhere, but there was nothing personal about the relationship. It wasn't that I didn't want a close, personal relationship with my God. No, it was that I didn't know how to acquire it, and I didn't know anyone who could or would teach me. During this study of Proverbs, I had literally immersed myself in Scriptures, and to my surprise and pleasure, the LORD allowed me to understand Romans 8:28. For the first time in my life, it became clear to me that the LORD doesn't do anything to us, for us, or with us that is primarily intended for our hurt. No, each thing the Father allows to come upon us is designed expressly to bring glory to the LORD Jesus Christ and, ultimately, to the Father. Let's say, though, that I get into a car wreck and lose my leg. Is that bad? Not necessarily. It is only bad if I perceive it to be bad. You see, if I know that everything the LORD does to or with me is designed to bring glory to His name, then I can and will see it as something good, directly from the hand of the LORD even though it may be a painful experience. Gregory, when I finally understood this principle, I saw the LORD as a loving LORD, and it thoroughly changed my life. At that time, I told the LORD that if He took my wife to be with Him, I would say He had done well. If He took you or your sister, I would say He had done well. When He takes my life, I can say He has done well. As I stated above, when I lost your mom in that emergency room in Jerusalem, I didn't feel a need one time to pray and ask the LORD to do something different than what He had chosen for her. I didn't need to pray because in my mind and heart the LORD was not doing anything wrong. He knew what He was doing, and by His grace, He would receive the glory no matter what the outcome for your mom. So, you see, when I watched your mom die, it was not the first time I had given her up to the LORD. I had won that battle years before when I came to understand Romans 8:28. It was merely the first time I was forced to say goodbye to my best friend for the rest of my earthly life. The peace came from understanding the heart of God in dealing with His children, and when the test came, I could continue to trust Him because of His loving heart. Isaiah 26:3 is certainly true when it states, *“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee”* (KJV). Son, I am living proof of this verse, and it is so sweet. Hopefully, you will someday be able to experience this same kind of trust and see the deep peace it brings to your life, but it only comes through immersing yourself in the Scriptures.

There is another part of this story that I must share with you. Three weeks before we took the trip to Israel, we were driving across town to visit with our friends Joe and Vanita Pearson. I failed to turn left onto their street, so I decided to turn left into the next place where I could turn around. When I did, a woman in the car behind us crossed a double yellow line and tried to pass us while we were making the left-hand turn. The impact caved in the door post on the driver's side of our car, but thank the LORD, no one was hurt. The woman who hit us was all shook up and apologized profusely. I simply told her that it was only a car, and it could be replaced. As the LORD would have it, our car was damaged severely enough for the insurance company to render it totaled. Well, both mom and I liked the little car very much, so as part of the insurance settlement, we bought the car back for a small sum and had it repaired by a fellow who does this kind of work on the side. That was all well and good, but let me tell you the beautiful part of the

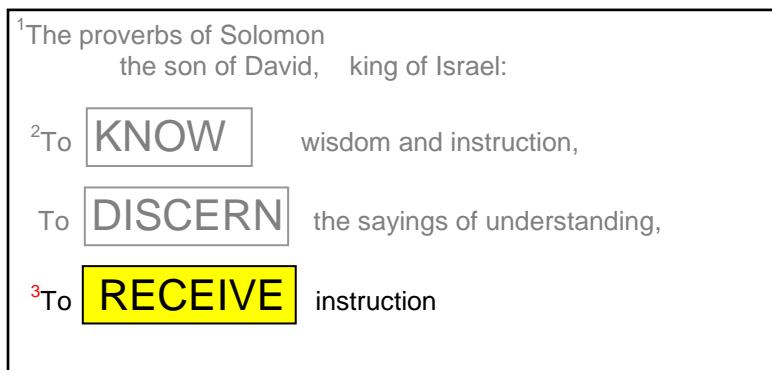
whole story. When we arrived home from Israel, the car insurance settlement was enough to pay the last of the Israel bills. You see, the LORD allowed us to get into that car wreck before the trip so that there would be money available to pay the bill for something that would take place several weeks later. The LORD did in fact work all things together for good from that wreck. He is indeed a loving and caring God. As you can see, understanding the Lord's intent behind the instruction in Romans 8:28 gave us the peace of heart we needed to actually trust Him in practice.

Now, let's get back to step two of our study. If you have learned a portion of Scripture well enough to perform it accurately but do not have a good understanding of why it was given, I encourage you to seek out that reason. Pray, and ask God to reveal it to you. Study the verse or verses in depth, ask questions about the text, find out what the individual words mean, and keep searching until you gain an understanding of the heart of God in the matter. Spend a lot of time doing this, and you will find answers. This is called **meditation**. Once you do, you will see how obeying the instruction will be good for you. When you come to this point, you are then ready to move to step three. This next step is probably the most important of the four steps because without practicing what you learn, your life will never change. All of your knowledge and understanding will be a purely mental exercise ending in frustration.

Step three: To **Receive**

Learn **HOW** to live what you have learned

Proverbs 1:1-6



After learning how to accurately perform a Scriptural instruction (step 1) and learning what benefits or detriments will result from doing or avoiding a certain thing (step 2), it is time to put what you have learned into practice. Acquiring knowledge and understanding is a good thing, but they are of no real value until you start using them in everyday life. In the illustration above, it was not merely knowing what Romans 8:28 taught that brought me sweet peace. No, it resulted from living out the understanding I had gained about the heart of God and resting in His loving care. It was indeed a sweet experience to see God keep His word.

If you are willing to discipline yourself enough to study your Bible and spend the time it takes to understand it, you will gain valuable wisdom by which to conduct your life. Each time you learn something from the Scriptures and are sure you have a good grasp of what it is teaching, put it into practice immediately. You see, the first two steps in Solomon's order of learning are important, but they are merely head knowledge. They are, in essence, useless until you start living them. That is why verse three uses the word "**receive**." You must receive them into your life and put them into practice before they become of any real value to you. When you live out the Scriptures, they will benefit you in the following four areas.

Wise behavior (the KJV translates this as Wisdom)

(Making wise decisions and following through with them on a personal level)

Proverbs 1:1-6

¹The proverbs of Solomon
the son of David, king of Israel:

²To **KNOW** wisdom and instruction,

To **DISCERN** the sayings of understanding,

³To **RECEIVE** instruction in

wise behavior,
righteousness,
justice, and
equity;

Verse 3 *"To receive instruction in **wise behavior**, righteousness, justice and equity;"*

How do people conduct themselves in this life? Some are self-disciplined and careful. Most, though, have little self-discipline and consequently live a life of no profit in the long run. Deep down inside I think most people would like to be wise, but they don't know how. In verse three Solomon explained that in order to be a wise man, you must practice what you know of the Scriptures. It is interesting to note that *wisdom* in verse two is not the same as *wise behavior* in verse three. In verse three, the word more closely conforms to the concept of being prudent or circumspect. A rough paraphrase of Strong's definition for "*Wise behavior*" is *the practice of conducting yourself on a personal level by carefully considering all your options, understanding their consequences, and choosing to proceed only with those choices that will produce the best and most productive results.*

In most cases, you are the one who will determine the outcome of your life. Unforeseen circumstances can take their toll, and problems can hinder your progress through life, but most of the time you are the one who will determine how you will respond to opportunities and difficulties. Solomon stated in Ecclesiastes 9:11 that time and chance overtake all of us. Things can and will go wrong, but your attitude toward them is the thing that will determine how you will fare in the end. If you understand the heart of God, then you will come through each situation with a sweet spirit. Then too, the choices you make in life set in motion actions and their corresponding results. This is called "sow and reap". Normally, when you make good choices you reap good results in return, and when you make bad choices you reap the hurts, heartaches, and losses that are the normal and natural result of such poor choices. Never forget the warning in Galatians 6:7-8 which states, *"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life."*

Gregory, evaluate your approach to life's situations. Do you carefully evaluate the choices you make? Do you look ahead to what those choices will produce for you tomorrow, next week, or

several years from now? It is important for you to develop this kind of outlook because what you do today will, in one way or another, affect you for the rest of your life. Take for example a young lady I heard about several years ago. She was a believer in Christ, but in a weak moment she agreed to go to a party with a somewhat wild young man. She knew better, but she wanted to have some fun. It seemed innocent enough, but during the party her date had too much alcohol to drink. On the drive home the guy wrecked the car, and the girl's face was cut up pretty badly. After her recovery, her face was scarred for life. Because a moment of desire was more important to her than principle, she had to pay for her poor decision the rest of her days here on earth. Her scars were external, but poor decisions can also produce internal hurts and scars as well. You have had some real hurts and disappointments, so you know this can happen. Please learn well what Proverbs has to teach you so that you don't have to experience the same unnecessary hurts and heartaches others endure as a result of their poor choices in life. You can experience a good life, free from those hurts if you will honestly evaluate the choices presented to you and proceed only with those that will be good for you both today and in the future. This is what "*wise behavior*" is all about.

Righteousness (Justice in KJV)

(Being a man of legal, moral, and ethical integrity on a personal level)

Proverbs 1:1-6

¹The proverbs of Solomon
the son of David, king of Israel:

²To **KNOW** wisdom and instruction,

To **DISCERN** the sayings of understanding,

³To **RECEIVE** instruction in

wise behavior,
righteousness,
justice, and
equity;

As important as it is to discipline yourself to make wise decisions by evaluating everything you do on a personal level, it is equally as important for you to be a good man in every aspect of your life. If you are to be a "*righteous*" man, then you must **always discipline yourself to do what is right before both God and men**. You alone know what kind of person you really are on the inside. Others will see your attitude and actions by observing how you conduct yourself, but they can only make an educated guess as to what kind of person you really are on the inside. They may think they know you, but only God knows what you are both inside and outside. One of the reasons Solomon wrote Proverbs was to help young men like you shape and mold your inner being in order to become genuinely humble, giving, and wise. This aspect of your walk through life is what integrity is all about. You see, what you do when no one is there to see you is the kind of person you really are. If you desire the wrong things when you are alone, sometime, somewhere you will ultimately do the wrong thing when you are with other people. It is then that you will show others your true colors.

Son, how do people perceive you? More importantly, how does God see you? Are you consistently the kind of person who desires to be good and godly? If you are, it will be obvious to others when they see you convey a good attitude toward God and a kind and loving attitude toward others on a regular basis. The question you need to ask yourself is this: "When others see me, do they see this kind of person, or do they see me as a hypocrite by professing to be a Christian while at the same time losing my temper, cursing, laughing at dirty jokes, watching immoral movies, or indulging in immoral sexual activities (or wishing I could)?" Son, it matters how you are perceived by those around you because what you are is a reflection upon the name and reputation of the LORD Jesus Christ. First Corinthians 6:20 states, *"For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's"* (KJV). Since He has saved you from your sins, you should live as though you were not a slave to those sins any longer.

What does it mean to be a righteous person? First, it means that you have been born again by simple faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ when He died on the cross of Calvary and rose again from the grave. By being born again and accepting the free gift of eternal life through Christ, you were made a new person. This made you positionally a son of God. When you trusted Him as your Savior, you were legally adopted into the family of God. You cannot perform any works to help Christ save you (see Ephesians 2:8-10). No one will get to heaven by good works, because the gift of salvation and eternal life are only gained by faith alone. Second, being righteous is the normal and consistent practice of doing good and avoiding sinful practices both privately and in public. This kind of conduct is based upon a sound fear of the LORD and is discussed more fully in chapter four of this commentary where we dissect Prov. 1:7. Having integrity is also a necessary characteristic of a man who desires to be righteous. Dr. Stuart Custer gave me a good definition of integrity. He wrote, *"The word "integrity" comes from the word integer, the number one. It means that a person of integrity is not two-faced or double-minded. He is a person of truth and honesty. He says what he means and will keep his promises. This is what the LORD Jesus referred to when He said, "No man can serve two masters. . . You cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt. 6:24). The man of integrity is on God's side."* This is the kind of man who will always do right, and this is the attitude that will enable any man to be a truly righteous person.

Son, are you this kind of man on the inside? Only you know. I hope and pray you will desire and strive to become such a man. Immerse yourself in Scripture and ask the LORD to show you from His Word how to be successful at it. If you really want this kind of life, God will show you, and when you find it, you will experience life in a way you never thought possible. Living this way is even sweeter than you could imagine.

Justice (Judgment in KJV)

(Being a man of integrity in your dealings with others)

Proverbs 1:1-6

¹The proverbs of Solomon
the son of David, king of Israel:

²To **KNOW** wisdom and instruction,

To **DISCERN** the sayings of understanding,

³To **RECEIVE** instruction in

wise behavior,
righteousness,
justice, and
equity;

The word *“justice”* as used here means **to consistently do what is right and fair to and for others morally, ethically, legally, and spiritually**. It is important to make wise decisions and be a person of integrity on a personal level, but it is also necessary for people to be able to trust you publicly. They need to know that you will treat them right and fairly every time they interact with you. It is not enough to merely hold to the letter of the law in your dealings with people. No sir! You must also be fair with them ethically and spiritually. If you conduct yourself in this manner, you will never have trouble keeping the laws of the land, and people who interact with you will see you as an honest man of integrity that they can trust.

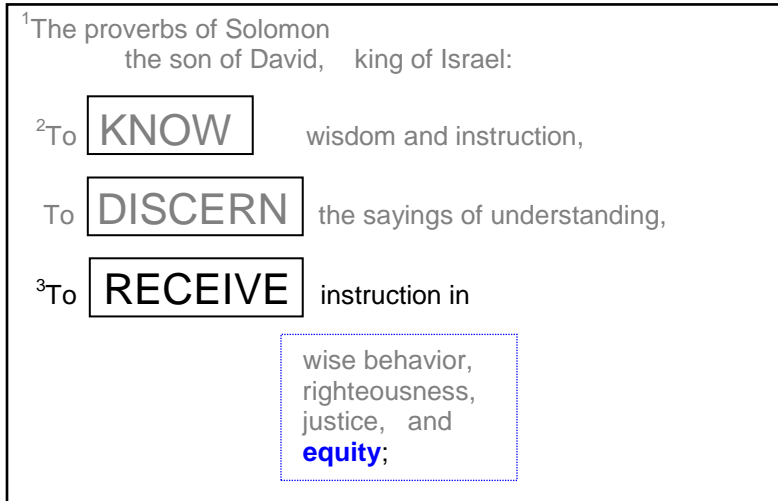
There was a man in a former church who was a professed believer and ran a construction business. The structures he built were sound buildings and were done in a quality manner. Although he did good work, he cheated another man one time. Legally he was within the law, but morally, ethically, and spiritually, he was expressly disobedient to the teachings of Scripture. Well, he got away with the cheating, and the other fellow spent a long time paying back his creditors for what the first man had taken from him unethically. I have seen this unjust man around town a few times since, and every time I see him the thought immediately pops into my mind, “I cannot trust this man. Don’t have any dealings with him.”

As you will see later in this commentary, the way to receive good things is to freely give of what you possess to those who need your help. The problem for many people with regard to justice is that their greed and selfishness take over. They try to get today what God would have given them at a later date and with His blessing if they had only sought God’s will and let Him provide in His own way and in His own time. Matthew 6:33 states, *“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you.”* The things God wants to give you will come to you if you seek His will and follow His way. Never forget Prov. 10:22, *“It is the blessing of the LORD that makes rich, and He adds no sorrow to it.”*

Equity

(Dealing with everyone without bias or favoritism)

Proverbs 1:1-6



“Equity” simply means **freedom from bias or favoritism**. Most people have prejudices. It is only natural, but when you were born again by faith in Christ, you were changed. Second Corinthians 5:17 states, *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”* Just because you did certain things before you were saved does not mean that you should continue doing them after you surrender your life to Christ in salvation. If you were to ask a cross-section of unbelievers how a Christian should conduct himself and how he should treat people, they would expect a lot more of a Christian than most professing Christians expect of themselves.

If you treat people with respect and let them know that they have worth as an individual, they will accept you, and they will be more receptive when you try to speak with them about trusting Christ as Savior. This whole idea of treating people with worth can be summed up by James 2:8 where it states, *“...You shall love your neighbor as yourself....”* If you treat people in this manner, they will sense that you are treating them as an equal, and you will be more effective in touching their lives for Christ.

To sum up the first three steps of learning and living Proverbs, you must 1) learn **what** an instruction is teaching and learn it well enough to perform it accurately; 2) gain a correct understanding of **why** the instruction was given and how performing it will affect your life for good; and 3) receive the truths of Proverbs by **obeying them** and experiencing the good that comes from living them. The four areas of conduct you must practice are shown in the chart below. Learning the teachings of Proverbs by experiencing them on a private level will cause you to make wise decisions (*wise behavior*) and become a man of integrity (*righteousness*). Learning Proverbs by experience on a public level will also cause you to treat people how they deserve (*justice*) and treat people without bias or favoritism (*equity*). You see, both the private and public aspects of your life must be pure, clean, and good. You cannot be a good example to a lost and dying world unless people see your good and godly conduct in all your daily activities. If you are not this kind of man, you may fool people for a little while, but sooner or later the real you will surface, and people will see you for what you really are.

Here is verse three in a nutshell.

Privately - on the inside

Publicly - on the outside

1. Make wise decisions <i>(wise behavior)</i>	3. Be a man of integrity <i>(Justice)</i>
2. Be a man of moral integrity <i>(righteousness)</i>	4. Treat all men without bias or favoritism <i>(Equity)</i>

² Derived from definition of "equity" www.dictionary.com/browse/equity

Step Four: To Give

Recognize **WHO** to help and how to help them

Proverbs 1:1-6

¹The proverbs of Solomon
the son of David, king of Israel:

²To **KNOW** wisdom and instruction,

To **DISCERN** the sayings of understanding,

³To **RECEIVE** instruction in

wise behavior,
righteousness,
justice, and
equity;

⁴To **GIVE** **prudence**
to the **naive**,

The last of Solomon’s four steps is to “give.” You might say, “What in the world do you mean? What am I to give, and to whom do I give it?” I’m glad you asked. In this verse the word “give” means to **share with others the blessings and security you enjoy as a result of your obedience to the Scriptures. Teach them the three steps you mastered so that they too can gain wisdom. This way they will one day be able to experience the same kinds of blessings and security you have experienced.** When you practice what Proverbs teaches, you will learn many valuable lessons and gain the wisdom to make good and profitable decisions that will bring about good and successful results. You will also gain a great deal of peace and contentment. People who know nothing about the blessings and security you are experiencing need to be shown how they too can experience the same. In essence, you are to **disciple others**. That’s right, you are to learn the four steps of learning and living the book of Proverbs so that you can teach them to others. In this way, you reproduce yourself.

Let’s assume that you desire to teach someone what you have learned, but you don’t know who to help. Proverbs clearly shows you. Verse four states that there are basically two types of people who need your help. The first group consists of those who are called “naive.” These folks need to learn how to become prudent. The second group that needs your help is the “youth.” These young people are immature and need to learn how to conduct

themselves in a manner that produces good and lasting results. They do need to learn knowledge, but knowledge alone is dangerous for a young person. This knowledge needs to be tempered with a good decision-making ability. Our generation is a generation of knowledge and scientific discoveries. The average high school student knows a great deal of facts, but they are not being taught right from wrong, good decisions from poor ones. Consequently, they make many poor and costly choices.

In any study it helps to understand the meaning of the words being used (step one). Before this study I did not know what it meant to be naïve or prudent. Maybe you are like I was, so let's stop here and do a brief study of the characteristics of a naïve and a prudent person to see how they approach choices in life. Afterward, we will sum up step four and make application.

Naïve

Exactly what does it mean to be naïve? Would you recognize this kind of person if he were to associate with you? Let me say from the start that a “*naïve*” person is not necessarily a bad person. No, he is simply **one who seldom seriously considers the cost or consequences of the things he chooses to do or say**³. He is not aware of nor does he care about what will happen to him after he does what he has decided to do. Consequently, he makes many foolish and costly choices, and then he has to suffer the consequences. When he makes a poor decision and is punished for it, he wonders why he is being punished since he meant no harm in what he did.

I once saw a newspaper article about a man in California who desperately wanted to fly. On July 2nd, 1982, Larry Walters tied 42 helium-filled balloons to a Sears lawn chair in the backyard of his girlfriend's house in San Pedro, California. He had decided to take a BB gun along so he could shoot enough balloons to enable him to settle to the ground when he was ready to land. Well to say the least, things didn't work out like he had planned. After the chair was tied to the car bumper, he filled the balloons. When he severed the rope there was much more lift than he had expected. He ascended at 1,000 feet per minute and stopped rising at approximately 16,000 feet in altitude. He supposedly tried to shoot some of the balloons to descend, but he dropped the gun. He ended up having to be rescued and consequently had to pay a hefty fine for flying his “aircraft” without FAA approval⁴. That little stunt could have cost him his life. Understand though, he didn't fly the chair because he was a bad person. No, he flew it because he was naïve enough to think it would work.

A simple example of a naïve young person is the guy who says, “I'm tired of living under my parents' rules. I'm going to join the marines and get away from all of those rules.” Yeah, right!

A naïve parent may send his or her child to a state school where the professors do their best to destroy the faith of anyone who claims to be a Christian. Then when the young person comes home from school and tells his parents he doesn't believe in the Bible or Jesus Christ anymore, they are shocked at how something like this could have happened. In essence, the parents were not prudent enough to check out the school before sending their child there. They would have been much safer sending their child to a Christian college or university.

Being naïve could be something as simple as dropping out of high school, marrying the wrong person thinking life will be a fairy tale experience, or getting into debt so far you can't see your way out. There are so many ways in which a naïve man can show his true colors. The important thing to remember is that the “*naïve*” man, for whatever reason he chooses, **does not evaluate the cost or consequences of the decisions he makes**.

³ Derived from the definition of Naïve. www.dictionary.com/browse/naive

⁴ See -- <http://www.markbarry.com/amazing/lawnchairman.html>

Prudent

Since the naïve man needs to become prudent, exactly what does it mean to be prudent? Can you define the word? To be quite frank, I couldn't before this study. A “*prudent*” man is simply **someone who carefully evaluates the cost or consequences of each choice he makes. If that choice will produce good and beneficial results, he will proceed, but if that choice will be hurtful, costly, or generate punishment, he will refrain**.⁵ This process of evaluating choices is a good safeguard and shows a wise approach to life.

To be prudent you must approach every decision in life with the same scrutiny. Always remember that it is not wise to be prudent in one area and foolish or naïve in another. No, you must work at being prudent in every area of life no matter how small or insignificant the decision may be. It just makes good sense to do so.

⁵ My definition derived from www.dictionary.com/browse/prudent

Prudent versus Naive

There are a lot of parallel comparisons in Proverbs. Some are direct parallels where similar things are being compared. Others are inverse parallels where opposites are being compared. Most of the comparisons between the prudent and the naive are inverse parallels. We have defined a prudent and a naïve man in the paragraphs above, so let's see what Proverbs has to say about how they compare to each other. (Note the underlined portion of the verses.) We will look at the aspect of being naïve first, prudent second, and then we will compare the two in chart form.

The Naïve man in Proverbs

Prov. 14:15 states, *"The naive believes everything, but the prudent man considers his steps."* If it sounds good or fun he will do it. As a result, he says and does many things that come back to haunt or hurt him later, and he makes many poor and costly choices. In the end, he has to suffer the undesirable consequences that are the natural result of his poor choices. Prov. 22:3, *"The prudent sees the evil and hides himself, but the naive go on, and are punished for it."* Prov. 27:12, *"A prudent man sees evil and hides himself, the naive proceed and pay the penalty."* Prov. 14:18, *"The naive inherit folly, but the prudent are crowned with knowledge."* Take, for example, Prov. 7:6-23 where a young man lacking sense chooses to indulge in an illicit sexual relationship with another man's wife. He did not set out intending to be wicked or destructive. No, he was merely looking for a good time. It appeared thrilling to him, so without thinking the whole thing through, he joined her in illicit sexual pleasures. What he did not know was that his little fling would quite likely cost him his life. He could have caught a terrible disease or been killed by a jealous husband. At any rate, a fling like this could very likely turn into something very, very ugly. This kind of thing happens to those who simply don't consider the end results of what they are about to do. They merely do what sounds fun or pleasurable and then pay the penalty later. You see, the naive man makes many foolish choices that bring undesirable results, yet that does not necessarily make him a fool. A fool is foolish, but not all foolish people are fools. So, as you can see, the naive man is someone who could really learn and benefit from what you are learning from Proverbs about godly living. Solomon said that he (the naïve man) is the one you should seek to help. Once you start living Proverbs and see the good that comes your way, be looking for people who can benefit from what you have learned and share it with them if they are teachable.

The prudent man in Proverbs

The prudent man is different from the naïve in that he carefully considers the consequences of what he is about to do or say. Prov. 14:15 says, *"The naive believes everything, but the prudent man considers his steps."* If the results are going to be good and beneficial, he will proceed, but if they are going to be hurtful or costly, he will refrain. Prov. 22:3, *"The prudent sees the evil and hides himself, but the naive go on, and are punished for it."* Prov. 27:12, *"A prudent man sees evil and hides himself, the naive proceed and pay the penalty."* Therefore, the prudent man is saved from most of the hurts and heartaches that come upon the naive man. Prov. 14:18, *"The naive inherit folly, but the prudent are crowned with knowledge."* Once a man is able to evaluate his choices in this manner, he will learn more and more knowledge. When he learns this knowledge, he will be well on his way to becoming a wise man.

The Prudent versus Fool

We will discuss the fool when we look at Prov. 1:7, but it would be useful here to take a brief look at the fool with reference to both the naive and the prudent man. Most all the verses in Proverbs dealing with the prudent and the fool are inverse parallels (or opposites) just like those comparing the naïve and the prudent. There are three primary definitions for a "fool" in Proverbs, but the most prominent definition is *someone who is bull-headed, immature, and unwilling to change his mind once he has made a decision, even if that decision will ruin his life or cause his death.*⁶ Whereas a naive man acts out of ignorance and apathy, the fool acts out of confidence that he is right. After all, his opinion, as you will see in the next chapter of this commentary, is the only thing that matters to him. Be that as it may, how does a fool compare to a prudent man?

1) The fool will encourage others to do whatever they want while the prudent man will encourage folks to use caution and weigh the results of each thing they do. Prov. 12:23 states, *“A prudent man conceals knowledge, but the heart of fools proclaims folly.”*

2) A fool acts out his own perverted attitudes and beliefs while the prudent man wants to know more about his choices. Prov. 14:8 says, *“The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way, but the folly of fools is deceit.”*

3) The fool does things that display his undisciplined and ignorant approach to life, while the prudent man acts and makes decisions based upon trustworthy knowledge and sound, godly understanding. Prov. 13:16 tells us, *“Every prudent man acts with knowledge, but a fool displays folly.”*

4) A fool will not change his mind once he has decided to do something because he will not accept discipline or instruction. The prudent man appreciates both discipline and instruction. Prov. 15:5 reads, *“A fool rejects his father’s discipline, but he who regards reproof is prudent.”*

5) After a fool does something stupid and is faced with the penalty, he loudly lets everyone know how unfairly he is being treated, while the prudent man keeps quiet when he has been dishonored. Prov. 12:16 says, *“A fool’s vexation is known at once, but a prudent man conceals dishonor.”*

⁶ Condensed from Strong’s Concordance definitions of the three types of “fool”

Prudent versus Naive versus a Fool

I don’t want to belabor comparisons here, but it is good to be able to compare these three types of people. The naive man doesn’t understand the results of what he is about to do, nor does he care. The fool thinks he is right, so he will do a certain thing even if it costs him his life. Oh, but the prudent man wants to know all about the opportunity at hand so that he can use trustworthy knowledge and sound, godly understanding to decide whether to proceed or refrain.

Once you start practicing the truths of Proverbs, you will discover how good they are, and you will experience the sweet blessings and security that come your way. As a result, you will have the resources to guide the naive man into becoming prudent. You can help change the naïve man, but there is no hope whatsoever of changing a fool. Proverbs 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.”* Once he makes up his mind to do something, he will not change it even if he dies trying to fulfill his desire.

The charts on the following pages show the actions and/or attitudes of these three types of people. The first chart shows general principles that have been condensed in order to give a visual representation of how these three types of people compare. The second chart contains verses with references to one or more of the three types of persons.

General principles

<i>Naive</i>	<i>Fool</i>	<i>Prudent</i>
Acts out of ignorance	Acts out of arrogance	Evaluates consequences before proceeding
Is punished, but may learn from it	Is punished and never learns	Learns beforehand and avoids the punishment
Makes friends with whomever happens to come along	Makes close friends only with fools like himself	Makes wise men his close friends
Is punished and regrets	Is punished and strikes back	Avoids punishment
Doesn't see the danger ahead	Confident he can avoid the danger ahead	Refrains in order to avoid the danger
Believes everything	Believes his opinion is right	Seeks sound sources to learn what is right
If disciplined, he may learn to avoid being caught	Rejects discipline	Appreciates discipline and learns from it.
Will die prematurely	Will die prematurely	Will live a long life
Complacent	Angry	Patient
Wants it now	Wants it now	Can wait

Scriptural principles

Reference	Prudent	Naive	Fool
Prov. 14:15	Evaluates his choices	Believes everything	
Prov. 8:5		Instructed to discern prudence	Encouraged to discern wisdom
Prov. 22:3	Sees evil ahead and hides himself	Proceeds and is punished	
Prov. 27:12	Sees evil ahead and hides himself	Proceeds and pays the penalty	
Prov. 14:18	Crowned with knowledge	Inherits folly	
Prov. 18:15	Acquires knowledge		
Prov. 12:16	Conceals his shame when dishonored		Shows his frustration immediately
Prov. 12:23	Conceals knowledge		Proclaims folly
Prov. 13:16	Acts with knowledge		Displays folly
Prov. 14:8	Understands his way		Is deceived about his way
Prov. 15:5	Values discipline and reproof		Rejects his father's discipline
Prov. 17:28			If he keeps quiet, he might appear to be prudent

Now that you have a reasonable understanding of how a naive man makes choices, let's assume for the moment that you want to help a naïve man become prudent. How would you accomplish this task? Let me use an example from Scripture to make the application practical. Please allow me to use this illustration for naive women even though the text calls them foolish. Remember that I stated earlier in this discussion that a fool is foolish, but not all foolish people are fools. Naive men are foolish, but the one distinguishing characteristic above all others about a fool is that he rejects God's rule over him. The naive man, on the other hand, could take God or leave him. He just doesn't care. So, if you think of a naive man as being foolish in his actions or words, this illustration fits the bill well.

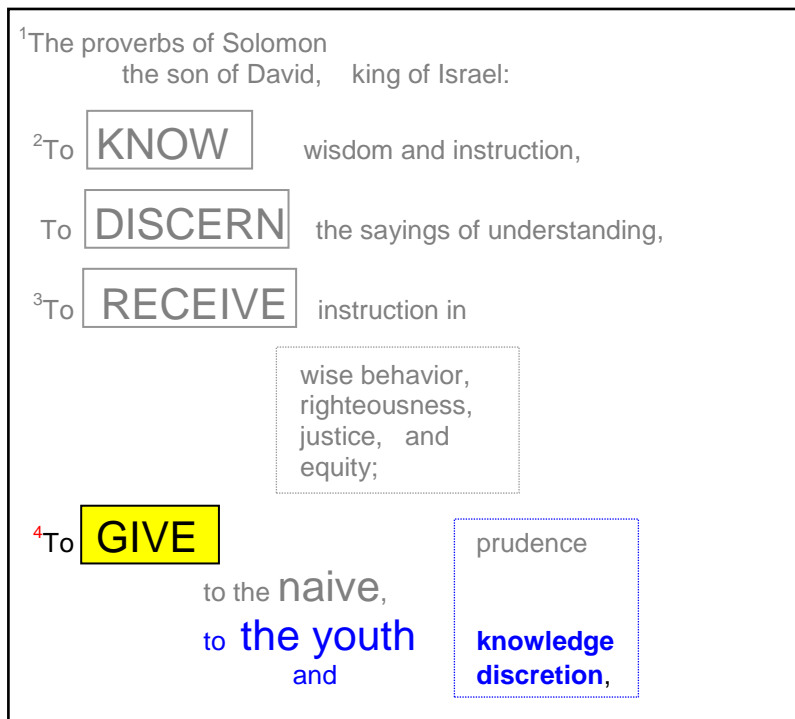
In Matt. 25:1-13 Christ states, *"¹ Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went out to meet the bridegroom. ² And five of them were **foolish**, and five were **prudent**. ³ For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, ⁴ but the prudent took oil in flasks along with their lamps. ⁵ Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and began to sleep. ⁶ But at midnight there was a shout, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' ⁷ Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. ⁸ And the foolish said to the prudent, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' ⁹ But the prudent answered, saying, 'No, there will not be enough for us and you too; go instead to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.' ¹⁰ And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut. ¹¹ And later the other virgins also came, saying, 'LORD, LORD, open up for us.' ¹² But he answered and said, 'Truly I say to you, I do not know you.' ¹³ Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour NASB (KJV adds -- wherein the Son of man cometh)"*

Notice that the main difference between the prudent and the naive was planning. The prudent evaluated what they would need to keep their lanterns burning even if the bridegroom waited until the next morning to arrive. They took extra oil just in case, and it saved them from disaster. Those who were naive (or foolish) had not even consider the possibility that they might run out of oil.

Your job, as explained in Proverbs, is to help naïve people learn to wisely evaluate the decisions they face. Teach them the four steps of learning and living Proverbs. By using these steps, they will learn to consider all that could or would go wrong. They will also learn the benefits they would gain if they proceed and the losses they would avoid if they refrain. Teach them to start with small decisions and use those successes to work up to the bigger ones. As they succeed in the smaller decisions, they will gain confidence that their decision-making ability will work well in the more important decisions as well. Since you will have gained knowledge and experience by following the first three steps taught by Solomon, you should be well equipped to fulfill the task of a teacher in step four. The only thing stopping you is your desire and the self-discipline to do it.

The Youth

Proverbs 1:1-6



Having discussed the naive and prudent man, let's now look at the other type of person you are to help if you are going to follow Solomon's advice in step four. The word "youth" in this verse refers to **someone who is either young or is immature enough that he has not gained the ability to make good decisions that produce good and successful results on a regular basis**. The youth who need your help are not necessarily in trouble or engrossed with evil. They merely need sound guidance before they make a mess of their lives. Verse four states that you are to teach them "knowledge." You might say, "Well, they go to school, don't they? What more do they need to know?" Yes, they do go to school, but if they are enrolled in our public schools, they are not being taught right from wrong, good from bad. When you see a young person who is teachable, see if he will allow you to teach him the knowledge he will need to make good decisions. But remember, knowledge alone is dangerous for a young person. He also needs to be able to make good and profitable decisions based upon the trustworthy knowledge he gains.

Let me give you an example. If a young person learns all about the act of sexual intercourse in school, he might venture to experience it with some young girl before marriage. If all he is taught is how to perform the act, he may not be aware of the moral or medical implications that would otherwise cause him to refrain and save himself for his future mate. So, he does need to be taught knowledge, but he also needs to be taught "discretion." This is **the ability to understand when a thing is good or bad and how to make good decisions that produce good and beneficial results**. Once they know right from wrong, good from bad, they need to learn how to best use that knowledge to make good decisions. Self-discipline plays a big part in the process of learning discretion by a young

person, and your job is to teach them how to do this so that it becomes a normal and natural part of their manner of living.

How to affect others for good

Having learned to accurately live out the Scriptures and having experienced the blessings and security that come from living them, you are ready to start investing yourself in the lives of other people. At this point you are ready to start practicing step four of Solomon's four steps to learning and living the book of Proverbs. You went through the four steps to living and learning the book of Proverbs, so you can help others do the same. **First**, you learned accurately what was expected of you. You learned exactly how to accomplish what each Scriptural instruction was telling you to do. Therefore, you can no longer plead ignorance if you don't do what a Scripture instructs you to do. **Second**, you invested enough time studying and meditating upon those verses that you came to understand the heart of God. You now understood that God does not do anything to us, for us, or with us that is primarily intended for our hurt. On the contrary, everything He does is designed for the express purpose of bringing glory to His name. By now you also understand the blessings that come from doing good and the security that comes from avoiding or abandoning every sinful practice. **Third** and finally, armed with this knowledge and understanding, you put the verses into practice by living them. This is where the rubber meets the road. Undoubtedly, you have experienced many good things, and you saw how you avoided difficult or costly consequences by following biblical principles. So, how do you teach a naive person or the youth to be prudent? Let's look at them step by step.

1) If he has never trusted Jesus Christ as personal Savior by faith alone, you need to teach him how to trust Christ as his own LORD and Savior. No one can be truly prudent until he knows Christ, has a proper fear of the LORD, and has assurance that heaven is his home. Anything short of this causes decisions to be clouded with doubts and questions that hamper a good decision-making process.

2) Show him verses from Scripture that teach right from wrong, good from bad. Teach him how to study and meditate upon the Scriptures so that he can learn these things for himself. This step alone could save him from a multitude of hurts. Teach him accurately what the verses are telling him to do and encourage him to start living them right away.

3) Teach him through verses of Scripture why things are right or wrong, good or bad. Blind obedience alone is not enough to last through really tough times when a person starts to question what he or she really believes. Each person must cultivate his own convictions, not adopt the convictions of his parents or someone else he knows. The only safe way to approach convictions is to settle the matter before the test comes. Otherwise, he could be swayed one way or another when a difficult test surfaces.

4) Teach him to accurately discern right from wrong and help him to understand the consequences of wrong choices. It is not enough to understand the fact that things will go well if he does right, but he needs to fully understand that he could end up being seriously hurt or killed if he makes bad choices in matters that really make a difference. Remember, though, he needs to use the same evaluation process on the little decisions as well as the big ones. If he is not careful, he will establish a pattern in little things that will end up adversely affecting his decision-making in the major things.

5) Encourage him to discipline himself by making good choices based upon what he has learned up to now. Knowledge and understanding are useless unless they are put into practice. It works the same for anyone who practices the first three steps in Solomon's four steps of learning and living Proverbs. In helping other people, you are merely duplicating in them what you went through to become someone who can genuinely help others attain godliness. Try to remember the struggles you experienced while you were learning to discipline yourself to do what Solomon taught you. The people you attempt to help will experience many of the same struggles, so encourage them. You have not only experienced the blessings from the LORD, but you will know what they are going through when they face struggles.

6) Encourage him to share his successes with you. If he follows these steps, he will see successes, and you will be encouraged to help him even more.

7) Encourage him to find someone who needs what he has learned and get him started teaching others as soon as he is ready. You will be there to help him when he has questions about the best way to share knowledge and understanding with these new young people. Then, before long, he will become the teacher, and the process will start all over again with a new generation of believers.

So, let's condense these seven steps.

1. Get him saved and free from doubts about his salvation.
2. Teach him how to study so he can learn right from wrong, good from bad.
3. Teach him why a thing is right or wrong and what produces good results.
4. Teach him how to evaluate choices based upon what is right or wrong.
5. Encourage him to use self-discipline in order to practice what you have taught him.
6. Encourage him to share his successes with you.
7. Encourage him to become the teacher and disciple someone else.

In conclusion:

We have now finished the first four verses of Proverbs chapter one, but there are two more verses that together with the first four comprise the first paragraph of chapter one. Before we discuss them, let's quickly review what we have learned thus far. We have seen that there are four steps to learning and living the things taught in Proverbs. They are:

- 1) **to know**—learn a verse or passage well enough to perform it accurately;
- 2) **to discern**—gain an accurate understanding of why a verse or verses were given and what God intended to accomplish in and through you as you obey them;
- 3) **to receive**—put what you have learned into practice by living it daily. It is here that you begin to experience the blessings and security that come from faithful obedience to God's Word; and
- 4) **to give**—share what you have learned and experienced by teaching the youth and naive people how to become wise and prudent like you. Then they too will make good decisions that produce beneficial results both today and in the future. Then after you have taught them, encourage them to become a teacher. They will now be equipped to disciple someone who needs what they have learned.

Verses 5 and 6

The attitudes necessary for learning

Proverbs 1:5-6

⁵ A WISE MAN	will HEAR and INCREASE IN LEARNING, and
A MAN OF UNDERSTANDING	will ACQUIRE WISE COUNSEL,

⁶to UNDERSTAND

a proverb and a figure, the words of the wise and their riddles.

Verse 5a *"A wise man will hear and increase in learning,"*

This is the key verse among verses 1:1-6 (Proverbs chapter one, paragraph one) and establishes the attitude necessary for learning the truths contained in the book. In fact, this is true for any other portion of Scripture for that matter. In order to understand this verse, it is first necessary to define both the *"wise man"* and the *"man of understanding."* Strong's Concordance says that a *"wise man"* is *one who is skillful in technical work, able to make good decisions about moral, ethical and personal matters, prudent, and shrewd in all his dealings, all of which produce the most successful results.* He has not only learned the trustworthy knowledge and sound understanding he needs, but he has also honed the skills he possesses until he is able to bring about the best and most successful results in every area of life and practice. Oh, that doesn't mean he won't make any mistakes, but his normal approach to life is to evaluate all that he does in order to make good and productive decisions based upon trustworthy knowledge and sound, godly understanding.

Notice the outlook of a *wise man.* He is always listening for more knowledge and understanding to add to what he has already gained. This is what I call **passive learning.** He is ready to learn when knowledge is presented to him. This is good because all of us ought to have this readiness to learn, but I am afraid today's average Christian practices passive learning, and that's all. They never have done the work of studying the Scriptures to the point where they are able to use the knowledge and understanding needed to become a wise man. Unfortunately, a large percentage of these people merely come to hear what the preacher or teacher has to say hoping to learn from them, but when they walk out the doors of the church, their learning process ceases. They simply do not want to go to the work of acquiring knowledge and understanding by searching for it themselves. Sadly, their Bibles collect dust all week. They simply will not put forth the effort to find knowledge and understanding on their own. Son, don't be one of them.

The fact that a person wants to be wise actually shows some wisdom, and it takes some understanding to know to search for understanding. Proverbs 4:7-9 illustrates this truth. These verses read,

"The beginning of wisdom is: Acquire wisdom; and with all your acquiring, get understanding. Prize her, and she will exalt you; she will honor you if you embrace her. She will place on your head a garland of grace; she will present you with a crown of beauty."

Verse seven is what triggered my search of Proverbs some 27 years ago. At first, I didn't understand how wanting to acquire wisdom was the starting point of any search for wisdom. It seemed like this verse was defining wisdom by itself. Oh, but it soon became clear that wanting to be wise is what will drive a man to seek wisdom. It makes perfect sense to me now.

Verse 5b *"and a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel, ..."*

Now, let's look at the *"man of understanding"*. Here is one who *has discernment, insight, and a good understanding of what is required of him if he is to become truly wise.* I say this because unlike the man who seeks knowledge in a passive manner, this man searches for wisdom through his own energies. He searches for and finds reliable resources. These will include seeking counsel from the Bible, from wise men, from good books, from nature, etc. The main difference here is that he has gone beyond **passive learning** and into the realm of **active learning.** It takes a lot of hard work and discipline to gain the kind of trustworthy knowledge and sound understanding that results in real wisdom, but every bit of the effort is worth the tremendous results that come in return. The man who practices an **active search** for wisdom and keeps on searching will eventually reach the goal of becoming a wise counselor. Strong's defines the word *"wise counsel"* as *the ability to counsel and guide others by the use of good reason and discretion.*⁷ This is the ultimate goal because when you can counsel someone else in this manner, you have all the resources needed to counsel and advise yourself with good discretion. You see, if you are not living what you are sharing as counsel to others, you certainly don't have any business counseling anyone. When we get to Proverbs chapter two, you will once again see this idea of passive and active searching for truth.

Gregory, do you desire to be a wise man? Do you want it badly enough to work for it? If you answered yes, then you have shown wisdom in desiring it. You see, if you really want to be wise, you show that you possess at least some wisdom. Consider Proverbs 4:7 where we saw, *"The beginning of wisdom is: Acquire wisdom; and with all your acquiring, get understanding."* I say again that this is the verse that generated my study of Proverbs and whose meaning eluded me for thirteen plus years, that is, until the writing of this portion of the commentary. You see, you have to begin your search for wisdom and understanding somewhere, but the desire and self-discipline to

want it is the initial wisdom that will eventually lead you to the full stature of being a wise man. If this verse were to be reworded, I believe it would read something like this:

"The beginning of wisdom is having the desire and self-discipline to search for her however and wherever necessary so that you can become a truly wise man. As you search for her, be sure to grasp all the understanding that comes your way so that you will be fully prepared to be and act like a truly wise man."

That is a mouthful, isn't it? Yet you can become this man if you desire it with all your heart. Remember, though, that it may take years to get there. Even so, all the work is worth the effort.

⁷ MacArthur Study Bible, copyright © 1997, Word Publishing, pg. 877

Why go to all the work?

Verse 6 *"to understand a proverb and a figure, the words of the wise and their riddles."*

⁵ A WISE MAN	will HEAR and
and	INCREASE IN LEARNING,
A MAN OF UNDERSTANDING	will ACQUIRE WISE COUNSEL,

⁶to UNDERSTAND

a proverb and a figure, the words of the wise and their riddles.

Okay, we've discussed the attitudes necessary to *"increase in learning"* and *"acquire wise counsel,"* but what is the reason for doing so? Verse six tells us. By the way, did you notice that verse six is a continuation of verse five? Both verses form one sentence. Notice the first two words in verse six, *"to understand."* These are the key words for the paragraph and are set in a solid red box in the text layout. Both the NASB and the KJV use these words, but I like the wording in the Spanish Bible much better. It says, *"in order to understand."* You might say, "Well, what's the difference." The English version reads, *"A wise man will hear and increase in learning, and a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel, to understand a proverb and a figure, the words of the wise and their riddles."* But the Spanish reading is much more clear. Let's add the words *"in order"* to the English reading, and it would read like this: *"A wise man will hear and increase in learning, and a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel, in order to understand a proverb and a figure, the words of the wise and their riddles."* To make it even more clear, it could rightfully be stated, *"A wise man will hear and increase in learning, and a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel, in order to understand all that follows in the book of Proverbs."* Yes, this is the reason for a passive and active search for wisdom. That's right. The goal is to understand all of what Solomon and the other contributors of Proverbs were trying to teach you. It is obvious that Solomon and the other writers really wanted us to learn what they shared, but understanding doesn't come any other way than by study, meditation, and plain old hard work. If you will pursue wisdom in this way, you will surely find her.

What types of verses or groups of verses will you find during your study of Proverbs? There are two general categories. There are those which are easy to understand, and there are those which are difficult to understand. The first group consists of *proverbs* and *figures*. The second consists of *words of the wise* and also *their riddles*. Let's look at each of them.

First, there are *proverbs*. These are condensed, to-the-point sayings that carry a truth to be learned. Each of them has its own *interpretations* (as the King James translates the word) or *a figure* (as the NASB translates the word). They both convey the same idea. The majority of the verses in the book of Proverbs are straightforward and easy to understand.

The second group contains *the words of the wise*. Proverbs chapter thirty in its entirety is one such passage. As you will see when you read my commentary on that chapter, the whole of Agur's discussion is a rebuke of two young men by their father. Each time I read the words Agur shared with these two boys and see the sophisticated logic he used, it causes me to conclude once again that he is their actual father. In Prov. 1:6 the NASB refers to some of the words of these wise men as "*riddles*," but I prefer the wording in the KJV which calls them "*dark sayings*." I like this wording because it seems like the real truths of some of the difficult passages in Proverbs are hiding in the shadows, as it were. Each person who seriously studies Proverbs will run across some verses that are difficult to understand, but with dedicated study and meditation, they, too, can be understood. It took about twelve years to understand the logic behind chapter three, but when its logic finally surfaced, it was something of rare beauty. This kind of understanding comes only through hundreds or thousands of hours of study and meditation. The key is to park at a particular passage and refuse to leave it until you understand what is being taught. The following chart condenses the ideas in verse six.

The statement	The meaning
Proverbs →	Its interpretation (riddles)
Words of the wise →	Its meaning (dark sayings)

Below you will find a finished layout of verses 5 and 6. Now that we have come to this point in our discussion, you should know what is being taught.

Proverbs 1:5-6

⁵ A WISE MAN A MAN OF UNDERSTANDING	will HEAR and INCREASE IN LEARNING, and will ACQUIRE WISE COUNSEL
<div style="border: 1px solid red; display: inline-block; padding: 2px 10px;"> ⁶to UNDERSTAND </div>	
<div style="border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; padding: 5px;"> a proverb and a figure, the words of the wise and their riddles. </div>	

What have we learned about Proverbs 1:1-6 thus far? The following is somewhat of a repeat of what we have already covered, but repetition is valuable.

There are four steps to learning and living the book of Proverbs. They are:

- 1) **to know**—learn a verse or passage well enough to perform it accurately;
- 2) **to discern**—gain an accurate understanding of why a verse or verses were given and what God intends to accomplish in and through you as you obey them;
- 3) **to receive**—put what you have learned into practice by living it daily. It is here that you begin to experience the blessings and security that come from faithfully obeying God’s Word; and
- 4) **to give**—share what you have learned and experienced by teaching the youth and naive people how to become wise and prudent like you. Then they too will make good decisions that will produce good and beneficial results both today and in the future. Then after you have taught them, encourage them to become a teacher by helping someone else gain what they have learned.

In order to successfully learn wisdom, you must practice **passive learning** coupled with **active learning**. You will do so **in order to understanding** all the teachings presented in Proverbs.

Gregory, it is my desire that you will spend the time necessary to truly learn and experience the truths of Scripture. They were meant to help you live for Christ and, ultimately, for the Father, so determine in your heart that you will learn them. Dedicate yourself to them, and they will make your life sweet and secure. I pray you will.

On the following page, you will find a full layout of Proverbs 1:1-6. It should make good sense to you now. If not, I have not done my job very well. Look it over and ponder the depths of this section. Everything you do with the rest of Proverbs hinges upon understanding this paragraph. Son, I hope you will learn and use it well.

Proverbs 1:1-6

¹The proverbs of Solomon
the son of David, king of Israel:

²To **KNOW** wisdom and instruction,

To **DISCERN** the sayings of understanding,

³To **RECEIVE** instruction in

wise behavior,
righteousness,
justice, and
equity;

⁴To **GIVE**
to the naive,
to the youth
and

prudence

knowledge
discretion,

⁵A WISE MAN will HEAR and
INCREASE IN LEARNING,
and

A MAN OF UNDERSTANDING will ACQUIRE WISE COUNSEL,

⁶to UNDERSTAND

a proverb and
a figure,
the words of the wise
and their riddles.

Proverbs 1:7

Two choices in life

The attitude you must acquire and maintain if you are to be successful at learning and living the book of Proverbs.

Proverbs 1:7

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Gregory,

In Prov. 1:1-6 you discovered the four steps to learning and living the book of Proverbs. I hope you took the time to understand them well, because they will be invaluable as you proceed through this commentary. Now in verse seven you are presented with a choice. You can search the Scriptures in order to figure out the fear of the LORD that leads to the kind of trustworthy knowledge that will produce wisdom, or you can be a fool and live for this world and all that it has to offer. This is an important decision, one that you would do well to evaluate carefully. If you have good discretion, you will pursue the LORD and wisdom, but if you are like the fool and think you already know all that you need in life, you will reject wisdom and the LORD in favor of the pleasures this world has to offer. Son, choose carefully and wisely. It is important to understand that this verse sets the stage for all that will follow in chapters 1-9, and when we get to chapter nine, you will see this choice restated and expanded. It really is a beauty to behold.

This will be a relatively long chapter because in order to intelligently discuss our text verse it will be necessary to do word studies on several different words contained in the verse. These word studies will include the following topics: 1) what is a genuine fear of the LORD, 2) who is the LORD in Proverbs, 3) what is knowledge, 4) what is a fool, 5) what is wisdom in Proverbs, and 6) what is instruction? Boy, is that a mouthful or not?

It is clear from verse seven that whatever the fear of the LORD is, it is the place where we must start our search to gain trustworthy knowledge. We all know lots of things, but much of what we know is trivial and of no real benefit with regard to living a good and godly life to the glory of God. What we really need is a basis upon which we can gauge knowledge to be trustworthy and beneficial. The fear of the LORD does just that. We will see this more clearly as we progress through this discussion.

Keep in mind that Proverbs is Hebrew poetry, so we can rightfully deduce that the first and second halves of verse seven are an inverse parallel. This means that they are opposite of each other. Whereas having and living a genuine fear of the LORD results in trustworthy knowledge for the wise man, a fool rejects the fear of the LORD and hates wisdom and instruction. These are the very things we were told to gain in step one of the four steps to learning and living the book of Proverbs. Oh, but the fool thinks he already knows all he needs in life, so he doesn't want anyone trying to persuade him differently.

Before we can discuss our text in-depth, we must practice step one of the four steps to learning and living the book of Proverbs. This step is to learn what the verse says and understand the instruction well enough to perform it accurately. This is why we will do word studies on these six words, and we will dissect them in the order they appear in the verse. When we finish these word studies, I will explain the text as a whole and make application. By the time we get to the actual commentary on this verse, you will already understand much of what I will share with you about the verse itself.

Part one—What is a genuine fear of the LORD?

[Return to Index](#)

Proverbs 1:7a *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge*

Gregory,

How would you define a biblical fear of the LORD? Do you possess it, and is it a controlling factor in your life? The opposite of the fear of the LORD is a fear of man. Prov. 29:25 states, *“The fear of man brings a snare, but he who trusts in the LORD will be exalted.”* Many men and women fear what others will think of them if they speak up for Christ. This is why peer pressure causes so many to cave in and either be quiet about their faith or go along with questionable or outright sinful activities in order to “fit in.” If their fear of the LORD was stronger than their fear of being ridiculed, they would stand up for their convictions in order to please the LORD. You and I need to develop a spiritual attitude where the thing that drives our decision-making process is whether or not God is pleased with what we do. When that happens, the fear of the LORD will permeate our whole manner of living, and it will change our lives for good.

Prov. 1:7a says that *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge.”* The fear of the LORD, then, is the starting point of our search for wisdom. Every commentary I have read on Proverbs agrees that Prov. 9:10 is the key verse for the whole book of Proverbs. It states, *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”* It is easy to see from this verse that the fear of the LORD is the foundation upon which wisdom is built, and it is the gauge by which we determine knowledge to be true and trustworthy. Other verses support this idea. Prov. 15:33a states, *“The fear of the LORD is the instruction for wisdom.”* In Psalm 111:10a King David told us, *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.”* Finally, in Job 28:28 we read, *“And to man He (God) said, ‘Behold, the fear of the LORD, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.’”* (Grayed text added for clarity) It is one thing for godly men to tell us we need a genuine fear of the LORD, but when God tells us, we need sit up and take notice. Moses reiterated the value of a genuine fear of the LORD when he wrote in Deut. 10:12-13, *“Now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the LORD’s commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good?”* It is clear, then, that acquiring a fear of the LORD is essential if you want to become a wise man and enjoy sweet fellowship with Him. First Samuel 12:24 sums it up when it says, *“Only fear the LORD and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you.”* Since figuring out the fear of the LORD is the starting point on the path to gaining trustworthy knowledge that leads to godly wisdom, you would do well to know what the fear of the LORD really is, how it is acquired, and how it will affect your life once you embrace it.

Before anyone can gain a fear of the LORD he must be born again. An unsaved man simply cannot understand the Bible. First Corinthians 2:14 states, *“But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.”* The King James Version phrases this verse as *“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”* An unsaved man cannot understand the Scriptures because he does not have the Holy Spirit dwelling in him to teach him what they mean. Once a man is born again, he becomes a child of God by faith, and the LORD gives him eyes to see and a heart to understand what the Scriptures teach. When a man is truly converted, he wants to serve the LORD, and he will never want to go back to the old sins he practiced before he was saved. I worked with a young man named Greg, and he is a good example of this truth. He was thoroughly converted and is growing in the LORD by leaps and bounds. He has a genuine fear of the LORD, and it shows every time we fellowship together. He has said on numerous occasions that he never wants to go back to his old sinful ways.

It is unfortunate that being saved does not necessarily result in a biblical fear of the LORD. I say this because I know of many “supposedly saved” men and women who act and think in a way that plainly shows that they do not fear the LORD. They want to stay as close to the world as they can without actually stepping out of bounds. A man who fears the LORD will want to stay as far away from sin as he can. Hopefully someday these saved people will gain a biblical fear of the LORD, but it will require them to spend lots of time in the Word on a regular basis. At present these men and women have not learned enough to fully grasp who the LORD is, what He does, or how He works in the affairs of men. This is where Proverbs chapter two comes into play. It teaches the process by which a

believer can come to discern (figure out) the fear of the LORD, but it is important to understand that no man can understand or acquire a genuine fear of the LORD until or unless he is truly born again.

A genuine fear of the LORD?

Gregory, a fear of the LORD is different for an unsaved man than it is for a born-again child of God. An unbeliever may fear God alright, but his fear is the “afraid” kind. He knows deep down in his soul that God is unhappy about his sinful lifestyle. If he doesn’t repent, he will end up experiencing very real “fear” or “terror” when the consequences of his sin come crashing down upon his head. The dictionary defines fear as **an overwhelming emotion that hurt or disaster is eminent**, and a paraphrase of the definition of terror is **being so afraid that you end up shaking in your boots**. This is the kind of fear that kept Israel’s enemies from attacking them. In Second Chronicles 17:10 we are told, *“And the fear of the LORD fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that were round about Judah, so that they made no war against Jehoshaphat.”* The people of those countries knew that if they attacked Jehoshaphat, God would fight for Israel, and they knew they could not win.

A born-again child of God does not need to be afraid of the LORD like the unsaved, but he does need to be afraid of breaking fellowship with the LORD by sinning. First John 1:5-7 tell us, *“⁵This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. ⁶If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; ⁷but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.”* Darkness in these verses refers to sinful practices while light refers to holiness and purity. If we sin and think we still have fellowship with the LORD, we lie to ourselves and are not practicing the truth we know (or should know). If we repent of our sin, He will cleanse us, forgive our sin, and restore us to fellowship with Himself. If we choose to sin, we will still have to endure the consequences of our sin, but the greatest loss is intimate fellowship with the LORD Jesus.

Most of the verses in Proverbs describe the fear of the LORD as avoiding or abandoning every sinful practice, but there is a second aspect of a fear of the LORD. It is a healthy respect and reverence for God. He is such an awesome God, and His power and greatness are beyond man’s ability to fully comprehend. When we give the LORD such an elevated place in our hearts and minds, we will want to do good as an offering to our great God. This is what Romans 12:1-2 is referring to when it says, *“Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”* So then, the fear of the LORD is a two-sided coin so to speak. It is love-hate relationship. It is hating sin, and it is loving God by reverencing Him the way He deserves. Solomon touched on both of these in Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 where he summarized the truth he had learned after he made a mess of his life. He wrote, *“The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.”* We will now discuss both aspects of his conclusion.

1) A genuine fear of the LORD involves reverencing the LORD and giving Him His rightful place in our lives.

If you really fear the LORD, you will recognize the Lord’s greatness and power and then give Him first place in your life. Because Christ has saved you from your sins, you should have a love and respect for him that permeates your whole inner being. John told us in 1 John 4:17-19, *“By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. We love, because He first loved us.”* If we reverence Him like we should, we will obey the Scriptures out of a heart of love and gratitude for all that He has done for us. When we obey His Word, the LORD is pleased with us. Prov. 21:3 supports this truth by saying, *“To do righteousness and justice is desired by the LORD rather than sacrifice.”* This is what Samuel told Saul in First Samuel 15:22 where we read, *“Samuel said, ‘Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams.’”* The LORD is definitely not as concerned with what we do for Him as He is with our motives and the kind of person we are in our heart. In a similar manner, Prov. 14:2 tells us, *“He who walks in his uprightness fears the LORD, but he who is crooked in his ways despises Him.”* Throughout this commentary I have paraphrased *upright* as **“doing what is right in the sight of the LORD.”** So then, a child of God who has a biblical

fear of the LORD will live in a good and godly manner as an expression of his love and respect for the LORD. This is the love aspect of the love-hate relationship that defines a genuine, biblical fear of the LORD.

2) A genuine fear of the LORD involves reverencing the LORD enough to avoid or abandon every sinful practice.

It is true that we need to reverence the LORD and give Him His rightful place in our lives, but we also need to avoid or abandon every sinful practice as an expression of our fear of the LORD. Our sins were paid for at the cross. Therefore, we will not have to stand before God in judgment for them. Even so, if we sin, we will have to endure the earthly consequences of our sin. The greatest loss, though, is that sin will break our fellowship with the LORD. As a result, true believers in Christ will avoid or abandon every sinful practice primarily because they love the LORD so much that they don't want to do anything that will break fellowship with Him. That intimate relationship is more important to them than anything the world has to offer. As I said above, avoiding or abandoning every sinful practice is the major emphasis in Proverbs when it comes to the fear of the LORD. Consider the following verses that illustrate this truth. They speak for themselves.

1) In Prov. 8:13 Wisdom states, *"The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverted mouth, I (wisdom) hate."*

2) Prov. 16:6 tells us, *"By lovingkindness and truth iniquity is atoned for, and by the fear of the LORD one keeps away from evil."*

Other Old Testament books support this idea.

3) In Job 28:28 the ancient patriarch Job told us, *"And to man He (God) said, 'Behold, the fear of the LORD, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.'"*

4) In Exodus 20:18-21, Moses had just finished giving the children of Israel the ten commandments. Then he said,

¹⁸ All the people perceived the thunder and the lightning flashes and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood at a distance. ¹⁹ Then they said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen; but let not God speak to us, or we will die."²⁰ Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may remain with you, so that you may not sin."²¹ So the people stood at a distance, while Moses approached the thick cloud where God was.

5) In Romans chapter six Paul sheds valuable light on avoiding or abandoning sinful practices. Spend some time digesting the following verses. They obviously support the logic of avoiding or abandoning every form of sin and evil. Those who have a genuine, biblical fear of the LORD will do as he taught.

Paul writes that we are not to continue in sin after being saved because when we accepted Christ as Savior by faith alone, we should have become dead to sin. Romans 6:1-6 state,

¹ What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? ² May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? ³ Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? ⁴ Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. ⁵ For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, ⁶ knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; ⁷ for he who has died is freed from sin.

He also writes in verses 8-14 that since we are dead to sin, we are alive in Christ and should use our bodies as instruments of righteousness, not slaves to sin. These verses read,

⁸ Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, ⁹ knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. ¹⁰ For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. ¹¹ Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. ¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, ¹³ and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. ¹⁴ For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

Then in verses 15-23 Paul encourages believers to obey God from the heart and do good instead of continuing in sin.

¹⁵ What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! ¹⁶ Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? ¹⁷ But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, ¹⁸ and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. ¹⁹ I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification. ²⁰ For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. ²¹ Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. ²² But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our LORD.

These and other verses of Scripture should make it clear that possessing a genuine, biblical fear of the LORD will drive a believer in Christ to avoid or abandon every sinful practice. As a result, he or she will live a good and godly life to the glory of God. This is truly righteous living.

A) Sin generates punishment

Son, when you were a child, you were given rules that you were expected—scratch that—required to obey. When you did obey, there was no need for you to be afraid of being punished because you had done nothing wrong. In fact, every time you obeyed, you made your mother and me very happy. There were times, though, when you disobeyed. After you broke the rules and we learned about the infraction, we confronted you about your wrong, and, if necessary, you were disciplined. When you did wrong, you knew discipline was waiting because that was the standard practice in our home.

God works the same way. He has given men commandments, principles, and guidelines in the Bible, and these are designed to give people direction in life. There are also the ten commandments. By the way, I saw a poster one time that said, “If God had wanted us to be permissive, He would have given us the ten suggestions.” I have no idea who authored that statement, but it is very true. God didn’t give us suggestions. He gave us commandments, and we are required to obey them. There is no excuse for breaking them. Do we break them from time to time? Yes, we do, but we have no excuse when we do. The problem with doing wrong is that the principle of sow and reap works as well here as in other situations. Galatians 6:7-9 states, *“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.”* Somewhere, sometime what we do will come back upon us in like form. When we do good, we will receive good in return. When we do wrong, we will experience hurts, heartaches, and/or losses in return. The LORD may punish us directly if we choose to sin, or He may simply allow the normal and natural consequences of our sin to take their toll. In either case, we lose. I like to explain this truth by showing that when I do good, the LORD places His protective hand over me, and no harm can come my way without His express permission. If I choose to sin, He merely takes His protective hand away and allows the

normal and natural consequences of my sin to take its toll. He doesn't always have to punish me directly because the normal and natural consequences of sinful practices are typically severe enough to get my full attention and make me wish I had never committed that sin. Paul understood this truth when he wrote Second Corinthians 7:1 where we read, *"Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."*

Since you know that you will be punished if you do wrong, it is sound wisdom to abandon sin and evil in order to avoid punishment and experience blessings instead. This is what Proverbs is talking about in the following verses: Prov. 3:7-8 states, *"Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your body, and refreshment to your bones."* Doing good produces a healthy body and renewed vitality. Doing evil produces anxiety and fear of reprisal. Prov. 16:17 states, *"The highway of the upright is to depart from evil; he who watches his way preserves his life."* The New Century Version renders this verse this way: *"Good people stay away from evil. By watching what they do, they protect their lives."* Two more verses support this aspect of the fear of the LORD. Prov. 14:16 says, *"A wise man is cautious and turns away from evil, but a fool is arrogant and careless."* Prov. 16:6 tells us, *"By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil."* Doing good and avoiding evil causes a man to live a long life, have a healthy body, and enjoy a vibrant life. This is the normal and natural result of living a good and godly life. It makes good sense, then, to avoid or abandon every sinful practice.

B) Sin breaks intimate fellowship with the LORD

I grew up attending a good Bible preaching church, and during both my childhood and teen years, I heard several testimonies by people who said that they were experiencing an intimate, personal relationship with the LORD. At the time I thought such a statement was merely a cliché since I didn't know anyone who could or would teach me how to gain such a sweet relationship with the LORD. I was saved when I was 14 years old, but I wasn't privileged to experience a close, personal relationship with the LORD until I was approximately 55 years old. The change came as a direct result of immersing myself in Proverbs for thousands of hours. Quite simply, the Word of God worked in and through me. Having experienced an intimate relationship with the LORD, I don't want to do anything that would damage that relationship. First John 1:5-10 illustrates this principle clearly. In the application section of the commentary on Proverbs chapter thirty, I discuss this passage. The first thing we learn there is that if we maintain a sinful practice and try to tell others that we are in fellowship with the LORD, *"we lie and do not practice the truth."* It then goes on to say that if we repent of our sin and abandon it, then fellowship is restored. Son, I don't want to engage in some pet sin that will break my fellowship with the LORD because I love Him too much. This, then, is why a believer who fears the LORD will avoid or abandon every sinful practice. So then, the fear of the LORD is indeed a love-hate relationship. When I fear the LORD, I love Him enough to give Him His rightful place in my life and obey the Word of God, and I love Him enough to hate sin because it breaks my fellowship with the LORD. Gregory, this is a genuine, biblical fear of the LORD, plain and simple.

How do you know if you have a genuine fear of the LORD?

It must be noted that a genuine fear of the LORD **is not a static belief**. It is not merely giving mental ascent to the fact that God is great, powerful, and absolutely awesome. Simply believing something is of no real benefit until or unless it is put into practice. Unfortunately, many believers maintain a head knowledge that God is great and powerful, but it does not change their lives for good. Many church attenders who profess to know the LORD in salvation display an "I know it is true, and that's good enough for me" attitude by coming to church, politely listening to the teaching or preaching, and walking out the door to do the same things they did before going to church. It doesn't help them live a good and godly life. They may give mental ascent to the fact that God is great and say that they fear and reverence Him, but they still hang onto their pet sins. On the other hand, a **dynamic belief** is one that causes a believer to do something with what he believes. Because he understands that God is good, great, and powerful, he will obey the Scriptures and do good. Since he is convinced that the LORD can and will punish sin and that his sins will break his fellowship with the LORD, he will avoid or abandon every sinful practice in order to maintain that close, intimate walk with the LORD. So then, the only believers who have a genuine fear of the LORD are those who actually act and react so that they won't disappoint their heavenly Father and avoid or abandon every sinful practice so that their fellowship with the LORD is not broken. This, son, is how a genuine fear of the LORD displays itself in the life of a believer. It is **dynamic**. It changes a life for the better. In light of this truth, if we really fear the LORD like we should, we will witness to others about Christ and not fear what they may think of us. Our only concern will be what the LORD thinks about us. Christ Himself said in Matthew 10:28-33,

²⁸ *Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.* ²⁹ *Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father.* ³⁰ *But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.* ³¹ *So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows.* ³² *Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven.* ³³ *But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.”*

Paul said in Second Corinthians 5:11a, *“Therefore, knowing the fear of the LORD, we persuade men.”* This is indeed a convicting truth and is a vivid example of how a genuine fear of the LORD can be seen in the life of an obedient believer. If the fear of the LORD is indeed this all-inclusive, and it is, then it calls for us to respond to God in such a way that we practice doing what the Scriptures teach. A truly faithful and dedicated servant will obey his master’s demands without question or hesitation. He will hold back nothing. His life is not his own, and when the master speaks, he obeys. We should be like this when our LORD speaks, but are we? If the truth were known, most of us would have to say that we fall far short of this kind of obedience to our Heavenly Father.

What are the benefits that come from a genuine fear of the LORD?

There are valuable benefits that result from living a genuine fear of the LORD. The following are some of those blessings:

1) It will enable you to live a long and vibrant life.

Prov. 10:27 tells us, *“The fear of the LORD prolongs life, but the years of the wicked will be shortened.”* Proverbs mentions over and over again how a wicked man will, as a general rule, experience a premature death as a result of his sinful practices. Not so for the believer who lives the fear of LORD. Prov. 16:17 states, *“The highway of the upright is to depart from evil; he who watches his way preserves his life.”* As I said above, *“upright”* is *doing what is pleasing in the sight of the LORD*. Therefore, an upright man can rightfully expect to live a long and full life. This is because as Prov. 14:27 teaches, *“The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, that one may avoid the snares of death.”* A believer who fears the LORD won’t be guilty of engaging in sinful practices that generate hurtful and costly consequences. This is also why Prov. 23:17-18 tells us, *“Do not let your heart envy sinners, but live in the fear of the LORD always. Surely there is a future, and your hope will not be cut off.”* As you can see, it pays big dividends to practice the fear of the LORD. Prov. 22:4 promises, *“The reward of humility and the fear of the LORD are riches, honor and life.”* We may not become wealthy in the world’s eyes, but we will 1) gain eternal riches, 2) be honored by those who love and fear the LORD, and 3) experience a long life. These things alone are worth the effort of serving the LORD with a godly, biblical fear and reverence.

2) It will produce a peaceful life.

The world is searching for peace and contentment, but they are searching in all the wrong places. Real satisfaction can only be found in the LORD Jesus Christ, and it can only be attained when we gain a genuine fear of the LORD and put it into practice. Prov. 15:16 tells us, *“Better is a little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and turmoil with it.”* The opposite of turmoil is peace and contentment. A believer who lives in the fear of the LORD will be at peace because he won’t feel the need to pour all his energies into gaining wealth or pursuing the pleasures this old world has to offer. He will be content with what he has and will enjoy the peace that results. That doesn’t mean he will never have a desire to excel, but pursuing wealth or pleasures will not be the driving force in his life.

Living in the fear of the LORD also brings freedom from anxiety. Prov. 19:23 says, *“The fear of the LORD leads to life, so that one may sleep satisfied, untouched by evil.”* You and I can sleep peacefully without having to worry about what evil might overtake us in the night. The LORD is our protector, and knowing this gives the believer a settled peace the world simply cannot comprehend. Prov. 3:19-26 also tell us about the peace and security found in trusting the LORD. This passage reads,

¹⁹ *The LORD by wisdom founded the earth, by understanding He established the heavens.*
²⁰ *By His knowledge the deeps were broken up and the skies drip with dew.* ²¹ *My son, let them not vanish from your sight; keep sound wisdom and discretion,* ²² *so they will be life to your soul*

and adornment to your neck. ²³ Then you will walk in your way securely and your foot will not stumble. ²⁴ When you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet. ²⁵ Do not be afraid of sudden fear nor of the onslaught of the wicked when it comes; ²⁶ for the LORD will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being caught.”

It is wonderful to be able to go to sleep at night fully confident that the LORD is on guard protecting His children. What more could we ask from our loving heavenly Father? My answer of course is, “Nothing!”

Prov. 14:26 tells us, *“In the fear of the LORD there is strong confidence, and his children will have refuge.”* It is clear from this verse and many others in the Bible that the LORD is indeed our protector. When we fear Him like we should, nothing can harm us without His permission. When we insist on sinning, He merely stands back and lets us have our way. As a result, he may punish us for our sins, or He may simply allow the normal and natural consequences of our sins take their toll. It is much better to live in the fear of the LORD and experience His blessings than to experience the hurts and heartaches that result from sinful practices.

3) It will please our heavenly Father.

God wants all men to reverence him with a genuine fear of the LORD, but most people never will. The LORD Himself said in Deut. 5:29, *“Oh that they had such a heart in them, that they would fear Me and keep all My commandments always, that it may be well with them and with their sons forever!”* He wants to bless His children, but it is up to us to be obedient to Him and avoid or abandon sinful practices. There is much to be gained by fearing Him in a biblical sense, and much to be lost if we don't.

Lessons from two Psalms about the fear of the LORD

Psalms 103:6-17 tell us that the LORD is kind, loving, and compassionate toward His children, because those who fear the LORD are dear to Him. He wants to lavish His love upon them, but the requirement for receiving His outpouring of love is a genuine fear of the LORD. The text speaks for itself. It reads:

*⁶ The LORD performs righteous deeds and judgments for all who are oppressed. ⁷ He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the sons of Israel. ⁸ The LORD is **compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness.** ⁹ He will not always strive with us, nor will He keep His anger forever. ¹⁰ He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. ¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth, **so great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him.** ¹² As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. ¹³ Just as a father has compassion on his children, so **the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him.** ¹⁴ For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are but dust. ¹⁵ As for man, his days are like grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. ¹⁶ When the wind has passed over it, it is no more, and its place acknowledges it no longer. ¹⁷ But **the lovingkindness of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him,** and His righteousness to children's children, ¹⁸ to those who keep His covenant and remember His precepts to do them. (Underlining and colored text color added for clarity).*

In Psalm 34, David wrote about his escape from Abimelech by pretending to be crazy. Fortunately for David, Abimelech literally ran him out of town. In this Psalm David attempted to teach the people of Israel what constitutes a genuine fear of the LORD. Read verses 1-14 below. Notice God's goodness to those who fear Him.

*¹ I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. ² My soul will make its boast in the LORD; the humble will hear it and rejoice. ³ O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt His name together. ⁴ I sought the LORD, and He answered me, and delivered me from all my fears. ⁵ They looked to Him and were radiant, and their faces will never be ashamed. ⁶ This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him and saved him out of all his troubles. ⁷ The angel of the LORD **encamps around those who fear Him,** and **rescues them.** ⁸ O taste and see that the LORD is good; How blessed is **the man who takes refuge in Him!** ⁹ O **fear the LORD,** you His saints; for to **those who fear Him** there is **no want.** ¹⁰ The young lions do lack and suffer hunger; but **they who seek the LORD shall not be in want of any good thing.”***

¹¹ *Come, you children, listen to me; **I will teach you the fear of the LORD.***

¹² *Who is the man who desires life and loves length of days that he may see good?*

¹³ *Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit.*

¹⁴ ***Depart from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.***"

Note: Departing from evil is what David taught Solomon. It is no wonder that Solomon majored on this aspect of the fear of the LORD when he wrote Proverbs.

Examples of men who feared the LORD

Abraham

In Genesis 22:9-14 we read the story of the time when Abraham was required by God to sacrifice his only son on an altar. His fear of the LORD was so firm that he was prepared to kill his only son in order to obey his God. As he was raising the knife to kill Isaac, God stopped him and said that *"now I know that you fear God."* Hopefully the LORD will never require us to do something so drastic in order to make us prove our love to Him. Read the text below:

⁹ *Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. ¹⁰ Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. ¹¹ But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." ¹² He said, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; **for now I know that you fear God,** since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me." ¹³ Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son. ¹⁴ Abraham called the name of that place *The LORD Will Provide*, as it is said to this day, "In the mount of the LORD it will be provided."*

Joseph of Egypt

Genesis 42:14-20 tells part of the story of when Joseph's brothers came to Egypt to buy food, unaware that the ruler they were bowing down to was their own brother. He tested his brothers, but he didn't go overboard because he feared God. It is obvious that he had a healthy respect for and fear of the LORD judging by his trust in the LORD during his years as a slave. Read the text below.

¹⁴ *Joseph said to them, "It is as I said to you, you are spies; ¹⁵ by this you will be tested: by the life of Pharaoh, you shall not go from this place unless your youngest brother comes here! ¹⁶ Send one of you that he may get your brother, while you remain confined, that your words may be tested, whether there is truth in you. But if not, by the life of Pharaoh, surely you are spies." ¹⁷ So he put them all together in prison for three days. ¹⁸ Now Joseph said to them on the third day, "Do this and live, **for I fear God:** ¹⁹ if you are honest men, let one of your brothers be confined in your prison; but as for the rest of you, go, carry grain for the famine of your households, ²⁰ and bring your youngest brother to me, so your words may be verified, and you will not die." And they did so.*

Conclusion

Summing up what we have discussed thus far, we have learned that the fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge (Prov. 1:7) and that trustworthy knowledge based upon the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom (Prov. 9:10). We learned that the fear of the LORD has two sides. On the one hand, the fear of the LORD is such an elevated view of God that we are driven to obey the Scriptures and do good so that we will please our heavenly Father. On the other hand, the fear of the LORD causes us to see how sin breaks fellowship with the God we love, so we are driven by our love of Him to avoid or abandon every sinful practice in order to maintain that sweet fellowship. This manner of living is the demonstration of a genuine fear of the LORD. Anyone who claims to be born again but feels he can engage in sin practices is likely not even saved let alone in possession of a genuine, biblical

fear of the LORD. So then, a genuine fear of the LORD is the basis upon which we gauge knowledge to be trustworthy or find it to be of no lasting value. This is where the process of acquiring wisdom starts.

Part two—Who is the LORD in Proverbs?

[Return to Index](#)

Who He is, what He is, and how He works in the affairs of men.

Gregory,

If you search for wisdom the way Solomon taught in Proverbs chapter two, you will figure out (discern) the fear of the LORD, and then you will start to discover who He is, what He is, and how He works in the affairs of men. Therefore, it is only right that we should do a word study to learn more about our great LORD.

The LORD is mentioned 87 times in Proverbs. That's almost 1 out of every 10 verses. It seems obvious, then, that He is a major player in the book. I believe that Proverbs chapter eight is the best place to start our discussing of the LORD in Proverbs. That whole chapter is Wisdom's testimony of who she is, what she is, who she helps, and how she helps them. Verse 22 states, "*The LORD possessed me (wisdom) at the beginning of His way, before His works of old.*" Then verse 30 tells us that when the LORD created the world, "*I (wisdom) was beside Him, as a master workman.*" (Grayed text added for clarity). So then, wisdom was with the LORD before He created everything, and she was beside the LORD when He actually created the world and everything on it. The important character here is not wisdom, but the LORD, the Creator. In Prov. 3:19-20 we learn that the LORD created everything. It states, "*The LORD by wisdom founded the earth, by understanding He established the heavens. By His knowledge the deeps were broken up and the skies drip with dew.*"

I would like to take you on a short journey through the Scriptures in order to give you what I feel is a proper perspective on the LORD in Proverbs. Follow along with me, and I think you will find it fascinating. The first thing we know is that the LORD in Proverbs created the world and all the things on the earth. Now let's go to Genesis 1:1 where we read, "*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*" So then, it is obvious that the LORD and God are the same person with reference to creation. Strong's defines the word "*God*" in Genesis as "*elohim*" or [the covenant God, the all-powerful One](#). This name was used exclusively throughout Genesis chapter one and the first three verses of chapter two. In Gen. 2:4 another name for God was added. Verse four reads, "*This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made earth and heaven.*" Strong's says that the word *LORD* with all capital letters is [Jehovah, the self-existent one](#). Matthew Henry says that "in the first chapter (of Genesis), he was called Elohim—a God of power; but now Jehovah Elohim—a God of power and perfection."⁸ (Grayed text added for clarity). So, we know so far is that the LORD in Proverbs is the same LORD as in Genesis.

Having laid this foundation, I have a question for you. Who created the heavens and the earth? What was His name as we know it today? As in many other cases, the New Testament clarifies the Old Testament. In this case John 1:1-14 has the answer. There we will learn his name, but more importantly we will learn who He was before he came to earth in the body of a man. Verses 1-3 read, "¹ *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* ² *He was in the beginning with God.* ³ *All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.*" It is obvious from these verses that "the Word" is a name for someone. Verse 14 clarifies who this is. It states, "*And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.*"

So then, who is "the only begotten" from the Father? Obviously, it is the Son of God. Since this is true, we can rightfully conclude that *elohim* and Jehovah are names for the Son of God. *Elohim* in Genesis chapter one showed His power in creation. Jehovah in Genesis chapters two and three shows the covenant aspect when He created man and promised to redeem man back to Himself after man had sinned. Okay, since we know that He is the Son of God, by what name do we know the Son of God today? Matthew 27:38-43 clarifies this question. In this narrative Jesus Christ was on the cross of Calvary, and others said of Him, "³⁸ *At that time two robbers *were crucified with Him, one on the right and one on the left.* ³⁹ *And those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads* ⁴⁰ *and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross."* ⁴¹ *In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking Him and saying,* ⁴² *"He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him.* ⁴³ *"he trusts in god; let god rescue him now, if he*

delights in him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.'" (Underlining in all the verses above have been added for clarity).

After reading these verses and the comments above, it is clear that the LORD in the Old Testament is the Son of God and that the Son of God created the heavens and the earth. He created everything in and on the earth knowing that man would turn away from Him by sinning. He also knew when He created men that He Himself would have to come down to earth in a physical body, live a sinless life, and offer Himself as a sacrifice to pay the penalty for man's sin in order to redeem men back to God the Father. So then, the all-powerful Son of God who created everything was the same Son of God in Proverbs before He came to earth as the God/man Jesus Christ. This is why Romans 1:3 tells us that Christ was "*declared to be the Son of God,*" not "*made to be*" the Son of God. His form was different at different times, but His essence as the Son of God didn't change. Before he came as Jesus Christ, he was in a spirit form; when he chose to dwell in the body of Jesus, he was in a physical form; and when he rose from the dead, He took upon himself a glorified form. Throughout all this, his essence did not change. He was still the Son of God. This is why Hebrews 13:8 states, "*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*" The Son of God is the Son of God no matter how He may manifest himself in different ways and at different times. This is the reason Jesus Christ could say with all authority that "*Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I AM.*" He had the right to make such a bold statement because he was and is Jehovah, the self-existent one.

It is interesting to note that according to Strong's Concordance the name Jesus means "*Jehovah is salvation.*" Acts 4:12 makes this truth crystal clear when it says, "*And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.*" Christ Himself said in John 14:6, "*I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.*" I am so glad that you and I have trusted Christ as our personal savior and have the promise of eternal life with Christ in heaven when we die.

Some books of the Bible clearly teach that Christ is wisdom, and I agree. Although Christ is the LORD in Proverbs, I do not believe, as some good men, that wisdom in Proverbs is Christ. One of the major reasons I disagree is that as I said above, Prov. 8:22 states that "The LORD *possessed* me (wisdom)," and Proverbs 8:30 says that wisdom was "*beside*" the LORD as a master helper in creation. It has become apparent to me that wisdom is something the LORD possesses and uses, and it is something He gives to us as a gift so that we can make the best decisions that will produce the best result in every area of life and practice. I would not argue the point with those who firmly believe that wisdom in Proverbs is Christ, but I must respectfully disagree.

As we discuss the things Proverbs teaches about the LORD, it must be remembered that the LORD is always the same. When He was in the world as Jesus Christ, He was the same in essence as before He came to the earth to offer Himself for our salvation. Now that He has returned to heaven to be at the Father's right hand, He is the same. So, when we look at the following topics labeled "pre-incarnate Jesus Christ," there is no difference in His essence or His approach to men of the earth. Please keep this in mind as you read more about the LORD.

⁸ Matthew Henry Commentary, part of Online Bible Millennium Edition, Version 1.1, January 18, 2002, Copyright © 1987, 2002, Timnathserah, Inc., Winterbourne, Ontario, Canada. N0B2V0.

What can we learn about the LORD from Proverbs?

1) The LORD (pre-incarnate Jesus Christ) is the Creator

We understand that the LORD in Proverbs is pre-incarnate Jesus Christ, but let's expand our discussion somewhat. My little sister, Barbara Upton, gave me a book of photographs taken by the Hubble telescope. It shows stars and galaxies, some of which are as many as 600 million light years from the earth.⁹ I have gone through the book many, many times because I am absolutely amazed at both the beauty and the complexity of God's creation. It is a worship experience for me. The book tells that there are more than 350 billion galaxies in space with millions of stars in each galaxy.¹⁰ One particular star is so huge that if it were to replace our sun, its surface would extend to the orbit of Saturn.¹¹ The fact that there are millions of stars in each of the billions of galaxies is beyond my ability to fully comprehend, and yet the LORD knows all of them by name. Psalm 147:4 says, "*He (the LORD) counts the number of the stars; He gives names to all of them.*" (Grayed text added for clarity). Just think. Christ the LORD not only knows how many stars there are in space, but He knows each one of them by name. This kind of power and intelligence boggles my mind. On the other end of the spectrum, science is discovering that there are sub-atomic particles within the nucleus of an atom, and the LORD made all of them at creation just like He made the stars and galaxies. The most fascinating part of creation is that the LORD brought all of it into existence by His spoken word. We can get a glimpse of how he did it when we look at the narrative of Christ's first recorded miracle in John

chapter two. There He changed water into wine by simply saying it. He did a miracle at the wedding, and He did a miracle as pre-incarnate Christ at creation. When we search the Scriptures and discover that the LORD really is all-powerful, all-knowing, and in complete control of His creation, it becomes clear that He is in control of each one of us as well. Therefore, we should give Him His rightful place on the throne of our hearts.

The LORD performed a miracle when He made Adam and Eve, and each time a woman becomes pregnant, the LORD performs another miracle by creating life inside of her. It is amazing the way one cell in the womb grows into a complete human being. Proverbs shares a few verses that remind us that the LORD made us and that we should be in subjection to Him. Prov. 22:2 states, *“The rich and the poor have a common bond, the LORD is the maker of them all.”* Prov. 29:13 reads, *“The poor man and the oppressor have this in common: the LORD gives light to the eyes of both.”* Both the rich man and the oppressor think they are better and more deserving than the poor man, but the LORD sees all of them the same. All men have an equal opportunity to see the truth because Prov. 20:12 tells us that, *“The hearing ear and the seeing eye, the LORD has made both of them.”* People can see and understand the truth if they are willing to accept the truth.

We need to look at one more verse before we move on to another topic about the LORD. Prov. 16:4 says, *“The LORD has made everything for its own purpose, even the wicked for the day of evil.”* Does this sound like the LORD made wicked people so that He would have someone to punish? I don't think so, especially when First Timothy 2:1-4 tells us, *“¹ First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, ² for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. ³ This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴ who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”* It is clear then that the LORD would like to see all men become children of God by faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. Sadly, when men rebel against God and choose to do wicked and sinful deeds, He must punish them. So, wicked men will end up going to that place called hell, but their punishment will be the result of their own choices while they were still living.

⁹ Stilwell, Lisa, The Heavens Proclaim His Glory, Copyright © 2010 by Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville, TN., page 74

¹⁰ Ibid, page 6

¹¹ Ibid, page 107

2) The LORD (pre-incarnate Jesus Christ) is in control of everything

We like to think that we are in control of our lives, but there are many times when the LORD chooses the circumstances we will face even though we may not even be aware of His control. Prov. 16:9 give us a correct picture of this when it says, *“The mind of man plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps.”* We figure out what we want to do, but if it is not what the LORD wants to happen, our plans will fail. We may think we have things all planned out to the last detail so that nothing could go wrong, but the LORD may not want us to do that thing. Prov. 16:1 tells us, *“The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the LORD.”* He always has the last word, like it or not! The LORD is in control even when we draw straws or throw dice because we don't know what to do. Prov. 16:33 states, *“The lot (dice) is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.”* (Grayed text added for clarity). He even causes the dice to land on a number that will accomplish His will. Isn't that neat?

We all have things we would like to do. Some of them are feasible while others are completely out of our reach. We make plans and figure them out to the last detail, but even then, our plans may not work out. Prov. 19:21 reminds us, *“Many plans are in a man's heart, but the counsel of the LORD will stand.”* It won't do any good to simply try harder to make our plans work when they are not what the LORD has in mind. It won't do any good to argue with the LORD about it either. Prov. 21:30 simply states, *“There is no wisdom and no understanding and no counsel against the LORD.”* Therefore, we should be sensitive to the fact that the LORD knows what is best for us and for His glory. This holds true in times of war too. Our military can plan every detail of a conflict and give our fighting men and women the best weaponry and the finest training, but if the LORD doesn't want our country to win, there is absolutely no way we can avoid defeat. Prov. 21:31 makes this clear when it says, *“The horse is prepared for the day of battle, but victory belongs to the LORD.”* There is simply no way around this truth.

While we are talking about governments, the LORD can change the mind of a government official whenever and wherever He wishes. Prov. 21:1 tells us, *“The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes.”* In fact, even though I have prayed that the LORD would change the minds of the officials in the India Consulate so that they would grant me a visa, it is obvious now that the LORD has said, 'no' to my request, Son, you and I were simply not allowed to go and minister to the students at the Bible College there. There is no question that the LORD had something else in mind for us. Prov. 20:24 reminds us, *“Man's steps are*

ordained by the LORD, how then can man understand his way?" I don't know that I fully understand the Lord's leading in the matter of my visa, but I am trusting the LORD to lead me as He sees fit. Whether we went to India or not, we can be sure that the hand of the LORD has done it. It is so reassuring to know and believe that the LORD does all things well.

3) The LORD (pre-incarnate Jesus Christ) sees all and evaluates all

The LORD sees everything from His throne in heaven, and nothing escapes His scrutiny. Prov. 5:21 tells us, *"For the ways of a man are before the eyes of the LORD, and He watches all his paths."* He not only sees everything that men do and say, but He evaluates the motives of every individual on earth. Several verses show this truth. Prov. 15:11 states, *"Sheol and Abaddon lie open before the LORD, how much more the hearts of men!"* Sheol and Abaddon are generally considered synonyms for hell and the grave, and God can see into our hearts as easily as He can look into both of those places. When He looks into our hearts, He tests our motives to see if they are pure and good. We may think we have good motives, but God sees our motives for what they really are, not what they appear to us. Consider two more verses on the subject. Prov. 16:2 says, *"All the ways of a man are clean in his own sight, but the LORD weighs the motives."* Then Prov. 21:2 reads, *"Every man's way is right in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the hearts."* The more we learn from the Scriptures, the more we will understand the heart of God. The more we understand about the heart of God, the more our motives and desires will fall into line with God's will for us. Prov. 20:27 teaches, *"The spirit of man is the lamp of the LORD, searching all the innermost parts of his being."* Since this is true, we need to work at maintaining a good and godly spirit in all we do. This is important because the LORD tests our heart by "pouring on the heat" to see if we will be true and faithful. Prov. 17:3 illustrates what it means to "pour on the heat." This verse says, *"The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, but the LORD tests hearts."* In the same way impurities are removed from precious metals by heating them to the melting point, so the LORD pours on the heat of trials, hardships, or losses until the impurities of our lives rise to the surface and are taken out of the way. Being tested by the LORD in this way may not be pleasant, but if we respond in a good and godly manner, the results will always be good, worthwhile, and honoring to the LORD. This is why Prov. 3:11-12 says, *"My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD or loathe His reproof, for whom the LORD loves He reproveth, even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights."* Because He loves us, He disciplines us in order to make us more godly men and women. Pouring on the heat is one way He accomplishes this task.

4) The LORD (pre-incarnate Jesus Christ) hates sin in any form.

Let's look at two passages in Proverbs chapter six.

Man's view of wicked men

Prov. 6:12-15
¹² *A worthless person, a wicked man, is the one*
¹³ *who walks with a perverse mouth, who winks with his eyes, who signals with his feet, who points with his fingers;*
¹⁴ *who with perversity in his heart continually devises evil, who spreads strife.*
¹⁵ *Therefore his calamity will come suddenly; instantly he will be broken and there will be no healing.*

The LORD's view of wicked men

Prov. 6:16-19
¹⁶ *There are six things which the LORD hates, yes, seven which are an abomination to Him:*
¹⁷ *haughty eyes,*
a lying tongue, and
¹⁸ *hands that shed innocent blood,*
feet that run rapidly to evil,
¹⁹ *a false witness who utters lies, and one who spreads strife among brothers.*

These two passages deal with the undesirable characteristics of wicked men and sinners. The first section is Prov. 6:12-15, (paragraph 3 of that chapter). It describes the things good men hate about wicked people. The second is chapter 6:16-19, (paragraph 4 of that chapter). It describes the things that God hates about wicked men

and sinners. Both of these passages are basically saying the same thing but from different perspectives. You might be asking why the writer included two separate passages about the same topic? The answer is quite simple. In First Samuel 16, God had told Samuel to anoint a son of Jesse as king of Israel. In verse seven, Samuel saw Jesse's oldest son first and was impressed with the man. He felt that this must be the one God had chosen to be king, *"But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."* Prov. 4:23 tells us why God looks at our heart. It says, *"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life"* (KJV). Everything we do, say, or think is an expression of what we are deep down inside. So, in the LORD's own words, He told us that He looks at a man's heart to examine his thoughts and motives, whereas men look at other men and judge them by their physical stature or the things they see them do or say. Therefore, paragraph 3 (verses 12-15) is man's view of wicked men based upon the things we see them say or do, while paragraph 4 (verses 6:16-19) is God's view of wicked men based upon the wickedness He sees in their hearts. We cannot judge a man's motives, but we can judge his deeds. That is exactly what paragraph 3 (verses 12-15) shows. Let's look at both passages and compare them, and then we'll look at several verses that support these two paragraphs.

Before we proceed it is necessary to understand something. Prov. 16:12 tells us that good men consider a wicked man to be worthless. God takes an even more serious stand against wicked men. Prov. 16:16 says that wicked men and women are an abomination to the LORD. Since they are an abomination to the LORD, they should be an abomination to us too. Strong's says that *"abomination"* is *"a disgusting thing."* While the LORD hates those things, He loves the deeds and attitudes of men and women who live in a good and godly manner.

The LORD's view of wicked men (6:16-19)

Gregory, in this passage we will see why the LORD hates wicked men. Verse 16 reads, *"There are six things which the LORD hates, Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him."* The reference to six and seven appears to be a poetic style rather than saying that one of the wicked man's character traits is worse than any of the others. Let's look at each of the things the LORD finds detestable about the wicked.

1) God hates a man with *haughty eyes* (v. 17a).

Strong's defines *haughty* as *to rise, rise up, be high, be lofty, be exalted*. Prov. 30:13 pretty well sums up *haughty* when it says, *"There is a kind (of man)—oh how lofty are his eyes! And his eyelids are raised in arrogance."* (Grayed text added for clarity). A man with *haughty eyes* has a proud heart. Consequently, he looks down at others as unworthy of his presence and treats them with scorn and contempt. Prov. 21:4 tells us God's view of such a man. This verse says, *"Haughty eyes and a proud heart, the lamp of the wicked, is sin."* It is sin because it is contrary to Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. These verses are what Jesus quoted in Mark 12:28-31 where we read, ²⁸ *One of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him, "What commandment is the foremost of all?"* ²⁹ *Jesus answered, "The foremost is, 'hear, o Israel! the LORD our God is One LORD;'* ³⁰ *and you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.'* ³¹ *the second is this, 'you shall love your neighbor as yourself.'* *there is no other commandment greater than these."* Someone who looks down with contempt upon his neighbor because he feels his neighbor is not worthy is someone who cannot love his neighbor as himself. You and I should never find ourselves in this condition.

Part of the problem with a man who has haughty eyes is that he is not only proud, but he is also arrogant. One who is arrogant is *proud in an overbearing and snooty manner*. This kind of man generally feels that he doesn't need God. He feels like he is good enough as he is. Prov. 26:12 says, *"Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him."* There is no hope for a proud man because Prov. 27:22 tells us that there is no hope for a fool. The verse reads, *"Though you pound a fool in a mortar with a pestle along with crushed grain, yet his foolishness will not depart from him."* The only hope for a proud man is that he will somehow see the truth and trust Jesus Christ as his personal LORD and savior. Other than that, there is no help for the man. In fact, this kind of man will experience disaster in the end. First John 2:15-17 tell us what we should do about pride. It says, ¹⁵ *Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* ¹⁶ *For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.* ¹⁷ *The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God*

lives forever. Proverbs 16:5 reminds us that, *“Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD; assuredly, he will not be unpunished.”* Prov. 15:25 warns that, *“The LORD will tear down the house of the proud, but He will establish the boundary of the widow.”* Then too, Prov. 18:12 tells us that, *“Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, but humility goes before honor.”* A truly humble man will never experience the same kind of disaster that a proud man must endure as a result of his sin.

2) God hates a man with *a lying tongue* (v. 17b).

No one likes or appreciates a liar. Once he has lied to you, there is no way to be sure that he will not lie to you again. It is foolish to lie because sooner or later, you will be found out and punished. A much better way to live is like Prov. 3:3-4. It reads, *“Do not let kindness and truth leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favor and good repute in the sight of God and man.”* Kindness and truthfulness always produce good results both now and in the long run.

3) God hates a man with *hands that shed innocent blood* (v. 17c).

This kind of man is a murderer, plain and simple. He is guilty regardless of the reason for his evil deed. Exodus 20:13, one of the 10 commandments, reads *“You shall not murder.”* God hates murder, and so do good men and women. Prov. 28:17 tells us, *“A man who is laden with the guilt of human blood will be a fugitive until death; let no one support him.”* We should obey this verse even if the guilty one is a member of our own family.

4) God hates a man with *a heart that devises wicked plans* (v. 18a).

A wicked man *devises wicked plans* because his heart is wicked and perverted. Prov. 2:20a states, *“Deceit is in the heart of those who devise evil.”* Strong’s Concordance defines *deceit* as *deceit or treachery*. The dictionary defines *deceit* as *the act of representing as true what is known to be false*, and *treachery* as *betrayal of trust or allegiance, giving a false appearance of safety or reliability*.¹² This is the reason the LORD hates a wicked man. Once again we are reminded of Prov. 3:3-4 which teach us, *“Do not let kindness and truth leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favor and good repute in the sight of God and man.”* The LORD loves those who tell the truth and are honest in their dealings with others, but He has no use for men or women who plan and/or perform deeds that cause hurts, heartaches, and/or losses for innocent people. Prov. 12:2b reinforces this truth when it says, *“...He will condemn a man who devises evil.”*

Prov. 11:20 summarizes God’s attitude toward a man who devises evil when it says, *“The perverse in heart are an abomination to the LORD, but the blameless in their walk are His delight.”* Unfortunately, the wicked man has no concept of the fact that he is the LORD’s enemy. Prov. 26:23 tells us that a wicked man is worthless when it says, *“Like an earthen vessel overlaid with silver dross are burning lips and a wicked heart.”* Dross is the waste that forms from slag on top of molten metal. The slag traps the impurities, and then the slag is skimmed off the metal and discarded. A wicked man is equally as worthless because he is a fool. Prov. 28:26 states, *“He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, but he who walks wisely will be delivered.”* Wicked men trust in themselves and have no use for the LORD. This is a tragic mistake, but many foolish men contentedly go through life in their ignorance and defiance toward the LORD.

5) God hates a man with *feet that run rapidly to evil* (v. 18b).

Wicked men cannot enjoy peace and quiet. They have to be doing something, and many times the things they delight in doing are sinful and perverted. They don’t merely do these things. No, they literally run to where the sinful deeds are taking place so that they can get a piece of the action. Sometimes even God’s people backslide and get involved in sinful activities. Jeremiah 4:22 tells us, *“For My people are foolish, they know Me not; they are stupid children and have no understanding. They are shrewd to do evil, but to do good they do not know.”* It takes effort and discipline to learn to do good, but doing evil comes naturally. Prov. 8:13 says, *“The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverted mouth, I (wisdom) hate.”* (Grayed text added for clarity). Both wisdom and the LORD hate the evil way. We should do the same.

6) God hates a man who is *a false witness who utters lies* (v. 19a).

In point 2 above the lying was a personal thing. The wicked man was trying to protect himself so that he could either get away with his sin or avoid facing the consequences of his own actions. In this verse his reason for lying is different. The picture here is of a man on the witness stand in a court of law. If a man will tell the truth, his testimony can assist in clearing the innocent or condemning the guilty. If he lies on the witness stand, he could easily condemn an innocent man or help free a guilty man. The LORD is a just God and is interested in seeing that justice is served in every court of law. He hates it when a man will knowingly sit on a witness stand and outright lie about what he knows, has seen, or has heard. Good men hate this as well. Proverbs 17:15 illustrates this point well when it says, *“He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous, both of them alike are an abomination to the LORD.”* Simply stated, the LORD hates lying like this.

7) God hates a man *who spreads strife among brothers* (v. 19b).

In Prov. 6:12-15 the emphasis is on the way good men view a man who causes arguments and fights. Here, the emphasis is on the way the LORD sees a man’s argumentative spirit and how that spirit is an expression of a heart full of sin and wickedness. The LORD is concerned about the effects of the wicked man’s sin, but He is more concerned about the motives that drive a man to argue and fight with others even if they are members of his own family. The root cause of strife and division is a proud and arrogant heart. Prov. 28:25 reminds us that, *“An arrogant man stirs up strife, but he who trusts in the LORD will prosper.”* The only thing that will change a proud, arrogant heart into a kind and tender heart is for a man to receive Jesus Christ as Savior. When he does, he will literally become a new man.

So, let’s summarize Prov. 6:16-19. Here the LORD is disgusted with wicked men and women because their hearts are full of sin and evil. Their heart attitude is the driving force behind everything they do and say. This is why Proverbs 15:29 states, *“The LORD is far from the wicked, but He hears the prayer of the righteous.”* The only time the LORD is obligated to hear and answer the prayer of a wicked man is when he prays a prayer of repentance unto salvation. The sinner is always welcome to trust in Jesus Christ as his Savior and have his sins forgiven by the blood of Christ. Until or unless a wicked man repents of his sins Prov. 3:33a says, *“The curse of the LORD is on the house of the wicked.”* In addition, Prov. 10:3b tells us that, *“He (the LORD) will reject the craving of the wicked.”* (Grayed text added for clarity). This is the plight of the wicked man, and his future will not be bright since the LORD is his enemy as long as he is engrossed in his sin. Until he is born again, everything the wicked man does is an abomination to the LORD. Prov. 15:9a says, *“The way of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD.”* Prov. 15:8 reads, *“The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, but the prayer of the upright is His delight.”* And finally, Prov. 21:27 states, *“The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination, how much more when he brings it with evil intent!”* It is clear then that the LORD is not happy with the wicked man. There is absolutely nothing a wicked man can do to make the LORD happy except to be born again by faith in Jesus Christ. Below you will see a brief chart depicting the things the LORD hates versus the things He loves.

	<i>The LORD hates this</i>	<i>The LORD loves this</i>
Prov. 3:32	the devious	He is intimate with the upright
Prov. 3:33	curse the house of the wicked	blesse s the dwelling of the righteous
Prov. 11:20	The perverse in heart	the blameless in their walk are His delight
Prov. 12:22	Lying lips	those who deal faithfully are His delight
Prov. 15:8	The sacrifice of the wicked	the prayer of the upright is His delight
Prov. 15:9	The way of the wicked	He loves one who pursues righteousness
Prov. 15:26	Evil plans	pleasant words are pure
Prov. 16:5	The proud in heart	
Prov. 17:15	he who condemns the righteous he who justifies the wicked	

¹² Definitions of “deceit” and “treachery” www.dictionary.com/browse

I realize that we are in the middle of a word study about the LORD, but I feel we would do well to take a short rabbit trail in order to compare the LORD's view of wicked men to man's view of wicked men.

A good man's view of wicked men (Prov. 6:12-15)

Prov. 6:12-15

¹² *A worthless person, a wicked man,
is the one*

who walks with a perverse mouth,

¹³ *who winks with his eyes,
who signals with his feet,
who points with his fingers;*

¹⁴ *who with perversity in his heart
continually devises evil,
who spreads strife.*

¹⁵ *Therefore his calamity will come
suddenly; instantly he will be broken
and there will be no healing.*

Notice the first four things in the list above (Prov. 6:12-13). They have to do with how wicked men communicate with others. Keep in mind as we discuss these things that all of a wicked man's actions stem from a proud heart. In essence, the wicked man feels that "life is all about me," and his only concern is "what can I get out of it" regardless of what it may cost others. This is why Prov. 21:10 tells us, "*The soul of the wicked desires evil; his neighbor finds no favor in his eyes.*" The only thing important to a wicked man is what he can get out of life, and good men have no use for a man with this kind of attitude.

Now, let's look at these four things in order.

1) A wicked man walks with "*a perverse mouth.*" (6:12b)

Strong's Concordance defines *perverse* as *distorted or crooked*. Literally, a wicked man distorts the truth to meet his own selfish desires. He will say whatever he feels necessary in order to deceive, trick, or persuade others into believing what he wants them to believe. Of course, he says these things so that he can take unfair advantage of innocent people. Many times he has a filthy mouth to boot. You cannot depend upon him to tell the truth or expect him to speak in a morally sound manner. He will lie if it suits his purposes, and he will openly speak about filthy or immoral things. This is one reason good men view wicked men as worthless.

2) A wicked man "*winks with his eyes.*" (6:13a)

Prov. 10:10a says, "*He who winks the eye causes trouble.*" Gregory, I suspect you have seen someone wink at you or those with you when he intends to trick someone or take unfair advantage of him. This kind of non-verbal communication is just as real and effective as if he were to actually say that he was kidding or attempting to take unfair advantage of you. At any rate, a man who will *wink* in this way shows that he cannot be trusted. This is another reason why good men view wicked men as worthless. Prov. 10:10a says, "*He who winks the eye causes trouble.*" Prov 16:30a tells us, "*He who winks his eyes does so to devise perverse things.*" And Psalm 35:19 states "*Do not let those who are wrongfully my enemies rejoice over me; nor let those who hate me without cause wink maliciously.*" Obviously, winking the eye is not good.

3) A wicked man “signals with his feet.” (6:13b)

Strong’s defines the Hebrew word for *signals* as *to speak, utter, say*. Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament says that *signals* means *one who scrapes with his feet, draws them backwards and forwards on the ground in order thereby to give a sign to others*.¹³ So then, this is another non-verbal means of communication like winking the eye. It may refer to moving his feet as a sign of his impatience with another man or as a sign to tell his friends to proceed with some evil deed. Both communicate his intent at the moment. It is possible that “signals with his feet” refers to where his feet take him, and this would include his manner of living. Proverbs 5:6 illustrates this truth when it says about an adulteress, “*She does not ponder the path of life; her ways are unstable, she does not know it.*” This is her manner of living, the kind of life she has chosen to follow. The wicked man’s manner of life (where his feet take him) speaks volumes about the man and his disgusting deeds. Prov. 6:18b is what the LORD hates about evil men, and it states that they have, “*Feet that run rapidly to evil.*” This is the reason Solomon warned us in Prov. 4:14, “*Do not enter the path of the wicked and do not proceed in the way of evil men.*” Wicked men are detestable, and we should not desire to be like them. In fact, we should seek to be good and godly men because Prov. 4:18 reminds us, “*But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, that shines brighter and brighter until the full day.*” Life for good and godly men and women just keeps getting better and better while the life of a wicked man is filled with hurts, heartaches, and troubles in abundance.

¹³ Keil & Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, a component of Online Bible Millennium Edition, Version 1.1, January 18, 2002, Copyright © 1987, 2002, Timnathserah, Inc., Winterbourne, Ontario, Canada. N0B2V0.

4) A wicked man “points with his fingers.” (6:13c)

I assume that **pointing the fingers** in Solomon’s day is equivalent to **pointing a finger** in our day. When a wicked man points his finger, he is communicating something. He may want someone to do some wicked thing, or he may point his finger at someone else in an attempt to blame that person for the evil he himself has done. It could also be a diversionary tactic so that he can evade capture by law enforcement or run from others who want to get even with him for the wrong he has done to them. Prov. 28:1 says, “*The wicked flee when no one is pursuing, but the righteous are bold as a lion.*” It is certain, though, that whenever a wicked man points his finger, he is up to no good. The LORD Himself said that “pointing the finger” is something men need to quit doing. In Isaiah 58:9-11 we read, “⁹ *Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; You will cry, and He will say, “Here I am. If you remove the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger and speaking wickedness,*¹⁰ *and if you give yourself to the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then your light will rise in darkness and your gloom will become like midday.*¹¹ *And the LORD will continually guide you, and satisfy your desire in scorched places, and give strength to your bones; and you will be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters do not fail.*” So then, by both good men’s standards and the LORD’s own standard, pointing the finger is a sin.

These four means of communication are bad enough in themselves, but now we will look at the wicked man’s goals and desires.

5) A wicked man *continually devises evil* because he has *a perverse heart*. (6:14a)

Prov. 6:18a says that the LORD hates “*A heart that devises wicked plans.*” In essence, Prov. 6:14 and 6:18 are saying the same thing but from two different perspectives. Prov. 21:10 adds, “*The soul of the wicked desires evil; his neighbor finds no favor in his eyes.*” We will discuss Prov. 4:14-19 when we get to chapter 9 of this commentary, but that passage sheds light on the way wicked men are always trying to come up with more and better ways to do evil things. That passage reads, “¹⁴ *Do not enter the path of the wicked and do not proceed in the way of evil men.*¹⁵ *Avoid it, do not pass by it; turn away from it and pass on.*¹⁶ *For they cannot sleep unless they do evil; and they are robbed of sleep unless they make someone stumble.*¹⁷ *For they eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence.*¹⁸ *But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, that shines brighter and brighter until the full day.*¹⁹ *The way of the wicked is like darkness; they do not know over what they stumble.*” Men like this are consumed with doing wicked things.

Wicked men have *a perverse heart*. As we said above, *perverse* means *distorted or crooked*. We already know that a man's heart attitude will drive what he does and says. Therefore, since wicked men have a twisted, perverted, immoral heart, they will do and say things that are twisted, perverted, and immoral. It is their nature. There is no way to change a wicked man's heart unless he will trust Christ as his personal Savior from sin and be born again. If he will do this, the LORD will give him a new nature that will give him the power to avoid or abandon sinful practices and live a good and godly life.

Now we will look at the last thing in the list showing why good men consider wicked men worthless.

6) A wicked man is one *who spreads strife*. (6:14b)

Wicked men are not only contentious, but they enjoy driving a wedge between people by arguing and fighting. It is no wonder this kind of man ends up with a boatload of hurts and heartaches. These difficulties are unavoidable as long as he continues to make so many enemies by fighting and arguing. This is a big reason why good men find wicked men so detestable.

Prov. 6:15 tells us that hurts, heartaches, and losses in abundance will come back upon the wicked man as a result of his wicked deeds and words. This verse states, *"Therefore his calamity will come suddenly; instantly he will be broken and there will be no healing."* Many years ago, Dr. Charles Woodbridge said, "When you see the word 'therefore', you need to see what it is there for." In verse 15 the word *"therefore"* is basically saying "as a result of all of the things the wicked man is and does." Verse 15 is simply saying that hard times and possibly disaster (calamity) will come back upon the wicked man because of his wicked words and deeds. Strong's Concordance defines the word *calamity* as *distress, burden, calamity*. The dictionary states that *calamity* means *an extreme misfortune bringing great loss and sorrow*.¹⁴ The wicked man's own actions will generate these losses and sorrows, and when this happens it will take place *suddenly* – that is, it will happen so fast that he will not be able to do anything to avoid it. Next, Strong's defines *broken* as *to be broken, be maimed, be crippled, be wrecked*. A good illustration of this is a car going 65 miles per hour slamming into an immovable concrete wall. All that is left is death and destruction. The wicked man's own actions will generate such disaster, and when it happens, it will take place *instantly* – that is, it will happen so fast that he won't even have time to wonder what happened, let alone escape. Note: Proverbs 16:4 tells us that, *"The LORD has made everything for its own purpose, even the wicked for the day of evil."* I can't say as I understand this verse, but there is one thing for certain. A wicked man will ultimately be punished for his sin. The principle of sow and reap always works this way. Now let's get back to our word study of the LORD in Proverbs.

¹⁴ Dictionary definition of "calamity" www.dictionary.com/browse/calamity

5. The LORD (pre-incarnate Jesus Christ) is the one who provides a prudent wife for a man.

Prov. 19:14 plainly states, *"House and wealth are an inheritance from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the LORD."* If you will recall, we said earlier in this commentary that a prudent person is one who carefully considers the consequences of every decision, and if the results of his decision will be good and beneficial, he will proceed. If those consequences will be hurtful or costly, he will refrain. This is what a prudent wife does. A woman like this did not learn prudence from books in school. No, she learned it from the Bible, from good, sound preaching and teaching on the Bible, and from the sound advice and teaching of wise and prudent people. The LORD, through the Holy Spirit, formed her into a prudent woman, and happy is the man who finds a woman like her for a wife. (By the way, I have one—your mother.) I am pleased that Lemuel's mother in Proverbs 31 said, *"Who can find a virtuous woman"* instead of *"Who can find the virtuous woman"* If Lemuel's mother had said *"the"* virtuous woman, there would have been only one such woman for a bachelor to find, but since he wrote, *"a"* virtuous woman, then there are several of them available. This is encouraging for godly young men looking for a godly, prudent wife. When he finds a prudent woman, it will have been the LORD who made her the good woman she became. When a man does find her, Prov. 18:22 says, *"He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the LORD."* I have certainly found this verse to be true regarding your mother. She is indeed a very good thing, and I have been blessed immensely of the LORD because of her.

6) The LORD (pre-incarnate Jesus Christ) hates adultery

A good and godly wife is well worth pursuing, but illicit sexual relations with another man's wife are always wrong and must be avoided. God hates it, and we should hate it too. Prov. 22:14 tells us, *"The mouth of an adulteress is a deep pit; he who is cursed of the LORD will fall into it."* Strong's Concordance defines the Hebrew word for "cursed" as *to denounce, or express indignation*. The dictionary defines *indignation* as *denouncing or scorn as a result of an injustice*.¹⁵ Engaging in illicit sexual relations with another man's wife is certainly an injustice, and the LORD detests such actions. A man who will engage in such deeds will certainly fall into a pit of troubles and heartaches where he will be trapped for life. I have seen this happen to many men including my dad. I have also seen good pastors fall into sin this way. With rare exceptions, their lives and their families were ruined for life as a result of their lust.

¹⁵ Dictionary definition of "indignation" www.dictionary.com/browse/indignation

7) The LORD (pre-incarnate Jesus Christ) is the one who takes vengeance.

When we are hurt or wronged by someone, it is natural to want to get even with the other person. It may be the natural thing to do, but the LORD is disgusted with the man who seeks vengeance on his own. Prov. 20:22 tells us, *"Do not say, 'I will repay evil'; wait for the LORD, and He will save you."* The apostle Paul reminded us of this truth in Romans 12:19 where he wrote, *"Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay,' says the LORD."* The LORD will do His part, and we need to do our part. Our part, then, is to wait on the LORD to do His job. Trust Him because He will do His job, and He will do it very, very well.

8) The LORD (pre-incarnate Jesus Christ) repays in kind

I have heard it said that the principle of sow and reap means that we will reap what we sow, we will reap more than we sow, we will reap after we sow, and we will reap in the same manner as we have sown. There are several verses in Proverbs that substantiate this principle. Prov. 22:22-23 read, *"Do not rob the poor because he is poor, or crush the afflicted at the gate; for the LORD will plead their case and take the life of those who rob them."* If a man robs a poor and needy man, the LORD will take the offender's life as retribution. Prov. 24:17-18 states, *"Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles; or the LORD will see it and be displeased, and turn His anger away from him."* If you are glad when something bad happens to your enemy or when he is defeated, then the LORD will withhold the punishment that He would normally have poured out upon your enemy. He will do this because you have already passed judgment on your enemy. Speaking of an enemy, Prov. 25:21-22 tells us, *"If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink; for you will heap burning coals on his head, and the LORD will reward you."* In the New Testament, Luke 6:27-28 says it this way, *"But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you."* When you do this, the LORD will reward and bless you. As I overheard one man say, "Kill 'em with kindness!"

9) The LORD (pre-incarnate Jesus Christ) desires honesty in all business dealings

People appreciate a businessman who is consistently honest. Although people are rightfully concerned about a businessman being honest, the LORD is even more concerned. The LORD is holy, honest, and good in every way, and He wants every one of us to be holy, honest, and good like Him. Prov. 16:11 tells us, *"A just balance and scales belong to the LORD; all the weights of the bag are His concern."* We learned before how the LORD sees everything we do and how He judges our motives. Here we see that He also watches the actual deeds we do. Therefore, it is plain to see that He knows whether we are honest and truthful. If we are dishonest, He will see it and be displeased. The reason He will be displeased is because He hates it when anyone is deceptive and takes unfair advantage of a neighbor. Prov. 11:1 states, *"A false balance is an abomination to the LORD, but a just weight is His delight."* Two more verses show the LORD's displeasure for dishonest dealings. Prov. 20:10 reads, *"Differing weights and differing measures, both of them are abominable to the LORD."* Then too, Prov. 20:23 tells us, *"Differing weights are an abomination to the LORD, and a false scale is not good."* In Solomon's day a scale was a balance beam. A known weight was put on one side of the balance beam, and product to be sold was put into the other side. When the beam was balanced (or level) the proper amount of product had been dispensed for the

customer. If a dishonest merchant had weights that were purposely lightened, then the customer would receive less than he agreed to buy. This, of course, is cheating, and it is exactly the kind of thing the LORD hates. So, since we want to please the LORD, we must be honest in all of our business dealings. If we are, then the LORD can pour out His blessings upon us. If in His providence the LORD chooses for us to become rich, then Prov. 10:22 tells us how it will happen. The verse says, *“It is the blessing of the LORD that makes rich, and He adds no sorrow to it.”* When the LORD’s blessing makes a man rich, that man will realize that everything he possesses belongs to the LORD, and he will use his wealth to honor the LORD. A man like this will experience a deep-seated joy that selfish rich men can never know.

10) The LORD (pre-incarnate Jesus Christ) provides justice

There always seems to be someone who needs legal help because another person has taken unfair advantage of him. Unfortunately, often times people cannot get help from their political leaders. Prov. 29:26 shows why. The verse says, *“Many seek the ruler’s favor, but justice for man comes from the LORD.”* Frankly, I’m not sure I fully understand this verse. Sometimes it seems like the LORD is sitting back on His haunches and doing nothing to see that justice is done for a needy person. This verse must refer to the way the LORD, at His discretion, can and does move upon the hearts of the right people to be in the right places at the right time in order to come to the aid of those who need help in finding justice. Providing this is no problem for the LORD, but the help comes when He feels it is the right time to act. As we saw above, He is in control of everything anyway.

Those who seek to know the LORD in an intimate, personal relationship understand justice. Prov. 28:5 tells us, *“Evil men do not understand justice, but those who seek the LORD understand all things.”* Righteous men love justice because they know it provides security, but a wicked man cannot understand this. His heart is wicked and sinful. Consequently, he cannot understand the benefit of giving evil men the justice they deserve. His only concern is finding a way to get out of having to pay the penalty for his sinful actions.

11) The LORD (pre-incarnate Jesus Christ) is the One who gives knowledge and wisdom

Prov. 3:13 states, *“How blessed is the man who finds wisdom and the man who gains understanding.”* To be *“blessed”* is *to be happy, be pleased, or find enjoyment*. When I first read this verse, I thought Solomon couldn’t really mean what the verse said. Notice how the verse says that we can *gain* understanding, but we *find* wisdom. In essence, it is as though we look for wisdom and stumble upon it during our search for trustworthy knowledge and sound understanding. Prov. 2:6 substantiates this truth when it says, *“For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding.”* It is as simple as that. Does that mean we don’t have to do any work to become wise? Certainly not. Read part four of this chapter. In it we will discuss wisdom in Proverbs, and you will see that we need to study and meditate upon the Scriptures in order to acquire trustworthy knowledge and sound understanding. Armed with these, we will gain insight that will enable us to see an opportunity or situation for what it really is, and not what it appears on the surface. Then we will gain the discretion to see all of the possible solutions to the problem. Once we have done our part, the LORD will step in and *give* us the wisdom to make the best choice that will bring about the best results in every situation. Isn’t this a wonderful truth? I think it is.

Prov. 1:7a states, *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge.”* Therefore, trustworthy knowledge consists of facts that are found to be true and reliable when tested with reference to the God’s Word, His works, His person, His nature, and His dealings in the affairs of men. I think this is what Prov. 22:12 is referring to when it states, *“The eyes of the LORD preserve knowledge, but He overthrows the words of the treacherous man.”* He sees that knowledge is preserved for future generations so that they too can have an accurate and trustworthy knowledge of His Word and His works.

12) The LORD (pre-incarnate Jesus Christ) wants people to trust Him

God wants every man, woman, and child to believe in Him and live a good and godly life. Prov. 21:3 says, *“To do righteousness and justice is desired by the LORD more than sacrifice.”* As the verse says, the LORD is much more interested in our living right (*righteousness*) and treating others the way they deserve (*justice*) than whatever service we might attempt to do for Him. Doing good things for the LORD is commendable, but it is more important to be good and godly in heart and mind. As a result, this good and godly heart attitude will be the driving force that causes us to do good deeds for Him.

Solomon had a deep desire to teach his son how to know the LORD and gain the wisdom to live a good and godly life. In Prov. 22:17-21 Solomon explained why he was going to all of the work of teaching his son such important truths. These verses say,

“¹⁷ Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise, and apply your mind to my knowledge; ¹⁸ for it will be pleasant if you keep them within you, that they may be ready on your lips. ¹⁹ So that your trust may be in the LORD, I have taught you today, even you. ²⁰ Have I not written to you excellent things of counsels and knowledge, ²¹ to make you know the certainty of the words of truth that you may correctly answer him who sent you?”

Look again at verse twenty. He was teaching his son *“excellent things of counsels and knowledge”* for the express purpose of equipping him to trust the LORD in everything. Trusting the LORD in every situation is exactly what God wants young men and women to learn. This is where you will experience God’s richest blessings.

Let’s take a moment and look at some of the excellent things Solomon tried to teach his son. Consider the following:

A) Trusting the LORD brings blessing and safety

You and I have two options. We can fear what men think of us, or we can act and react based upon what the LORD thinks of what we are and do. Prov. 29:25 tells us, *“The fear of man brings a snare, but he who trusts in the LORD will be exalted.”* If we make choices in life based upon what others think of us, then at some point in time we will make choices that will end up being hurtful, costly, or downright disastrous. Oh, but the results are vastly different when we live a life based upon what the LORD desires for us. When we trust the LORD in everything, the world won’t think anything special about us, but good and godly children of God will think very highly of us and praise and honor the LORD as a result.

Those who trust in the LORD are generally happy people. Prov. 16:20 states, *“He who gives attention to the word will find good and blessed is he who trusts in the LORD.”* As I said above, to be *“blessed”* is to be happy, be pleased, or find enjoyment. The more we study God’s Word, the more we will learn to trust the LORD. The more we trust the LORD, the more joyful we will become. This is the normal result of trusting the LORD in everything.

We will find real, genuine security when we trust in the LORD. Prov. 18:10 reminds us, *“The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous runs into it and is safe.”* Notice that this verse doesn’t say that just anybody who turns to the LORD for safety finds it. No, it is the good and godly man who finds real safety and security. This is because the LORD only does this for those who have been born again by receiving Jesus Christ as savior **and** are living a good, lawful, and ethical life (*righteous*). They are the ones who find safety in the name of the LORD.

B) Trusting the LORD makes life smooth and successful

It is easy for us to make plans and leave the LORD out. We tend by nature to adopt the attitude, “I’ll do it myself. I don’t need any help.” The problem is, we do need help. The LORD knows better than we do about how and when to do things. Prov. 3:5-6 substantiate this when it says, *“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.”* When we base our decisions on the Word of God and the LORD’s prompting, things will run smoother, with fewer problems, and with better success. This is a promise from God, and you can count on it happening if you will trust Him to guide you. That is why Prov. 16:3 tells us, *“Commit your works to the LORD and your plans will be established.”* It is as simple and as hard as that. All we have to do is trust the LORD to lead us. He has promised to fulfill His end of the bargain. Now it is our turn to fulfill ours.

C) Trusting the LORD makes for a peaceful and secure life

Deep down inside, every believer wants to be at peace with himself, with those around him, and with his God. Prov. 16:7 tells us that when we live upright before God, He will cause our enemies to be at peace with us. This verse says, *“When a man’s ways are pleasing to the LORD, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.”* The LORD may take some time to bring this about, but at the time of His choosing,

He will keep His word. He is good about that, and you can count on it happening. Being the right kind of person before the LORD and doing those things that please Him not only generate peace, but they also provide perfect security. Prov. 10:29 substantiates this truth when it says, *“The way of the LORD is a stronghold to the upright, but ruin to the workers of iniquity.”* As you will remember, a person who is *upright* is *one who does what is right in the sight of the LORD*. This is the kind of person I always want to be. It is for my own good and for the LORD’s glory. I hope you want this too.

D) Trusting the LORD with your money brings blessings in return

The LORD Jesus had a lot to say about money, and Solomon was wise to include verses on this subject as well. In Prov. 3:9-10 read, *“Honor the LORD from your wealth and from the first of all your produce; so your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will overflow with new wine.”* The LORD loves giving to His children, and He will not forget our generosity. We should not give to others or to the church just so that we will get money in return, but giving to the LORD will result in the LORD giving back in some form or another. The principle of sow and reap works that way. (You will find a more thorough discussion of this verse when we discuss Proverbs chapter three.) Prov. 19:17 sums up this principle of sowing and reaping very well when it says, *“One who is gracious to a poor man lends to the LORD, and He will repay him for his good deed.”* The LORD will not be indebted to anyone. He always pays His debts in full. If you give of what you possess to honor the LORD, then He will give back to you in abundance. This does not necessarily mean that you will become rich, but if you are a giving person, you will never have a need that the LORD will not meet in full, in the right place, and at the right time. He may use people to accomplish this, or He may do it some other way. Be assured, though, He will reward those who are generous toward the LORD. You can bank on it.

E) Trusting the LORD allows you to appreciate the times when He disciplines or corrects you

Any parent raising a family must discipline his child from time to time. He does it because he loves his child. In the same manner, the LORD disciplines us for our own good because He loves us. Prov. 3:11-12 says, *“My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD or loathe His reproof, for whom the LORD loves He reproves, even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights.”* Strong’s says that *“loathe”* means *to feel a sickening dread*. The dictionary defines the word as *to dislike greatly and often with disgust or intolerance*. We naturally want to avoid pain, sorrow, and/or losses. Nobody wants to experience those kinds of trials, but the LORD may know that we need them. If we respond in the right way, they will either teach us to trust Him more or teach us to live in a better and more godly manner. Modern torpedoes fired from submarines are wire guided. From the time they leave the submarine until they strike their target, they are constantly receiving course corrections from the weapons control deck of the submarine. The goal is for the weapon to hit its target, and it is unlikely that the weapon would do this without being guided all the way to the target. In a similar fashion, the LORD sometimes has to discipline us in order to make us into the man or woman He wants us to be. If we realize that these disciplining experiences are merely course corrections from the LORD designed for our good and God’s glory, then the LORD will be able to accomplish all that He wants to, in and through us, resulting in glory to His name. If, on the other hand, we become bitter or resentful when things get hard, we nullify all that the LORD is trying to accomplish in and through us. The result will be a blot on the name of the LORD. This is why our verse says that we should not reject it or become bitter when the LORD needs to discipline us. Rather, accept it as God’s best for us, even when we don’t understand it all.

F) Using sound wisdom and discretion generates trust in the LORD

Prov. 3:19-26 illustrates this principle well. It says, ¹⁹ *The LORD by wisdom founded the earth, by understanding He established the heavens.* ²⁰ *By His knowledge the deeps were broken up and the skies drip with dew.* ²¹ *My son, let them not vanish from your sight; keep sound wisdom and discretion,* ²² *so they will be life to your soul and adornment to your neck.* ²³ *Then you will walk in your way securely and your foot will not stumble.* ²⁴ *When you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.* ²⁵ *Do not be afraid of sudden fear nor of the onslaught of the wicked when it comes;* ²⁶ *for the LORD will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being caught.”* Notice how verses 23 and 24

teach that consistently using sound wisdom and discretion produces trust in the LORD and results in the kind of security only the LORD can provide. Now that is real security.

Summary and concluding thoughts about the LORD in Proverbs:

1) Who He is

We have learned that the LORD in Proverbs is none other than per-incarnate Jesus Christ, the Son of God. So, when we read “**LORD**” in Proverbs we can rightfully substitute Jesus Christ. We understand that He was in His pre-incarnate form at the time of the writing of Proverbs, but He was and always will be the same Son of God.

2) What He is

He is the One who sees everything, knows everything, and constantly evaluates the thoughts, deeds, and motives of every individual alive. There is nothing we can do, think, or say that escapes His scrutiny. He is a holy God, and He hates sin. Although He hates sinful attitudes and actions, He loves the kind of thoughts and deeds that display good and godly behavior. He hates sexual impurity (adultery), but He is the One who will provide a man with a prudent wife accompanied by sexual enjoyment free from guilt. He is an honest and holy God, and He demands that His children be honest and holy as well. He is a wise and knowledgeable God, and He is the source of wisdom. By studying and meditating upon the Word of God, we can gain trustworthy knowledge and sound understanding that will ultimately lead to the LORD giving us wisdom. Don't we have a powerful, knowledgeable, and wonderful God in the person of Jesus Christ? I say an emphatic, “Yes!”

3) How does He work in the affairs of men

He controls everything. He is constantly orchestrating everything and when an individual or a nation attempts to do something He doesn't want to happen, He will see that they are not successful no matter how hard they try. Even when they throw the dice to decide, He makes the dice land on the numbers that will bring about His desires. It is as easy for Him to manipulate political leaders as it is to change the course of a river. It will not do any good to argue with the LORD because you will not change His mind. He provides justice, yet He takes vengeance upon those who oppress or take unfair advantage of others. Then too, He repays kindness with kindness.

Those who trust Him are blessed with peace, security, and safety, and He repays those who lend to Him by being generous with them. He corrects His children for their own good and for His own glory. Therefore, we should accept His correction without despising Him.

This is the LORD of Proverbs, and He is well worth trusting and following. No wonder we are to fear the LORD. It only makes sense after learning how great, knowledgeable, and powerful He is. Simply put, the LORD Jesus Christ is a wonderful and awesome God. Amen!

Part three — What is knowledge in Proverbs?

[Return to Index](#)

There are 38 verses in Proverbs that contain the word “**knowledge**.” Let's take a brief look at them. This should help you see how “**knowledge**” in Proverbs is different than worldly knowledge. I mentioned this earlier, but it bears repeating. **Knowledge** in Prov. 1:7 is talking about “**a knowledge of the truth and of God Himself.**”¹³ This kind of knowledge will not teach a man how to make a living, but it will teach him how to live a good, godly, and wise life. As you will see in part five of this chapter, knowledge is the second of the building blocks upon which wisdom is built. Our text verse, Prov. 1:7a, tells us that “**The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge** (a knowledge of truth and indeed God Himself).” The fear of the LORD is the perspective or basis by which we judge knowledge to be true and trustworthy. This is definitely the starting point in our search for wisdom. The more we study and meditate upon God's Word, the more trustworthy knowledge we will acquire. Follow along as we look at the verses in Proverbs that reference knowledge. Note: All of the words in the verses that follow have been colored for clarity's sake.

Our text verse says that “**The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge.**” It is well worth noting here that since the fear of the LORD is the perspective from which we gain trustworthy knowledge, why would any born again child of God want to send their children to a school where the teachers do not fear the LORD and will try their best to destroy the child's belief and trust in God and the Bible? Gregory, this is precisely why your mom and I chose to

enroll you and Nancy in private Christian school from the first day of kindergarten until both of you graduated from high school. It only made good sense from a godly perspective. It would be wonderful if every person who claims Christ as savior would do the same with their children.

¹³ Kidner, Derek, *Proverbs An Introduction and Commentary*, Copyright © 1964, The Tyndale Press, Page 35

1) The LORD is the source of knowledge

The first thing we need to understand is that Jesus Christ is the source of all truth and knowledge about God. Prov. 2:6 states, *“For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge (a knowledge of truth and indeed God Himself) and understanding.”* Today we have the completed Word of God, and it tells us God’s thoughts and desires. When we study and meditate upon it, we will learn more and more truth, and we will learn more and more about who God is, what He is, and how He works in the affairs of men. When we search for knowledge and wisdom from His Word, in time Prov. 2:10 will become a reality. It says, *“For wisdom will enter your heart and knowledge (a knowledge of truth and indeed God Himself) will be pleasant to your soul.”* The more you learn about the Word of God and the LORD Himself, the more you will enjoy learning.

2) The LORD used knowledge in Creation

We saw in part two of this chapter that the LORD is the creator of the world. He spoke it into existence. We do not know the mechanics He used except to say that He knew an awful lot. Prov. 3:20 tells us that, *“By His knowledge (a knowledge of truth and indeed God Himself) the deeps were broken up and the skies drip with dew.”* He knew all about vapor condensation, and when He created the world, He put the laws of nature in place so that generations to follow would have rain and plenty of water to drink.

3) The LORD guards and preserves knowledge

Some things are meant to last. Knowledge of the truth and about God Himself is eternal, and the LORD carefully guards that kind of knowledge to make sure that it isn’t corrupted. Prov. 22:12 reads, *“The eyes of the LORD preserve knowledge (a knowledge of truth and indeed God Himself), but He overthrows the words of the treacherous man.”* Lies and deceit will pass into obscurity, but the truth will shine forever.

4) Knowledge is valuable

You might be asking yourself if a pursuit of biblical knowledge is worth the effort. Prov. 8:10 tells us, *“Take my instruction and not silver, and knowledge (a knowledge of truth and indeed God Himself) rather than choicest gold.”* In addition, Prov. 20:15 states, *“There is gold, and an abundance of jewels; but the lips of knowledge (a knowledge of truth and indeed God Himself) are a more precious thing.”* Money or wealth cannot buy knowledge or understanding. It isn’t for sale, but knowledge is much more valuable than any physical possession because it brings real security and happiness. Prov. 19:2 warns us, *“Also it is not good for a person to be without knowledge (a knowledge of truth and indeed God Himself), and he who hurries his footsteps errs.”* We don’t need to run through life chasing possessions and pleasures that won’t matter in the long run. There is a better way. You see, there is security in biblical knowledge because it teaches a man how to live a good and godly life so that he can avoid the hurts, heartaches, and losses sinners endure as a result of their sinful practices.

5) Knowledge coupled with discretion is useful

When we dissect Proverbs chapter two (chapter 7 of this commentary) you will see that a proper search for wisdom will result in substantial finds. First, Prov. 2:5 tells us, *“Then you will discern the fear of the LORD and discover the knowledge of God”* (a knowledge of truth and indeed God Himself). Basically, the verse is telling us that the first thing we will figure out is a genuine fear of the LORD, and after that, we will start learning more and more things about who God is, what He is, and how He works in the affairs of men. In Proverbs chapter 8, wisdom is giving her testimony about what she is and what she does. In verse 12 we read, *“I, wisdom, dwell with prudence, and I find knowledge (a knowledge of truth and indeed God Himself) and discretion.”* Wisdom is always on the lookout for new knowledge and better ways to figure out (discern) how things work, how to solve problems, or how to successfully navigate opportunities. In fact, finding knowledge and discretion is so important that they are the essence of steps one through three of the four steps of learning and living the book of Proverbs. Prov. 1:4 states

that the reason for the first three steps is so that we will be equipped *“To give prudence to the naive, to the youth knowledge (a knowledge of truth and indeed God Himself) and discretion.”* These young people need to learn how to live a good and godly life and how to make really good and productive decisions about life. In Proverbs chapter five, Solomon warned his son about the tragic consequences of adultery and the blessings that result from allowing his own wife to satisfy all of his emotional and sexual needs. In Prov. 5:1-2 we read, *“My son, give attention to my wisdom, incline your ear to my understanding; that you may observe discretion and your lips may reserve knowledge (a knowledge of truth and indeed God Himself).* In these verses Solomon was telling his son that he needed to recognize when a woman was coming on to him sexually (*observe discretion*), and he needed to tell her verbally that he is not interested in joining her in forbidden sexual pleasures (*your lips reserve knowledge*). This will be discussed in detail when we examine Proverbs chapter five.

6) Wise men store up knowledge for the future and know how to use it

Prov. 10:14 states, *“Wise men store up knowledge (a knowledge of truth and indeed God Himself), but with the mouth of the foolish, ruin is at hand.”* Since the two thoughts in this verse are an inverse parallel, we can rightfully deduce that since a fool’s mouth results in disaster and ruin, then a wise man finds safety and security as he learns more and more biblical knowledge that he can apply to life in both actions and in word.

7) Knowledge will guide what you have to say

Wise men know what to say and when to say it. Prov. 15:7 tells us, *“The lips of the wise spread knowledge (a knowledge of truth and indeed God Himself), but the hearts of fools are not so.”* Fools don’t have any knowledge of the truth or about God, so there is nothing useful that they can say. Ah, but a wise man is always trying to teach those around him about the truth and the truth of God Himself. A wise man not only knows what to say and when to say it, but he knows how to say it so that it is palatable to the listener. Prov. 15:2 states, *“The tongue of the wise makes knowledge acceptable (a knowledge of truth and indeed God Himself), but the mouth of fools spouts folly.”* A fool only knows how to do stupid and senseless things, so that is all he can talk about. A wise man not only knows what to say, when to say it, and how to say it, but he knows when to say nothing. Prov. 17:27 reads, *“He who restrains his words has knowledge (a knowledge of truth and indeed God Himself), and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding.”* Not saying anything when nothing needs to be said is sometimes as difficult as maintaining your cool when you want to light into someone and give him a piece of your mind. Both take self-discipline, and a wise man is one who has gained the wisdom to restrain himself when needed.

8) Intelligent people seek knowledge

Gregory, all of us like to think that we are intelligent, but do we show it? Solomon said in Prov. 15:14, *“The mind of the intelligent seeks knowledge (a knowledge of truth and indeed God Himself), but the mouth of fools feeds on folly.”* Do you diligently seek a knowledge of the truth and of God on a regular basis? This is a question only you can answer. I am trying to do so, and I hope you are too. Notice that the verse above says nothing about the mind of the fool. This is because he doesn’t care about learning the truth. All he wants to do is talk about what he knows (which isn’t much and isn’t worth much). The only kind of knowledge he wants to learn is more ways to accomplish his foolishness.

We all like to think that we are prudent, but do we show it? Solomon wrote in Prov. 18:15 that *“The mind of the prudent acquires knowledge (a knowledge of truth and indeed God Himself), and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.”* If you are prudent, then you will realize the consequences of failing to acquire more and more knowledge. Therefore, you will acquire all of the biblical knowledge you can, and if you are a wise man, you will search for trustworthy knowledge anywhere you can hear or see it. This is why Prov. 23:12 states, *“Apply your heart to discipline and your ears to words of knowledge (a knowledge of truth and indeed God Himself).”*

Prov. 22:17-21 shows the confidence that results from listening to biblical knowledge and then living what you learn. Read the text below. It says,

“¹⁷ Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise, and apply your mind to my knowledge (a knowledge of truth and indeed God Himself); ¹⁸ for it will be pleasant if you keep them within you, that they may be ready on your lips. ¹⁹ So that your trust may be in the LORD, I have taught you today, even you. ²⁰ Have I not written to you excellent things of counsels and knowledge (a

knowledge of truth and indeed God Himself), ²¹ *to make you know the certainty of the words of truth that you may correctly answer him who sent you?"*

So then, listening to and using biblical knowledge has real benefits. One of the most valuable of these is the confidence to be sure that the Word of God is true and trustworthy and that God Himself can be trusted without question. It will also give you the courage and wisdom to give a biblical defense whenever someone questions your faith and confidence in the LORD.

9) Knowledge comes to the rescue

Learning and using biblical knowledge will save a righteous man from having to experience the same hurts, heartaches, and losses sinners must endure as a result of their sinful practices. Prov. 11:9 tells us, *"With his mouth the godless man destroys his neighbor, but through knowledge (a knowledge of truth and indeed God Himself) the righteous will be delivered."* Notice that the mouth of a godless man **destroys someone else** while the knowledge possessed by a righteous man **is of benefit to himself**. This is reason enough to pursue knowledge.

10) Prudent men use knowledge

As we said before, a prudent man carefully considers the consequences of his choices in life. If the result will be good and beneficial, he will proceed. If they will be hurtful or costly, he will refrain. Prov. 12:23 says that *"A prudent man conceals knowledge (a knowledge of truth and indeed God Himself), but the heart of fools proclaims folly."* There are many times when a wise man will share knowledge with those who need to hear it, but a prudent man does not feel the need to tell everyone about what he knows when it is not appropriate. He is content to know and use the knowledge he has gained. A real sign of maturity is being able to know you are right and not having to prove it to someone else. Prov. 13:16 tells us, *"Every prudent man acts with knowledge (a knowledge of truth and indeed God Himself), but a fool displays folly."* A prudent man makes it a normal practice of life to evaluate every decision that comes his way, and that is why this verse says that he acts with knowledge. Fools want to tell all they know (Prov. 12:23 above), and you can know that they are fools by the foolish things they choose to do and say.

11) Sensible men are rewarded with knowledge

Prov. 14:18 says, *"The naive inherit foolishness, but the sensible are crowned with knowledge (a knowledge of truth and indeed God Himself)."* The dictionary defines *sensible* as *having or showing good sense or sound judgment*. So then, a *sensible man* has learned to look at a problem or opportunity for what it actually is, not what it appears to be or what he wishes it were. He is one who acts based upon sound logic and not the emotions of the moment. Because he acts with sound judgment there is no doubt that he will learn a lot of useful information along the way. Therefore, he is *crowned with knowledge (a knowledge of the truth and of God himself)*. The naive man cannot understand this kind of truth, so he goes on, contented to do the careless things he chooses without evaluating the consequences of his actions.

12) Correcting a wise man gives him more knowledge

Discipline is many times painful, but the goal of discipline is to bring about better behavior. Prov. 12:1 tells us, *"Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge (a knowledge of truth and indeed God Himself), but he who hates reproof is stupid."* When a man appreciates discipline, he will learn from the correction, but a man who hates being corrected will rebel and learn nothing from the attempt to help him. Rejecting discipline is indeed a stupid thing to do. Prov. 19:25 supports this truth when it says, *"Strike a scoffer and the naive may become shrewd, but reprove one who has understanding, and he will gain knowledge (a knowledge of truth and indeed God Himself)."* Prov. 21:11 is a close companion verse. It reads, *"When the scoffer is punished, the naive becomes wise; but when the wise is instructed, he receives knowledge (a knowledge of truth and indeed God Himself)."* What I want you to see from these verses is that a man with understanding will learn useful knowledge as the result of a rebuke. He appreciates correction even when it hurts. He appreciates it because he knows the benefits that come from enduring it with patience.

13) Knowledge makes understanding easy

We know from Scripture that an unsaved man cannot understand spiritual things. First Corinthians 2:14 substantiates this fact when it says, *“But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.”* Thank the LORD that this is not true for a child of God. When a man is born again, the Holy Spirit enters his heart and abides there to guide him into all truth. My question to you is this, “Do you want to be a man of understanding?” If so, then Prov. 9:10 tells us, *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One (a knowledge of truth and indeed God Himself) is understanding.”* The more you know about the LORD and His Word, the easier it is to understand additional truths from the Bible. This is because your previous knowledge and understanding will give you insight into the new truths being shared with you. Prov. 14:6 sums up this principle well when it says, *“A scoffer seeks wisdom and finds none, but knowledge (a knowledge of truth and indeed God Himself) is easy to one who has understanding.”* Once you gain some knowledge and understanding from the Scriptures you will establish a knowledge base, and this knowledge base will help you more easily understand both new knowledge and new understanding from God’s Word. Through study and meditation and with the help of the Holy Spirit, you can understand the truths of Scripture. Prov. 8:9 tells us, *“They are all straightforward to him who understands, and right to those who find knowledge (a knowledge of truth and indeed God Himself).”* You might be wondering about “they” in verse 9, so I will show you. In Proverbs chapter eight, wisdom is giving her testimony. In verses 6-9 she says,

⁶ Listen, for I (Wisdom) will speak noble things; and the opening of my lips will reveal right things. ⁷ For my mouth will utter truth; and wickedness is an abomination to my lips. ⁸ All the utterances of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing crooked or perverted in them. ⁹ They are all straightforward to him who understands, and right to those who find knowledge.”

As you can see, the words “they” and “them” refer to all the things wisdom says. Notice that what wisdom has to say is straightforward to a man with some understanding, and her words are right in the eyes of a man who is regularly seeking and finding knowledge of the truth and of God Himself. You can experience this if you will consistently pursue this kind of knowledge.

14) Knowledge provides lots of good things

Prov. 24:3-4 says, *“By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; and by knowledge (a knowledge of truth and indeed God Himself) the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches.”* In this verse wisdom knows how to fabricate the structure, understands the building process and engineering standards, and knows all about decorating the structure. Keep in mind here that we are not talking about a physical building but a manner of conducting yourself in this world before the LORD. Knowing and living the truth about God and His Word will bring many blessings and make everything about your life beautiful. This kind of life is worth more than all of the gold in the world and is well worth pursuing.

15) Knowledge gives power

Knowledge of the truth and of God Himself will guide a political leader well. In times of peace, these truths will enable him to keep his country from destroying itself. Prov. 28:2 tells us, *“By the transgression of a land many are its princes, but by a man of understanding and knowledge (a knowledge of truth and indeed God Himself), so it endures.”* Sometimes men will try to gain power by illegal or unscrupulous means, and in doing so, they damage their country in the process. Good and godly leaders, on the other hand, work hard and smart to see that justice is served and that the peoples’ rights are maintained. This is what makes a country last for centuries without falling apart.

In times of war, these truths will enable a good and godly man to fight his country’s battles and win. Prov. 24:5-6 states, *“A wise man is strong, and a man of knowledge (a knowledge of truth and indeed God Himself) increases power. For by wise guidance, you will wage war, and in abundance of counselors there is victory.”* A man who understands the truth and knows His LORD will be wise enough to understand not only his own country’s strengths and weaknesses, but also his enemy’s strengths and weaknesses. Then, with the guidance of wise counselors, he will wage a battle and win. Knowledge like this is the key to winning any battle.

16) There are always some people who are opposed to knowledge

Prov. 1:20-33 shows the disastrous results of rejecting wisdom. In verse 22, Wisdom is calling men to accept the truths she presents. This verse reads, *"How long, O naive ones, will you love being simple-minded? and scoffers delight themselves in scoffing and fools hate knowledge?"* (a knowledge of truth and indeed God Himself). It seems there will always be some people who will not accept or believe in the truths of the Bible, and they will not believe in the God of heaven. Some people go far beyond simply not believing. They actually ridicule God, the Bible, and anyone who tries to live a good and godly life. These people are what are called scoffers. Fools, on the other hand, don't want anything to do with discipline or conforming to a standard other than what they have set for themselves. Therefore, they hate the kind of knowledge we have been talking about because it requires self-discipline. Prov. 1:29 tells us that disaster will come back upon some people. It reads, *"Because they hated knowledge* (a knowledge of truth and indeed God Himself) *and did not choose the fear of the LORD."* In context, Prov. 1:20-33 teaches that since some men have rejected the fear of the LORD and a knowledge of the truth and of God Himself, they will experience devastation and ruin in the end. This is the normal and natural result of rejecting the LORD and His Word.

17) There are things that will keep you from learning knowledge

If you want to acquire a knowledge of the truth and of God Himself, then you must consistently study and meditate upon the Word of God. In time you will not only learn these truths, but you will learn how to live them. On the other hand, if you are complacent about learning or if you get involved with the wrong crowd, you will never learn these truths. Several times in Proverbs we are warned to avoid spending time with a fool or making him a close friend. There is another reason to avoid him. Prov. 14:7 states, *"Leave the presence of a fool, or you will not discern words of knowledge* (a knowledge of truth and indeed God Himself). *"*We tend to become like our friends. A fool hates knowledge and wants to talk about nothing but the foolish ideas and beliefs he espouses. If you spend enough time with him, you will lose the ability to figure out (discern) the truth or a proper knowledge of God. Beware, because untold numbers of people have done just that, and they will most likely never regain a knowledge of the truth. Therefore, they will follow the fool to a tragic end without even knowing it.

Rebelling when you are disciplined is another way to miss out on learning a knowledge of the truth and an understanding about who God is, what He is, and how He works in the affairs of men. Prov. 19:27 reads, *"Cease listening, my son, to discipline, and you will stray from the words of knowledge* (a knowledge of truth and indeed God Himself). *"* Notice that this verse doesn't say that if you turn your back on discipline you will give up a knowledge of the truth and of the LORD. No, it says that you will *stray* from these things. You will literally wander away and lose sight of the proper direction in life. In the end you will wander into sin. Either way, the knowledge of the truth and of God that you do have will gradually fade away, and you will become more and more like the fool and the world.

18) Agur knew knowledge and used it effectively in a rebuke

Proverbs chapter thirty shows us how a father named Agur rebuked his two sons, Ithiel and Ucal. These two young men were proud, arrogant, and critical of others. They thought they knew more than their dad, so in his opening remarks in verses 1-4, Agur made himself out to be some sort of ignoramus in order to ask them a question he knew they could not answer. In Prov. 30:2-3 he said, *"Surely I am more stupid than any man, and I do not have the understanding of a man. Neither have I learned wisdom, nor do I have the knowledge of the Holy One."* In verse two, he was saying that he didn't have the intellectual capacity of an average man and that he didn't have the ability to comprehend what an average man could comprehend. Then in verse three, he told the boys that he didn't know anything about making wise decisions and that he didn't know the first thing about the LORD. In other words, he was about as stupid as a man could be. Once he sarcastically agreed that his sons were much smarter than him, he dropped a bombshell on them. He asked them the name of the Messiah to come. Of course, we know him as Jesus Christ, but no one in Agur's day had a clue about his name. When the boys couldn't answer their dad's question, he responded something like this. "Okay boys, you mean you don't know it all. Well, maybe you're not as smart as you think, and maybe old dad is not as stupid as you think." This has been a brief look at this passage, but you will find a full discussion of chapter 30 later in this commentary.

What can we conclude about Prov. 1:7a (the first half of the verse)

Now that we understand what knowledge is, what a genuine fear of the LORD is, and who the LORD is in Proverbs, we can intelligently comment on the first half of our text verse. Prov. 1:7a reads, *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge.”* Let’s take a look at what we have learned so far and try to understand not only what this verse is saying (step 1) but also what it means (step 2). From part 1 of this chapter, we learned that the fear of the LORD is acquiring and maintaining such an elevated view of the LORD that we will strive to do two things. First, we will do good and obey the Word of God in order to please our heavenly Father. Second, we will avoid or abandon every sinful practice so that we don’t break intimate fellowship with the LORD. These two things together produce a life of holiness in the child of God. The fear of the LORD, then, is the starting point on the road to gaining knowledge of the truth and of God Himself (part 3 of this chapter).

From part 2 of this chapter, we learned that Jesus Christ is the LORD in Proverbs. He created everything, He sees and understands all of our motives and actions, He controls the circumstances every individual and nation must face, and He will judge every man, woman, and child for the things they have done in this life. The LORD is right beside us every moment of the day and night seeing everything we do and think. This is reason enough to live a good and godly life by doing good and avoiding or abandoning every sinful practice. Living this kind of life is, in essence, being holy like the LORD is holy. In 1 Peter 1:13-16, the apostle Peter told us,

“¹³ Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ¹⁴ As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, ¹⁵ but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; ¹⁶ because it is written, “YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.”

Can you see the truth in Prov. 1:7a? It is clear to me now. The fear of the LORD is to stand in awe of the LORD and love Him so much that I will be holy. I won’t do anything to disappoint Him either by failing to do good or by choosing to indulge in some sinful practice. This is the best approach to this life and to eternity, and it is the basis upon which a believer must evaluate facts in order to determine if new knowledge is true and worth accepting. As I said in part three of this chapter, the word *“knowledge”* in Prov. 1:7a is *“...implying not so much an informed mind as a knowledge of truth and indeed God Himself.”*¹⁴ An example of this is when we approach the study of natural science. In one of his preaching messages, Pastor Tony Miller said that the study of natural science is sacred. I went home after that service thinking that he must surely have been mistaken. How could such a study be a spiritual exercise. After thinking about it for the next week, the truth of what he said finally sank into my brain. Basically, he was saying that if a man will approach the study of natural science **in an unbiased manner**, he **“will”** come to the conclusion that there must be a Creator, and that Creator must be a powerful, wise, and knowledgeable being. Of course, we know that Creator as Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It is understood that the bias with which we approach a study drives the results of that study. When a man who believes in evolution studies nature, he will come to a conclusion that is in line with his belief system. When a man who believes that the LORD created everything is engaged in this kind of study, the results of his study will reflect God’s handiwork in natural science. This is why when we gain a fear of the LORD, we will start judging facts by whether they are consistent with what the Word of God teaches us about the truth and about the LORD Himself.

Keep in mind that Prov. 1:7 is the starting point on a journey toward finding wisdom. Therefore, living in the fear of the LORD is indeed the point where our understanding and perspective on facts causes us to accept only those truths that are consistent with the teachings of the Word of God and God’s nature. All facts that are contrary to these are to be rejected as useless. This is a sobering truth and one we need to take seriously.

Before we start our study of the second half of our text verse, let me share a truth with you. As I stated above, Prov. 1:7 is a pivotal verse in Proverbs and sets the stage for all that Solomon wrote in the first nine chapters of Proverbs. This verse offers a choice of two approaches to life. The best approach to life is to pursue the fear of the LORD so that you and I can live a good and godly life that leads to wisdom. The end result of such an approach is eternal life with the LORD we love. As we will see in our study of the second half of our text, there is an option to pursue what the world has to offer and leave God out. This approach to life will end in disaster and is the poorer choice. So then, you and I can either pursue wisdom and godliness (Prov. 1:7a), or we can leave God out of our lives while we pursue the pleasures and possessions this world has to offer (Prov. 1:7b). When we get to Proverbs chapter nine, we will see how this choice is repeated and expanded. It is indeed a beautiful thing to see.

¹⁴ Ibid.

This ends the discussion of Prov. 1:7a. Now we will discuss Prov. 1:7b.

Prov. 1:7b states, *"Fools despise wisdom and instruction."*

As we start the study of Prov. 1:7b, it must be remembered that Hebrew poetry is said to be a comparing of thoughts rather than rhyming of words in a certain meter. In this verse, the second half of Prov. 1:7 is the opposite of the first half. Whereas a man who fears the LORD is teachable, is receptive to the truth, and gains knowledge about the LORD that will help him live with eternity in mind, a fool is unteachable and doesn't want anyone telling him what to do, especially God. Therefore, he will reject wisdom and instruction. The fool, then, is an inverse parallel of the man who fears the LORD. In order to fully understand this half of Prov. 1:7, it will be necessary to do word studies on the fool, wisdom, and instruction.

Part four—What is a fool?

[Return to Index](#)

Gregory,

In a nutshell, the fool doesn't want God telling him what he can and can't do, and his approach to life makes him despise anyone who tries to instruct or correct him. He is this way because, as you will see, he is unteachable, bull-headed, and closed-minded to reason. There are 3 primary Hebrew words for *"fool"* in Proverbs. There are more Hebrew words for a fool elsewhere in the Bible, but we will restrict our study to only those words used in Proverbs except to look at Psalms 14 and 53. These Psalms show two classes of fools. The first is the non-religious fool (Psalm 53), and the other is the religious fool (Psalm 14). At a casual reading these Psalms appear to be saying the same thing, but a closer inspection shows the difference. It will be quite apparent when you see it.

Read about the non-religious fool in my paraphrase of Psalm 53. Let's look more closely at the chapter.

They (fools) don't want God

¹ Fools know deep down inside that there is a God, but they are convinced that God and the Bible are of no relevance in their lives. Therefore, they want nothing to do with God or the Bible. That way they can enjoy their sin. Since they are morally degenerate, they will get involved in all kinds of sinful activities that God and men hate. The simple fact is that other than trusting Jesus Christ as personal Savior, no one of this persuasion can do anything good in God's sight.

They (fools) are only interested in the world

² God has already looked down from heaven and has seen that everyone who is not born again has no clue that they are ruining their lives. He also saw how none of these fools would ever seek to have a personal relationship with God on his own unless God draws them to Himself.

³ Instead of seeking to know Christ and God's Word with the goal of obeying, these fools have totally rejected God and the Bible in order to pursue the pleasures and possessions this world has to offer. In the process, all of them have become filthy by getting involved in things that are either wicked, sinful, illegal, illicit, or unethical. No one of this persuasion can do anything good, not a single person.

They (fools) have no interest in prayer

⁴ In their greed, these fools devour God's people and their possessions. They pour as much energy into doing this as they do when they devour a plate of food at a banquet. Since God is of no relevance to them, they have no interest in ever praying to God. Are these wicked people really clueless about the disastrous consequences they generate for themselves and for God's people as a result of their sin? The answer is a resounding, "Yes."

They (fools) oppose God at every turn

⁵ They won't say it, but these fools are terrified about what the future holds for them. They are constantly looking over their shoulders to see if law enforcement is pursuing them or if someone they have hurt or defrauded is on his way to get even with them. They are so paranoid that they keep looking even when no one is there. They have opposed God at every turn, and God has opposed them. They have seen how God has destroyed other wicked people, and deep down inside, they know that their sinful lifestyle is shameful and that God hates what they do.

People are fools for rejecting Jesus Christ

⁶ The Jews, as a whole, want Messiah to come and rescue them from their enemies, but sadly, and biblically, they fall into the category of fools. They are religious, but they have rejected Jesus Christ, their true Messiah. Oh, how I wish Christ would come again and show Himself mighty. Then the Jews would realize that He is indeed their Messiah. In doing so, He would turn their adamant rejection of Christ into saving faith. When that happens, all of Israel will be glad and rejoice.

So, the non-religious fool doesn't want anything to do with religion, God, or the Bible. This is a tragic loss for them, but a good portion of the populace feels this way.

Now read about the religious fool in my paraphrase of Psalm 14. Let's examine it more closely.

They (fool) put on a show of religion

¹ Fools know deep down inside that there is a God, but they don't consider God and the Bible important enough for them to submit to the Lordship of Christ. They may go to church to put on a show of religion, but they do not have sound moral convictions. That way, they can still enjoy their sin. Once they walk out the door of the church, they will go right back to their corrupt lifestyle. They may do some things that appear good in the eyes of men, but because of their sinful lifestyle, God hates even those supposedly good deeds. The simple fact is that other than trusting Jesus Christ as personal Savior and submitting to His leadership, no one of their persuasion can do anything good in God's sight.

They (fool) pursue the things of the world

² The LORD has already looked down from heaven and has seen that everyone who is not born again has no clue that they are ruining their lives. He also saw how none of them would ever seek to have a personal relationship with God on their own unless God draws them to Himself. ³ Instead of seeking to know Christ and God's Word with the goal of obeying, these fools have turned their attention away from the LORD and have instead chosen to pursue the things this world has to offer. In the process, all of them have become filthy by getting involved in things that are either sinful, illegal, illicit, or unethical. No one of this persuasion can do anything good, not a single person.

They (fool) have given up on prayer

⁴ In their greed, these fools devour God's people and their possessions. They pour as much energy into doing this as they do when they devour a plate of food at a banquet. Since they are not God's children, God doesn't answer their prayers. As a result, they have quit praying. Are these worldly people really clueless about the disastrous consequences they generate for themselves and for God's people as a result of their sin? The answer is a resounding, "Yes."

They (fool) won't trust the Lord

⁵⁻⁶ You fools keep telling the poor and needy that it is useless to trust the LORD for protection and provision. As a result, you cause them to be ashamed to trust God, all because you really don't

understand that the LORD truly is the poor man's refuge. If you will simply look, you can see how God is good to those who live in a good and godly manner. Instead, people like you literally shake in your boots when you seriously consider the disaster that awaits you in the future.

People are fools for rejecting Jesus Christ

⁷ The Jews, as a whole, want Messiah to come and rescue them from their enemies, but they have rejected Jesus Christ, their true Messiah. Oh, how I wish Christ would come again and show Himself mighty. Then the Jews would realize that He is indeed their Messiah. In doing so, He would turn their adamant rejection of Christ into saving faith. When that happens, all of Israel will be glad and rejoice.

So, the religious fool wants to look like an upstanding religious person, but inside he wants to live like the world. Unfortunately, a large portion of people who attend a church fall into this category. This is tragic because their so-called religious deeds and observances will be worthless in the end.

Now, back to our study of the words for a fool in Proverbs. I want this study to be practical, so we will use simplified definitions for each type of fool. Later in this chapter of the commentary, we will make application so that you can benefit from what you learn. Although the three types of fools are different in some ways, in many ways they are similar. All fools will

- 1) do and say things that are hurtful, costly, or downright disastrous,
- 2) argue with anyone who disagrees with their (the fool's) opinion,
- 3) do what they want even if it causes their premature death,
- 4) make decisions based upon emotions rather than sound logic, and / or
- 5) feel that there is nothing wrong with what they do or say.

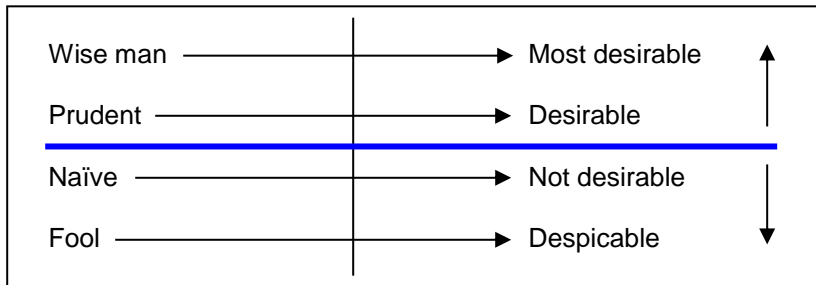
I must point out that a fool is someone who does these things on a regular basis. Someone who makes one wrong choice or engages in some stupid or hurtful activity one time is foolish. He is not a fool in the sense of this discussion. The foolish man will still have to endure the adverse consequences of his foolish actions, but hopefully he will learn from his mistake and become a better person as a result. As we will see later, the fool will never learn from his mistakes even if he is severely punished.

Strong's Concordance defines the three Hebrew words for fool used in Proverbs. We will refer to them by the number Strong's has assigned them. They are:

- 1) Fool number one is gullible and falls for almost anything.
A summary of Strong's Concordance explanation of the **<03684>** fool is [\(One who only wants to have fun, is gullible, and is prone to make wrong choices\)](#).
- 2) Fool number two is immoral and cannot comprehend the fact that he is doing wrong.
A summary of Strong's Concordance explanation of the **<0191>** fool is [\(One who is morally corrupt and doesn't have the sense to know better\)](#),
- 3) Fool number three is mean, looks out for number one, and is totally closed to reason.
A summary of Strong's Concordance explanation of the **<05036>** fool is [\(One who is mean, selfish, and closed to reason.\)](#),

In Proverbs the **<03684>** fool occurs in 49 verses, the **<0191>** fool occurs in 19 verses, and the **<05036>** fool occurs in only 3 verses. I have chosen to discuss the **<03684>** fool first since he is gullible and falls for anything that sounds reasonable to him. Next, we will discuss the **<0191>** fool since he acts primarily out of ignorance; and finally, we will discuss the **<05036>** fool since he is totally closed to reason.

Before we get into the discussion of the individual types of fools, let's take a moment to compare the different types of people and their methods of decision-making. Consider the illustration below.



This chart shows a little of the relationship between being prudent or wise and being naïve or a fool. The blue line in the illustration above is mid-point between a desirable and an undesirable approach to decision-making. A prudent man considers the consequences of every choice in life, and if that choice will produce good and beneficial results, he will proceed. If not, he will refrain. By using this decision-making process, the prudent man will avoid many of the adverse consequences other people will endure as a result of their hasty, impulsive, or corrupted decision-making processes. Although being prudent is good, being wise is even better. The wise man will use the same decision-making criteria the prudent man uses, but the wise man has more insight, discernment, and understanding. Wisdom is a gift from God, and armed with this wisdom, the wise man will make the best decisions that will produce the best results in every area of life and practice. This is the most desirable approach to life's choices, and it can be yours if you seek it according to Proverbs chapter two.

As we examine the people below the blue line, we come first to the naïve man. He is not necessarily a bad man, but he is nonetheless undesirable. He seldom evaluates the consequences of his choices in life, and as a result, he makes many stupid and costly mistakes. This happens because he cannot see the detrimental consequences his choices will produce. A classic example was the guy we talked about in chapter three of this commentary. He always wanted to fly an airplane but never got the chance. So, he came up with the hair-brained idea of attaching helium-filled balloons to a lawn chair so he could ride the chair like a hot air balloon. Long story short, he had to be rescued at 16,000 feet in the air and was cited for flying an unlicensed aircraft and wandering into a terminal control area, both of which are serious violations. He simply did not consider the consequences of his actions. The naïve man doesn't do stupid things because he is sure he is right. No, he does stupid things because he doesn't know any better.

The fool maintains the least desirable decision-making process. Whereas the naïve man simply makes stupid decisions because he doesn't know better, the fool makes stupid and senseless decisions because he is confident he is right and feels he knows better than everyone else. He doesn't realize that he is ignorant and unteachable. As a result, he makes many costly decisions that could cause his premature death.

So, to be prudent is good and desirable, but to be wise is better and most desirable. To be naïve is undesirable, but to be a fool is a total loss. As we saw in chapter 3 of this commentary (Prov. 1:1-6), we who practice the four steps to learning and living the book of Proverbs are to teach the naïve to become prudent by helping them learn to do the same things we have learned and now practice. Oh, but we are not told to try to teach a fool, because Proverbs tells us that the fool is unteachable. The only way the mind and heart of a fool can be changed is through the grace of God in salvation.

The <03684> Fool.

[Return to Index](#)

He seeks pleasure and always wants to have fun. He is this way because he is gullible.

As I said above, this word occurs 49 times in Proverbs. All this fool wants to do is to have fun and enjoy physical pleasures. It is the driving force behind everything he does. Therefore, the majority of his decisions are made based upon how much fun he can have or what physical pleasures he can enjoy. Strong's defines this Hebrew word as "fool, stupid fellow, dullard, simpleton, arrogant one." As such, he is a simple person, arrogant, and without the sense to make good choices. Once he makes a choice, he will defend it to the death. Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament defines this person as [the dull or obstinate one, referring not to mental deficiency, but to a](#)

propensity to make wrong choices.¹⁵ (Underline added for clarity). This fool is gullible, and this flaw will lead him into all sorts of things that sound fun or pleasurable on the surface but result in hurts, heartaches, or losses in the end. The sad part about this fool is that he either will not or cannot evaluate the choices he makes in life. He simply does whatever sounds fun or pleasurable and then pays dearly for the mistake.

A classic example of this kind of a fool is Amnon. Consider the narrative in Second Samuel chapter thirteen. Amnon's friend convinced him to invite his sister to his bedroom so that he could rape her. Read the text below.

¹ Now it was after this that Absalom the son of David had a beautiful sister whose name was Tamar, and Amnon the son of David loved her. ² Amnon was so frustrated because of his sister Tamar that he made himself ill, for she was a virgin, and it seemed hard to Amnon to do anything to her. ³ But Amnon had a friend whose name was Jonadab, the son of Shimeah, David's brother; and Jonadab was a very shrewd man. ⁴ He said to him, "O son of the king, why are you so depressed morning after morning? Will you not tell me?" Then Amnon said to him, "I am in love with Tamar, the sister of my brother Absalom." ⁵ Jonadab then said to him, "Lie down on your bed and pretend to be ill; when your father comes to see you, say to him, 'Please let my sister Tamar come and give me some food to eat, and let her prepare the food in my sight, that I may see it and eat from her hand.'" ⁶ So Amnon lay down and pretended to be ill; when the king came to see him, Amnon said to the king, "Please let my sister Tamar come and make me a couple of cakes in my sight, that I may eat from her hand." ⁷ Then David sent to the house for Tamar, saying, "Go now to your brother Amnon's house, and prepare food for him." ⁸ So Tamar went to her brother Amnon's house, and he was lying down. And she took dough, kneaded it, made cakes in his sight, and baked the cakes. ⁹ She took the pan and dished them out before him, but he refused to eat. And Amnon said, "Have everyone go out from me." So everyone went out from him. ¹⁰ Then Amnon said to Tamar, "Bring the food into the bedroom, that I may eat from your hand." So Tamar took the cakes which she had made and brought them into the bedroom to her brother Amnon. ¹¹ When she brought them to him to eat, he took hold of her and said to her, "Come, lie with me, my sister." ¹² But she answered him, "No, my brother, do not violate me, for such a thing is not done in Israel; do not do this disgraceful thing!" ¹³ "As for me, where could I get rid of my reproach? And as for you, you will be like one of the fools in Israel. Now therefore, please speak to the king, for he will not withhold me from you." ¹⁴ However, he would not listen to her; since he was stronger than she, he violated her and lay with her. ¹⁵ Then Amnon hated her with a very great hatred; for the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her. And Amnon said to her, "Get up, go away!" ¹⁶ But she said to him, "No, because this wrong in sending me away is greater than the other that you have done to me!" Yet he would not listen to her. ¹⁷ Then he called his young man who attended him and said, "Now throw this woman out of my presence, and lock the door behind her." (Underlined and bolding added for clarity).

Amnon didn't love Tamar. He was merely consumed with passion and lust to have sexual relations with her. He followed bad advice from his cousin and acted purely upon the emotions of the moment without any concern for the consequences of his actions. He was so consumed with the desire to enjoy her body that he didn't even consider what his father or brother would think when they heard that he had raped Tamar. Later in 1 Samuel 13 the narrative tells how Absalom hated Amnon for raping his sister, and one day he found a way to murder Amnon.

So, what can we learn from Amnon's experience and untimely death? First, he followed the feelings of his heart without considering the consequences of his actions. Prov. 28:26 states, "He who trusts in his own heart is a fool^{<03684>}, but he who walks wisely will be delivered." A wise man would seek sound, biblical counseling, but a fool will never do this. Second, all he could think about was fulfilling his physical desires and passions. Ecclesiastes 7:1-6 state, "¹ A good name is better than a good ointment, and the day of one's death is better than the day of one's birth. ² It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, because that is the end of every man, and the living takes it to heart. ³ Sorrow is better than laughter, for when a face is sad a heart may be happy. ⁴ The mind of the wise is in the house of mourning, while the mind of fools^{<03684>} is in the house of pleasure. ⁵ It is better to listen to the rebuke of a wise man than for one to listen to the song of fools. ⁶ For as the crackling of thorn bushes under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool; and this too is futility." (Underline added for clarity.) In these verses Solomon was trying to drive home the truth that we need to look at life in light of eternity instead of living for the pleasures of the moment like a fool. Amnon didn't evaluate the consequences of raping Tamar or how his sin would affect the people around him. Third, he didn't care what Tamar thought about his wickedness. He was going to have his fun no matter what. Prov. 14:16 states, "A wise man is cautious and turns away from evil, but a

fool^{<03684>} is arrogant and careless.” Tamar tried to convince him to seek permission to marry her and thus satisfy his physical desires in a lawful and respectful way, but Amnon’s mind was made up. No one was going to convince him otherwise. Fourth, he did not understand that his sin would cause his premature death. Psalm 92:6 states, “A senseless man has no knowledge, nor does a stupid man^{<03684>} understand this: ⁷ That when the wicked sprouted up like grass and all who did iniquity flourished, it was only that they might be destroyed forevermore.” I suspect that Amnon never thought Absalom would kill him because he had raped Absalom’s sister. Well, he got a real surprise, but he didn’t have long to contemplate it, because by the time Amnon realized he was in trouble, he was a dead man. Hebrews 11:24-26 tells us ²⁴ *By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; ²⁵ choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; ²⁶ esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward”* KJV. Sin is indeed fun at the moment and many times pleasurable, but the enjoyment only lasts for a short time, and then payday arrives. The cost of our sin is almost always greater than we are willing to pay, but we must pay it anyway. It certainly was the case with Amnon. Fifth and finally, it destroyed his reputation in the community. Prov. 14:33 tells us that “Wisdom rests in the heart of one who has understanding, but in the hearts of fools^{<03684>} it is made known.” A man’s sin almost always comes to light in time, and then he must pay the penalty. In addition, Prov. 13:16 teaches us that “Every prudent man acts with knowledge, but a fool^{<03684>} displays folly.” Tamar told Amnon that if he raped her, he would “be like one of the fools in Israel,” and his reputation in the community would be trashed. He was so obsessed with the passion of the moment that wouldn’t listen. As a result, it turned out exactly as Tamar had predicted. His reputation was ruined by his greed and selfishness.

¹⁵ TWOT, vol. 1, pg.449

Application:

Even though I claim to be a believer, if I make a habit of pursuing physical pleasures today instead of pursuing things that are eternal, I am a fool. If I do this one time, I have been foolish. In either case I must bear the penalty for my poor choice(s).

Gregory, do you ever want something so badly that you are determined to have it no matter what you are advised or taught to the contrary? It may be something only you know about, but the LORD knows. I encourage you to be alert to the dangers of following your own passions. Instead, be prudent, use good understanding, and rely upon sound counsel.

Consider the following characteristics of a <03684> fool:

1. A <03684> fool cannot control his temper.

A) Losing your temper is not good.

There are many things that are true about a fool, but one thing is certain. He gets angry when he does not get his way or when someone seriously disagrees with him. Prov. 29:11 tells us that “A fool^{<03684>} always loses his temper, but a wise man holds it back.” Disagree with a fool sometime, and you will find out firsthand. It won’t take long either because Prov. 12:16 teaches us that “A fool’s^{<0191>} anger is known at once, but a prudent man conceals dishonor. He is opinionated and impatient, and once an argument gets started, you cannot win. Prov. 29:9 states that “When a wise man has a controversy with a foolish man^{<0191>}, the foolish man either rages or laughs, and there is no rest.” He insists that he is right, and he will not abandon an argument until or unless you agree with him. He is too stupid to realize that other people may know more than he does. Don’t bother getting into an argument with a fool because it is an exercise in futility. If you do happen to get into a serious discussion with a fool, follow the advice of Prov. 26:4-5. It says, ⁴ *Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you will also be like him.*” I have paraphrased verse four as “A fool is simple-minded, arrogant, lacks good sense, is unteachable because he is bull-headed, and is not able to grasp the seriousness of the consequences of his actions^{<a fool>}. Do not answer him in the same manner or from the same perspective^{<according to>} as he would answer you, otherwise, you will be just like him.” He may not grasp the significance of what you say, but he will have no excuse for his ignorance. When you do choose to speak with him, ⁵ *Answer a fool as his folly deserves, that he not be wise in his own eyes.*” I have

paraphrased verse five as “A fool is simple-minded, arrogant, lacks good sense, is unteachable because he is bull-headed, and is not able to grasp the seriousness of the consequences of his actions ^{<a fool>}. Answer him in a manner that exposes the pride and self-sufficiency of his foolish heart ^{<as his folly deserves>} so that he does not walk away thinking he was right all the time ^{<wise in his own eyes>}.”

Prov. 25:28 teaches us that once a man becomes truly angry, he is defenseless. It says, “*Like a city that is broken into and without walls is a man who has no control over his spirit.*” His anger so thoroughly consumes him that he cannot think logically. He will do and say things that he would never do if he were quiet and had time to think about what he was about to do. Since losing our temper is so disastrous, Eccl. 7:9 admonishes us by saying, “*Do not be eager in your heart to be angry, for anger resides in the bosom of fools* ^{<03684>}.” Anger emanates from the heart of a fool as naturally as wise words from a man of wisdom. He responds this way because he has no concept of the hurts and difficulties he will cause himself and others. It is nearly impossible for a fool to keep from losing his temper at the slightest provocation, but change is what he needs. We cannot change his mind, but we can pray that the LORD, by His grace and mercy, will change his heart.

When we get angry, we create all kinds of problems for ourselves and those around us. It is a foolish and sinful thing to do. Prov. 14:17 tells us that “*A quick-tempered man acts foolishly* ^{<0200>}, *and a man of evil devices is hated.*” An angry man can’t see his foolishness at the moment, but when things settle down, he will have an opportunity to contemplate what he has done. During those quiet times, he might see the foolishness in his actions. Prov. 29:22 also tells us that “*An angry man stirs up strife, and a hot-tempered man abounds in transgression*” When we get angry unjustifiably, we pile one sin upon another. A fool does this over and over again, but since he will not submit to God’s rule over him, he doesn’t see himself as bound by moral restrictions. It simply doesn’t matter to him. Whether or not he recognizes his error, he will have to pay for his sins someday. There is no sense in trying to save him from the error of his ways because Prov. 19:19 tells us that “*A man of great anger will bear the penalty, for if you rescue him, you will only have to do it again.*” Until or unless the LORD changes his heart, he does not have the power within himself to affect a change and abandon his anger.

Application:

If I am quick to lose my temper as a normal habit, I am a fool. If I happen to lose my temper once in a great while, I am being foolish.

Gregory, does it take a lot of abuse to make you angry? If you answer yes, then thank the LORD for possessing the self-discipline to control yourself. If your answer is no, you have an opportunity to work on gaining self-discipline. Each time you lose your temper, you disappoint the LORD even if no one else knows about it.

B) Having self-control is much better.

No man in his right mind wants to be a fool, but a man who loses his temper easily has become a fool without realizing it. We who know the LORD need to recognize that we should be different. We need to allow the Scriptures to mold us into becoming the kind of men who require a great deal of abuse to become angry. The more we learn about God’s Word, the more understanding we will gain. Prov. 17:27 says that “*He who restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding.*” Also, Prov. 14:29 says that “*He who is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who is quick-tempered exalts folly.*” The understanding we gain from Scripture will, in time, make us patient as long as we live what we learn. Then, the more understanding we gain from Scripture, the more discretion we will gain. Prov. 19:11 teaches, “*A man’s discretion makes him slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook a transgression.*” As we will learn in the commentary on Proverbs chapter two, if we will search for wisdom, we will gain discretion as we learn about who God is, what He is, and how He works in the affairs of men. This discretion will teach us how we should live in this present world. The more discretion we gain, the more self-restraint we will gain.

A man who is slow to become angry is a strong man. Prov. 16:32 tells us that “*He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city.*” When a man is so consumed by anger that he cannot think clearly, he is no match for a man who is in control of his emotions and able to think clearly. A man in control always has the advantage, and it is an extremely powerful advantage. Prov. 29:8 states, “*Scorners set a city aflame, but wise men turn away anger.*” The wise man does this by carefully calculating what he is going to say and then saying it in a gentle manner. This is true especially when there is strife and contention. Prov. 15:18 tells us that “*A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but the slow to anger calms a dispute.*” Being calm and collected will knock the wind out of the sails of any argument or disagreement. This is true because having self-control will

allow you to think clearly and give a gentle answer to your opponent. Prov. 15:1 states, “*A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.*” It is hard to argue with someone who will not argue back. It takes all the heat out of a disagreement. Using cutting or degrading words does just the opposite. Prov. 25:23 tells us that “*The north wind brings forth rain, and a backbiting tongue, an angry countenance.*” This verse is quite interesting for me because the KJV rendering is quite different from the NASB. The KJV reads, “*The north wind driveth away rain: so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue.*” (KJV) Whereas the NASB says the north wind brings rain, the KJV says it drives the rain away. The NASB says that a backbiting tongue makes someone angry whereas the KJV says that an angry face stops backbiting. When your mom and I toured Israel, I tried to find out which direction storms come into Israel. It was kind of funny when one of the citizens finally told me that the majority of storms come in from the west. Oh well, so much for finding an answer that would help me.

Application:

If I am slow to become angry, I have learned self-discipline and have saved myself from the adverse effects of the foolish things I would otherwise do if I lost my temper.

Gregory, have you come to the point where you can control your temper all the time? If not, I encourage you to work overtime at gaining that self-discipline.

C) Do not befriend a man who loses his temper easily.

When we discuss Prov. 1:8-19, we will learn that in order to be successfully at using the four steps of learning and living the book of Proverbs, we must avoid or abandon any friends who would try to entice us to join them in their sinful activities (see Chapter 5 in the commentary, Proverbs 1:8-19). The same is true when it comes to an association with a fool. Prov. 22:24-25 warns us, “*Do not associate with a man given to anger; or go with a hot-tempered man, or you will learn his ways and find a snare for yourself.*” If you are around him long enough, he will affect you, but not for good. In the end, you will also become one who loses his temper at the slightest provocation. It is much better to avoid picking up a bad habit than to try to get rid of one once you have it. I encourage you to avoid a fool, and you won’t have to worry about picking up any of his undesirable traits.

Application:

Even though I claim to be a believer, if I befriend a man who loses his temper at the slightest provocation, I will have walked into a trap that will catch me and in time make me just like him.

Gregory, I encourage you to avoid making a quick-tempered man a close friend or spending any appreciable amount of time with him. By separating yourself from him, you will be able to maintain your good and godly lifestyle and stay even-tempered.

2. A fool is dim-witted and easily deceived.

One of the benefits of gaining wisdom is that you will be able to see where you are going in life and discern the best way to get there. A fool is not so fortunate. Prov. 14:8 tells us that “*The wisdom of the sensible is to understand his way, but the foolishness of fools is deceit.*” What the fool sees as good, pleasurable, and fun is not what it appears. His outlook is distorted by his passion and ignorance, and he sees what he wants to see. He doesn’t see life as it really is, but rather, he sees life as he wishes it were. The deceit is that he thinks his manner of living is good, whereas good people know that his manner of living is hurtful and destructive.

Prov. 14:24 states, “*The crown of the wise is their riches, but the folly of fools is foolishness.*” The same Hebrew word is used for folly and foolishness. This verse is interesting because it defines a word by using the same word. The essence of this verse is that the thing that is foolish about a fool is the foolish things he does. It seems that everything about a fool is stupid, senseless, and foolish. He doesn’t have the smarts to know better, and when another foolish person invites him to participate in some foolish activity, his foolish approach to life guides him right into the fun. It is stupid, but he does it anyway. There is simply no other way to describe him.

Application:

Even though I claim to be a believer, if I am easily deceived or easily convinced to do things that are stupid or senseless, I am a fool. If I get involved one time, I have been foolish. Either way, I must endure the consequences of my poor choice(s).

Gregory, make a habit of carefully evaluating every choice in life and be prudent enough to proceed only with those choices that will produce good and beneficial results. Life will go much smoother for you if you do.

3. A <03684> fool is prone to make wrong choices.

All of us make mistakes and/or wrong judgments every once in a while, but it shouldn't be something we do on a regular basis. Unfortunately, the fool makes poor decisions as a regular habit of life. His propensity to make wrong choices gets him into all sorts of hurts and difficulties, but he isn't smart enough to learn from his mistakes.

Application:

Even though I claim to be a believer, if I make a habit of making poor choices, I am a fool. If this is not a habit of life, each time I make a poor choice, I have been foolish.

Gregory, do you learn from the poor choices other people make? More importantly, do you learn from the poor choices you make? I certainly hope so. If not, determine that starting today, you will avoid making the same mistakes twice.

4. A <03684> fool spends all of his money on today.

A fool does not know how to handle money. He blows it as fast as he gets it. Prov. 21:20 tells us that *"There is precious treasure and oil in the dwelling of the wise, but a foolish man <03684> swallows it up."* He has never learned the value of money, so he will not save for the future. All that matters to him is the fun and pleasures he can enjoy with his money today.

A man who thinks money is security and pours all his energies into getting rich is a fool. Psalm 49:6-14 clearly illustrates this principle. It says,

"¹ Hear this, all peoples; give ear, all inhabitants of the world, ² both low and high, rich and poor together. ³ My mouth will speak wisdom, and the meditation of my heart will be understanding. ⁴ I will incline my ear to a proverb; I will express my riddle on the harp. ⁵ Why should I fear in days of adversity, when the iniquity of my foes surrounds me, ⁶ even those who trust in their wealth and boast in the abundance of their riches? ⁷ No man can by any means redeem his brother or give to God a ransom for him—⁸ for the redemption of his soul is costly, and he should cease trying forever—⁹ that he should live on eternally, that he should not undergo decay. ¹⁰ For he sees that even wise men die; the stupid <03684> and the senseless alike perish and leave their wealth to others. ¹¹ Their inner thought is that their houses are forever and their dwelling places to all generations; they have called their lands after their own names. ¹² But man in his pomp will not endure; he is like the beasts that perish. ¹³ This is the way of those who are foolish, and of those after them who approve their words. Selah. ¹⁴ As sheep they are appointed for Sheol; death shall be their shepherd; and the upright shall rule over them in the morning, and their form shall be for Sheol to consume so that they have no habitation."

Lots of people pursue wealth thinking it will bring security and contentment only to discover that it will fail them in the end.

A fool is always looking for greener pastures or some get-rich-quick scheme, but he is not willing to work hard and smart in order to acquire lasting wealth. Prov. 17:24 tells us that *"Wisdom is in the presence of the one who has understanding, but the eyes of a fool <03684> are on the ends of the earth."* There are lots of people who are hoping to win it big in the lottery, so they "give" their money away to buy tickets. Unfortunately, there are lots of people buying lots of tickets, and many of them cannot afford to do so. It is a foolish thing to do, but they do it

because they are fools. When it comes to saving and investing for the future, it is clear that he who does not plan for the future, plans to fail in the future.

A fool thinks he can purchase understanding and wisdom with money. Prov. 17:16 says, *“Why is there a price in the hand of a fool^{<03684>} to buy wisdom, when he has no sense?”* A fool thinks that money can make anything happen only to find out farther down the road that it cannot. Nonetheless, he will try. It is interesting that he would even try to buy wisdom since he hates all the discipline and sacrifice it would take to acquire it the right way.

Application:

Even though I claim to be a believer, if I spend all my income on today, if I make acquiring money or possessions a driving force in my life, or if I am always chasing one get-rich-scheme after another, I am a fool. If I get involved once and abandon it, I have been foolish.

Gregory, avoid the get-rich-quick opportunities. I have found that regular, consistent hard work, careful spending, and regularly saving for the future are what will make a man well-to-do over time. It is foolish to always be looking for greener pastures. There is nothing wrong with trying to better yourself, but making the best of what you have is the most productive approach to life.

5. A ^{<03684>} fool has a distorted outlook on life.

The ^{<03684>} fool looks at life as he wishes it were instead of what it actually is. Eccl. 2:14 tells us that the fool does not know where he is going in life or what will become of him. It says that *“The wise man’s eyes are in his head, but the fool^{<03684>} walks in darkness.”* A fool always makes choices based upon what he feels at the moment instead of using sound, godly counsel. His opinion drives the course of his life, and since he doesn’t know where he is going in life, he is truly blinded and walking in darkness.

Most, if not all fools, are liberals. He readily accepts the outlook of liberals in their approach to every situation in life. Eccl. 10:2-3 tell us that ² *A wise man’s heart directs him toward the right, but the foolish man’s^{<03684>} heart directs him toward the left.* ³ *Even when the fool walks along the road, his sense is lacking, and he demonstrates to everyone that he is a fool^{<05530>}.* It is amazing to me how a liberal democrat suddenly becomes a committed conservative when Christ comes into his life and changes him from the inside out. I have seen this happen over and over again, and each time it is a miracle. Yet, what Christ does for any man who will accept the finished work of Jesus Christ and be born again by faith is a miracle.

A fool wants nothing more than to have fun and experience pleasures, so don’t depend upon him for anything. Prov. 26:6 tells us that *“He cuts off his own feet and drinks violence who sends a message by the hand of a fool^{<03684>}.”* A sure way to get hurt or experience disaster is to depend on a fool to do something important for you. I have paraphrased this verse as

“A fool is simple-minded, arrogant, lacks good sense, is unteachable because he is bull-headed, and is not able to grasp the seriousness of the consequences of his actions^{<a fool - 03684>}. Sending a man like this to deliver a critical message will damage your cause as much as if you were to be beaten to a pulp^{<drinks violence>}, and it will cripple your cause as much as if you had both of your feet amputated^{<cuts off his own feet>}. 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 or 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, and your message will have been sent in vain. Therefore, don’t depend on a fool—ever!” (JLSParaphrase)

Finally, a fool consumes himself by sleeping his life away. Eccl. 4:4-6 tell us, ⁴ *I have seen that every labor and every skill which is done is the result of rivalry between a man and his neighbor. This too is vanity and striving after wind.* ⁵ *The fool folds his hands and consumes his own flesh.* ⁶ *One hand full of rest is better than two fists full of labor and striving after wind.”* The dictionary defines *consume* as *to destroy or do away with as by fire*. Therefore, by being lazy the fool literally destroys his life and his health. Unfortunately, he is not smart enough to realize it.

Application:

Even though I claim to be a believer, if I have a liberal outlook on life, if I am undependable, or if I am lazy, I am a fool. A wise man holds a conservative view on life.

Gregory, you are a conservative, you are dependable, and you are a hard worker. Praise the LORD that I don't need to worry about these with you.

6. A [fool](#) is unteachable.

When we discuss Prov. 1:20-33, you will see the downward spiral of those who reject wisdom. They will ultimately follow the road to disaster. On the other hand, Prov. 8:1-11 tells about everything wisdom has to offer those who will accept her. We will look much more closely at this passage when we dissect Proverbs chapter eight, but for now we will take a brief look. This passage reads as follows:

¹ Does not wisdom call, and understanding lift up her voice? ² On top of the heights beside the way, where the paths meet, she takes her stand; ³ beside the gates, at the opening to the city, at the entrance of the doors, she cries out: ⁴ "To you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men. ⁵ O naive ones, understand prudence; And, O fools, understand wisdom. ⁶ Listen, for I will speak noble things; and the opening of my lips will reveal right things. ⁷ For my mouth will utter truth; and wickedness is an abomination to my lips. ⁸ All the utterances of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing crooked or perverted in them. ⁹ They are all straightforward to him who understands, and right to those who find knowledge. ¹⁰ Take my instruction and not silver, and knowledge rather than choicest gold. ¹¹ For wisdom is better than jewels; and all desirable things cannot compare with her.

It is obvious from this passage that wisdom has a lot to offer anyone who will seek her God's way. Unfortunately, many men and women will miss out on the blessings of owning and using wisdom because they either don't know how to find her or they don't care to try.

It is clear from our text in Proverbs 1:7b that fools despise (hate) wisdom and instruction. Nonetheless, wisdom invites even the fool to come to her and enjoy the blessings and safety she provides. The fool will never do this, but she invites him just the same. Consider Proverbs 1:20-33 below. We will take a close look at this passage later in chapter six of this commentary, but for now, we will only look at it with reference to the fool. The text reads,

*²⁰ Wisdom shouts in the street, she lifts her voice in the square; ²¹ at the head of the noisy streets she cries out; at the entrance of the gates in the city she utters her sayings: ²² "How long, O naive ones, will you love being simple-minded? And scoffers delight themselves in scoffing and fools hate knowledge? ²³ "Turn to my (wisdom's) reproof, Behold, I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you. ²⁴ Because I called and you refused, I stretched out my hand and no one paid attention; ²⁵ and you neglected all my counsel and did not want my reproof; ²⁶ I will also laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your dread comes, ²⁷ when your dread comes like a storm and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you. ²⁸ Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but they will not find me, ²⁹ because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD. ³⁰ They would not accept my counsel, they spurned all my reproof. ³¹ **So they shall eat of the fruit of their own way and be satiated with their own devices.** ³² For the waywardness of the naive will kill them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them. ³³ But he who listens to me shall live securely and will be at ease from the dread of evil."
(Text bolded for clarity).*

As you can see, the fool basically tells wisdom to go take a hike because he hates wisdom and all she stands for. As a result, the fool's complacency will lead him down the road to his own demise.

Eccl. 4:13-16 shows how the fool is unteachable even though this is not the lesson Solomon was trying to convey in the passage. It reads,

¹³ *A poor yet wise lad is better than an old and foolish ^{<03684>} king who no longer knows how to receive instruction.* ¹⁴ *For he has come out of prison to become king, even though he was born poor in his kingdom.* ¹⁵ *I have seen all the living under the sun throng to the side of the second lad who replaces him.* ¹⁶ *There is no end to all the people, to all who were before them, and even the ones who will come later will not be happy with him, for this too is vanity and striving after wind.”*

Strong's defines *instruction* in this text as [to admonish, warn, teach](#). We seem to have many people in authority in our country who will no longer listen when the American people try to warn them about the detrimental effects of ignoring the constitution or the wishes of the people. The sad part is that even when some of these rulers are found guilty of breaking the law and are punished, they don't seem to learn from the experience. This is what Prov. 17:10 is referring to when it says, *“A rebuke goes deeper into one who has understanding than a hundred blows into a fool ^{<03684>}.”* It is unfortunate, but a fool, even a political one, will never learn.

Application:

Even though I claim to be a believer, if I come to the point where I am no longer willing to receive discipline or correction, I am a fool. If I refuse to listen to sound, godly counsel once in a while I am being foolish.

Gregory, please don't reject sound, godly counsel. If you are unsure about what you are being advised, question it. If you don't feel comfortable proceeding with what wise counselors advise, wait until you are convinced that to proceed is the right thing to do. Only a fool makes snap decisions.

7. A ^{<03684>} fool takes great pleasure in committing wickedness.

There is no arguing about the fact that sin can be very enjoyable, but it is only enjoyable for a season. Moses knew this truth, and it was part of why he chose to side with God's people rather than enjoy the pleasures of Egypt for a season. A fool really enjoys doing wicked things. Prov. 10:23 tells us that *“Doing wickedness is like sport to a fool ^{<03684>}, and so is wisdom to a man of understanding.”* It's all a big game for the fool because all he wants to do is have fun and experience physical pleasures. Prov. 15:21 states, *“Folly is joy to him who lacks sense, but a man of understanding walks straight.”* A fool would never seriously think of giving up his wicked ways because Prov. 13:19 teaches, *“Desire realized is sweet to the soul, but it is an abomination to fools ^{<03684>} to turn away from evil.”* He enjoys his wickedness so much that doing anything else doesn't even cross his mind. In fact, Prov. 26:11 tells us that he is so committed to having fun and enjoying his wickedness that *“Like a dog that returns to its vomit is a fool ^{<03684>} who repeats his folly ^{<0200>}.”* I have never understood what makes a dog eat its own vomit, but they do. I believe the reason a fool repeats the same stupid or senseless things even after he has been severely punished is because his foolishness is so deeply entrenched in his heart. Prov. 12:23 teaches us that *“A prudent man conceals knowledge, but the heart of fools ^{<03684>} proclaims folly ^{<0200>}.”* Since a fool is driven by the desires of his heart (emotions), he can do nothing else. He will never change even if his foolishness ends up getting him killed. Consider Prov. 27:22 which says, *“Though you pound a fool ^{<0191>} in a mortar with a pestle along with crushed grain, yet his foolishness will not depart from him.”* Don't waste your time trying to change a fool. You can't do it. Only the grace of God can change his heart and make him a wise and prudent man.

Application:

Even though I claim to be a believer, if I make a habit of doing wicked deeds or am unwilling to give up a sinful habit, I am a fool. If I choose to engage in a wicked act or deed one time, I have been foolish. In either case I must endure the consequences of my sinful actions.

Gregory, every time you become aware that you are committing or have committed something that is sinful or wicked, confess it, abandon it right away, and choose not to do it again. Don't let sinful habits get a foothold in your life and take control.

8. A <03684> fool's speech is not good.

A) He talks non-stop.

Have you ever been around someone who starts talking before he puts his brain into gear and then keeps on talking long after he has finished what he has to say? He says things an average person would never say. Why is that? It is because a sensible person thinks about what he is going to say and how it will affect people around him. Not so for a fool. He will talk and talk and talk long after he should have stopped. Solomon told us as much in Eccl. 10:12-15. It reads, ¹² *Words from the mouth of a wise man are gracious, while the lips of a fool <03684> consume him; ¹³ the beginning of his talking is folly and the end of it is wicked madness. ¹⁴ Yet the fool multiplies words. No man knows what will happen, and who can tell him what will come after him? ¹⁵ The toil of a fool so wearies him that he does not even know how to go to a city.* Notice the text says that he starts his conversation with foolish words and ends with wicked, sinful words. He is everything the wise man is not. A wise man will follow the advice of James 1:19-22 which states, ¹⁹ *This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; ²⁰ for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. ²¹ Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. ²² But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.* A wise man is quick to listen, slow to talk, and slow to become angry. A fool, on the other hand, is slow to hear, quick to talk, and has a hair-trigger temper. His continual talking is one of the tell-tale signs that will help you recognize him as a fool.

Application:

Even though I claim to be a believer, if I talk and talk and talk even after I have finished what I have to say, I am a fool. If I do this once in a while, I am being foolish.

Gregory, always remember James 1:19-20. It says, *“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.”* (KJV) When you listen far more than you talk, you show real wisdom.

B) His speech is corrupt and senseless.

As we saw in Ecclesiastes 10:12-15 above, the fool's words are sinful and wicked. That is what Solomon asserted in Prov. 19:1. It states, *“Better is a poor man who walks in his integrity than he who is perverse in speech and is a fool <03684>.”* Don't expect any better from a fool because it is all he knows. In fact, this kind of speech is all he wants to know. Prov. 15:14 tells us that *“The mind of the intelligent seeks knowledge, but the mouth of fools <03684> feeds on folly <0200>.”* He doesn't have the slightest interest in learning sound, trustworthy knowledge. Rather, he is only interested in learning more and better ways to do and say the stupid and senseless things he already knows. Since this is all he wants to hear it is no wonder he says such stupid, senseless, and immoral things. Prov. 15:2 supports this idea when it says, *“The tongue of the wise makes knowledge acceptable, but the mouth of fools <03684> spouts folly <0200>.”* That's just the way he is, so don't expect any better from a fool.

Application:

Even though I claim to be a believer, if I say stupid, senseless, or immoral things on a regular basis I am a fool. If I say such things once in a while, I am being foolish. In either case, what I say can easily come back to haunt me in the future.

Gregory, be careful about what you say and how you say it. Think about what you are going to say before you say it. By doing so you will never mistakenly say whatever comes to mind. Speaking your mind can cause serious problems for you in return.

C) When he talks, he is only interested in telling you what he thinks.

The next time you talk to a fool you will see how opinionated a man or woman can be. A fool wants nothing more than to tell you what he is thinking or knows, and since he always feels he is right, he doesn't want to listen to

your opinion if it differs from his. Prov. 18:2 tells us that “A fool^{<03684>} does not delight in understanding, but only in revealing his own mind.” This is one of the key indicators that will confirm to you that he is indeed a fool.

Application:

Even though I claim to be a believer, if I feel that I must always give my opinion on every subject to show that I know more than the next guy, I am a fool. If I share my opinion when it is not asked for, I have done foolishly.

Gregory, opinions are like noses. Everybody has one. It doesn't mean we have to share our opinion though. Be very careful to keep yours to yourself until or unless someone asks for your opinion. You would do better to spend more time listening because you will learn more that way.

D) His speech causes all sorts of disagreements and hard feelings.

A fool doesn't have tact. In fact, I doubt he could even spell the word. It is not unusual for him to do or say things that will start a serious argument that ultimately ends up in a physical altercation. Prov. 18:6 teaches us that “A fool's^{<03684>} lips bring strife, and his mouth calls for blows.” He is rude, crude, and uncaring. It is no wonder he starts all kinds of disagreements and creates all sorts of hard feelings. In fact, it doesn't bother him to lie about someone else, and he will even resort to slander. The dictionary defines slander as [the utterance of false charges or misrepresentations which defame or damage another's reputation](#). Prov. 10:18 makes it clear that “He who conceals hatred has lying lips, and he who spreads slander is a fool^{<03684>}.” It would be hard for him to speak differently because he doesn't understand sound, trustworthy knowledge. Therefore, he cannot speak it or share it with others. Consider Prov. 15:7 which states, “The lips of the wise spread knowledge, but the hearts of fools^{<03684>} are not so.” It is no wonder he gets himself and others into all sorts of disagreements since he doesn't have the sense to do any better.

Application:

Even though I claim to be a believer, if I lie or spread slander, I am a fool. If I lie or slander even once, I have been foolish.

Gregory, if you always tell the truth, people will trust you. If you lie or slander someone one time, it is possible that people will never trust you again.

E) His mouth will eventually be his undoing.

It won't take long before a fool will say or do something that will come back to haunt him. When a man or woman talks as much as a fool talks, it is nearly impossible to avoid getting into trouble. Prov. 18:7 asserts this truth when it says, “A fool's^{<03684>} mouth is his ruin, and his lips are the snare of his soul.”

Application:

Even though I claim to be a believer, if I talk the same way a fool would talk, I can expect to endure the same difficulties the fool will experience in life.

Gregory, always keep in mind that everything you say has consequences. Say good and edifying things, and your life will be blessed. This is the best way to live.

F) Wise words become powerless when a fool says them.

Since a fool is totally uninterested in learning sound, trustworthy knowledge, he ends up gaining useless and perverted knowledge. When he talks, it is evident that he is stupid and senseless. If he were to try to share a wise proverb with someone else, his beliefs and manner of living would make the proverb totally impotent to affect the listener for good. Prov. 26:7 tells us that “Like the legs which are useless to the lame, so is a proverb in the mouth of fools^{<03684>}.” According to this verse, when a fool speaks a proverb or wise saying, that fact that he is saying it

makes the proverb as powerless to affect the listener for good as paralyzed legs will enable a man to walk. Then too, Prov. 26:9 tells us that *“Like a thorn which falls into the hand of a drunkard, so is a proverb in the mouth of fools^{<03684>}.”* Understand that a drunken man does not feel pain. You can hurt him, but he won’t know he has been hurt until he is sober. In a similar manner, when a fool speaks a proverb or wise saying, that fact that he is saying it makes the proverb completely unable to convict or inspire the heart of the listener.

Application:

Even though I claim to be a believer, if I act or talk like a fool, I too will become powerless to affect people for good. If I do it even one time, I will damage my reputation and effectiveness for the LORD.

Gregory, always strive to speak wisely and say things that will edify the listener. This is the only way to be effective in your service for the LORD.

G) Any vows he might make to God are nothing more than empty words.

There is a time and a place for making promises to God. Making a vow to God is a good thing, but when you do make a vow, God fully expects you to keep your promise. Solomon supported this truth when he wrote Eccl. 5:1-7. It states,

“¹ Guard your steps as you go to the house of God and draw near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools^{<03684>}; for they do not know they are doing evil. ² Do not be hasty in word or impulsive in thought to bring up a matter in the presence of God. For God is in heaven and you are on the earth; therefore let your words be few. ³ For the dream comes through much effort and the voice of a fool through many words.

⁴ When you make a vow to God, do not be late in paying it; for He takes no delight in fools^{<03684>}. Pay what you vow! ⁵ It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay. ⁶ Do not let your speech cause you to sin and do not say in the presence of the messenger of God that it was a mistake. Why should God be angry on account of your voice and destroy the work of your hands? ⁷ For in many dreams and in many words there is emptiness. Rather, fear God.” (I have underlined certain words for emphasis).

Verses 4-7 tell us that it is better not to make a vow than to make a vow and not fulfill your promise. Then too, it is inexcusable to fail to keep your vow and then try to give excuses as to why you couldn’t or wouldn’t keep your promise. This is an important principle, but the thing I want you to see from this passage is how the fool approaches God and makes promises to Him. In verses 1-3 of the above text, we are told that we should not be in a hurry to make a vow to God. Rather, we should do a lot of listening and soul-searching before we tell God what we intend to do. Don’t be like the fool. He will promise all sorts of things as a result of the emotions of the moment, but he has no intentions of performing what he has promised. He merely likes to hear himself talk. That is the only work he intends to do. Gregory, you can and must do better.

Application:

Even though I claim to be a believer, if I make promises to God and don’t keep them, I am a fool whether or not I intended to do so. If I do it one time, I have been very foolish. Either way, God will be extremely disappointed and will hold me accountable.

Gregory, before you actually make a promise to God, think it through carefully. Calculate whether you are willing to do what it takes to fulfill your promise. If you are convinced that it is the right thing to do, then make the vow. If you are not fully convinced in your mind and heart, then abstain. Err on the safe side. Why would you want God to be angry with you?

H) You may have to shout to get a fool's attention.

It should come as no surprise that you might have to shout in order to get the attention of bunch of fools. Eccl. 9:13-18 gives a short story that validates this point. It says, ¹³ *Also this I came to see as wisdom under the sun, and it impressed me.* ¹⁴ *There was a small city with few men in it and a great king came to it, surrounded it and constructed large siegeworks against it.* ¹⁵ *But there was found in it a poor wise man and he delivered the city by his wisdom. Yet no one remembered that poor man.* ¹⁶ *So I said, "Wisdom is better than strength." But the wisdom of the poor man is despised and his words are not heeded.* ¹⁷ *The words of the wise heard in quietness are better than the shouting of a ruler among fools* ^{<03684>}. ¹⁸ *Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner destroys much good."* I understand that the thrust of the passage is that wisdom is much better than physical strength, but it also says that wisdom whispered in a quiet place is much better than having to shout to a bunch of fools in order to get their attention. I suspect that even by shouting, you still may not be able to get their attention. One of the basic characteristics of a fool is that he wants to do all the talking, and he will rarely listen carefully to someone else.

J) If he hears you speak wise words, he will only despise you because of them.

Prov. 23:9 states, *"Do not speak in the hearing of a fool* ^{<03684>}, *for he will despise the wisdom of your words."* It is no wonder that a fool will despise the wisdom of your words, because as we saw in Prov. 1:7 the fool hates wisdom. In fact, he hates to be corrected about anything. Don't be surprised if this happens to you. Simply consider the source of the contempt and go on with your life.

Application:

If I am in the presence of a fool, I will be careful to keep my wisdom to myself because the fool won't learn from or appreciate the wise words I have to say. If the fool happens to overhear me talking with someone else, so be it.

Gregory, when you recognize a man as a fool, keep your distance. There is no benefit in debating with him or trying to teach him wisdom. No matter what wise words you speak, he will still despise you for your wisdom.

9. A ^{<03684>} fool hurts everyone around him.

A) He will hurt his parents.

Because a fool is convinced that he is always right, he thinks that he knows more than his parents or those in authority over him. Consequently, he will not listen to any of them when they try to help him see the error of his ways or learn to live a good, godly, and productive life in the community. As a result, he will continue doing and saying stupid and senseless things, and this will make it obvious to all that he is a fool. One of his outstanding character flaws is that he despises his parents. Prov. 15:20 tells us that *"A wise son makes a father glad, but a foolish man despises his mother."* As a result, a fool's parents are grieved not only by the way their son treats them but also by the stupid and senseless things he does for all to see. Prov. 10:1 through 29:27 is a collection of random verses. Solomon started this section with Prov. 10:1 which states, *"The proverbs of Solomon. A wise son makes a father glad, but a foolish son is a grief to his mother."* In addition, Prov. 17:25 tells us that *"A foolish son is a grief to his father and bitterness to her who bore him."* In time, the fool's parents will become so frustrated with him that they may wish they had never conceived and birthed him. Prov. 17:21 teaches us that *"He who sires a fool* ^{<03684>} *does so to his sorrow, and the father of a fool* ^{<05036>} *has no joy."* In the end, the stupid and senseless conduct of a foolish son could make a father so embarrassed and disappointed that he may give up on life and possibly even give up on God. When that happens, the father's life could easily be ruined and end in disaster. Prov. 19:13 tells us that *"A foolish son is destruction to his father, and the contentions of a wife are a constant dripping."* Pity the parents who rear a son only to find out in the end that he is a fool.

B) He will hurt himself.

Since a fool enjoys wickedness and is committed to doing stupid and senseless things, it is just a matter of time before he must be punished for it. You can bank on it. That punishment may be mild, or it may be severe. In either case, Proverbs says that a whip is ready and waiting to be applied to the back of a fool. Prov. 19:29 states,

“Judgments are prepared for scoffers, and blows for the back of fools.” In addition, Prov. 26:3 tells us that *“A whip is for the horse, a bridle for the donkey, and a rod for the back of fools.”* A fool will not submit to anyone who tries to discipline or correct him, so as Prov. 15:10 tells us, *Grievous punishment is for him who forsakes the way; he who hates reproof will die.* The worst part about the whole thing is that a fool cannot see his demise coming.

C) He will hurt his friends.

Since the fool is stupid and senseless, he is content to be ignorant. The average person is ignorant in one or more areas, but they are not opposed to learning. The fool, though, will reject wisdom and understanding because he thinks he already knows all he will ever need. Since he is stupid, ignorant, and does senseless and wicked things, he will adversely affect his friends. Prov. 27:17 tells us that *“Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.”* In this verse we see how good and godly people affect their friends for good. Unfortunately, less desirable people affect their friends too, but not in a good way. No, they will drag their friends down to their own level. Prov. 14:7 tells us that a fool will so adversely affect his friends that, in time, they too will become stupid and senseless, unable to understand trustworthy knowledge and sound understanding. This verse reads, *“Leave the presence of a fool, or you will not discern words of knowledge.”* It is bad enough that a fool drags his friends down to his level morally, intellectually, and spiritually, but he will also lead them into all sorts of hurts, heartaches, and punishment. Prov. 13:20 tells us that *“He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.”* It may take a while for his friends to be so adversely affected, but it will happen if they associate with him long enough. Therefore, avoid him.

D) He will hurt his employer and his fellow employees.

Gregory, you have had the unfortunate experience of working with a fool. You and I both know who I am talking about, and you know from experience that it is not a pleasant experience. An employer should at all costs avoid hiring a fool. Of course, the employer must be able to recognize a man or woman as a fool before he can reject them for employment. Prov. 26:10 teaches that *“Like an archer who wounds everyone, so is he who hires a fool or who hires those who pass by.”* The fool will provoke everyone until the workplace is in utter disaster. Hiring a fool is a certain way to make all the other employees disgruntled.

Application:

If I hire a fool, I have just caused great damage to my company. Run him off, and the company will have peace and prosperity once again.

Gregory, if you are ever in a position to hire people, don't hire a fool. He will only be a thorn in your side. If you do hire a man and find out that he is a fool, get rid of him as soon as you can.

E) He will hurt you if you happen upon him.

We have seen how the fool hurts his parents, hurts himself, hurts his friends, and hurts his fellow employees. Be careful because he will hurt you too. Be quick to recognize a fool and avoid him. Don't become his friend, and try to keep from crossing his path. Prov. 17:12 tells us to *“Let a man meet a bear robbed of her cubs, rather than a fool in his folly.”* I suspect you have seen or read accounts of hikers who happened upon bear cubs that had wandered away from their mother. If the hikers retreated quickly enough, they were safe, but if they were near the cubs when the mother came into view, it was quite likely that the mother bear would attack the kickers. In such an attack it is possible that the bear could kill one or more of the people who got too close. Knowing the protective nature of a mother bear, we know to avoid her at all costs.

Likewise, knowing that a fool is going to do stupid and senseless things, it is the better part of wisdom to avoid him, especially when he is heavily involved in his foolish deeds. You and I could easily be seen as accomplices to his wicked or stupid actions. Then we would be punished right along with him. Such a situation is totally unnecessary, and we can avoid it by avoiding him. It is the sensible thing to do, and it is the safe thing to do.

Application:

If I associate with a fool, he will end up hurting me in some way or another. I won't let him do that. If I happen upon him while he is doing some foolish act, I can be hurt by it.

Gregory, as much as you like to help people, avoid a fool. You cannot help him. He is committed to his foolishness, and, in the end, he will hurt you. It is the better part of wisdom to keep your distance from him. If you could help him, it would be different, but a fool is totally committed to his foolishness.

10. A <03684> fool does not deserve honor or luxury.

Most people would love to enjoy a life of luxury, but few are willing to work as long and hard as it takes to arrive at the point in life where they become well-to-do. A fool doesn't want to work for what he gets, and he does not save for the future. Prov. 21:20 tells us that *"There is precious treasure and oil in the dwelling of the wise, but a foolish man swallows it up."* Since he does not save anything for the future Prov. 19:10 is right when it says, *"Luxury is not fitting for a fool; much less for a slave to rule over princes."* In actuality, he deserves to go without because he will not do what it takes to save and invest enough finances for a life of luxury.

In addition, he does not deserve honor or respect. Since he acts and reacts in a disgusting manner, it would be completely out of order to give him any kind of respect or honor. Prov. 3:35 tells us that *"The wise will inherit honor, but fools display dishonor."* Dishonor and shame are his lot in life since he does such stupid and senseless things. Honor is appropriate when someone has done something really great or courageous, but when honor is given to a fool it totally invalidates honor. Doing so makes the honor powerless to accomplish anything for good. Prov. 26:8 teaches us that *"Like one who binds a stone in a sling, so is he who gives honor to a fool."* If a rock cannot leave a slingshot, then the weapon is powerless. Honor is a thrilling experience when bestowed upon someone worthy of it, but it is a joke when bestowed upon a fool. Not only is honor powerless to accomplish anything good when bestowed upon a fool, it is totally out of place. Prov. 26:1 tells that *"Like snow in summer and like rain in harvest, so honor is not fitting for a fool."* This verse says it all. Enough said.

Application:

If I give honor to a fool, I have just invalidated all that honor stands for. Don't do it. Then too, since he spends everything he has on pleasures today and doesn't plan for the future, don't assist him in living a life of luxury. Let him experience the normal and natural results of spending everything he gets.

Gregory, don't encourage a fool by telling him how good or deserving he is. He is stupid and senseless, so he doesn't deserve any honor, and since he spends every penny he gets, he doesn't deserve to experience a life of luxury either. Don't be like him. Save a part of everything you make and invest it for the future.

11. God does not delight in him<03684>.

Eccl. 5:4-7 reads,

⁴ When you make a vow to God, do not be late in paying it; for He takes no delight in fools. Pay what you vow! ⁵ It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay. ⁶ Do not let your speech cause you to sin and do not say in the presence of the messenger of God that it was a mistake. Why should God be angry on account of your voice and destroy the work of your hands? ⁷ For in many dreams and in many words there is emptiness. Rather, fear God." (Words underlined for emphasis).

We have already examined these verses when we discussed the fool's speech, but let's look at God's view of a fool when he makes a promise. The New Testament states the God is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Therefore, He can certainly tell when someone is making a promise that he does not intend to keep. That is exactly what the fool does, and God finds it disgusting. We should not do the same, and we should not try to weasel out of a vow once we have made it. There is not much more we can say about this. We just need to be

genuine with God, and He will bless. The fool cannot be genuine with God because there is nothing genuine about him.

12. There is no hope for him[<03684>](#).

The most unfortunate thing about a fool is that he will never change. Prov. 27:22 tells us that *“Though you pound a fool in a mortar with a pestle along with crushed grain, yet his foolishness will not depart from him.”* He’ll keep doing the stupid and senseless things he likes even if those things get him killed. Since there is absolutely no hope of a fool becoming a wise man, how much hope do you give the man hasty in his words or the proud man? Consider the following verses. Prov. 26:12 reads, *“Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.”* In addition, Prov. 29:20 reads, *“Do you see a man who is hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him.”* It doesn’t give either of them much hope, does it?

Application:

Gregory, let a fool do as he wishes, and don’t try to change him. He is so committed to his foolishness that he will never change. Disaster awaits him down the road, and God will see to it that he gets what he deserves. Instead, invest your life in the lives of those who are teachable and will listen to the wisdom of your words.

The <0191> Fool.

[Return to Index](#)

He is morally corrupt and doesn’t have the sense to know better.

Strong’s indicates that this kind of fool:

- 1) acts and reacts on emotions;
- 2) hates wisdom and instruction, so he will not let anyone teach or correct him;
- 3) talks incessantly and annoys everyone around him;
- 4) will argue with anyone about anything and will fly off the handle if he doesn’t get his way;
- 5) is a master at doing evil, but doesn’t know how to do good; and
- 6) will not take responsibility for the hurts or losses he causes others to endure.

This type of fool has little or no moral, legal, or spiritual restraints. He does not have any respect for authority and does what he feels like doing when and where he feels like doing it. We must keep in mind, though, that this kind of fool makes decisions based upon how he feels at the moment. It isn’t surprising, then, that he would choose to do something hurtful or stupid. You might want to call him naïve, and in some sense of the word you would be right. Probably the best Bible illustration I can think of to demonstrate the <0191> fool is the man in Proverbs chapter seven. In the narrative Solomon was looking out his palace window when he saw a young, naïve man making his way to the house of an adulterous wife in order to enjoy illicit sexual pleasures with her. Prov. 7:6-8 tells us, *“For at the window of my house I looked out through my lattice, and I saw among the naïve, and discerned among the youths a young man lacking sense, passing through the street near her (the adulteress) corner; and he takes the way to her house.”* (Gray text added for clarity). Verses 21-23 tell us that *“With her many persuasions she entices him; with her flattering lips she seduces him. Suddenly he follows her as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as one in fetters to the discipline of a fool, until an arrow pierces through his liver; as a bird hastens to the snare, so he does not know that it will cost him his life.”* His was a stupid and costly endeavor, and he chose to do it because he did not have sound morals and was ignorant of the consequences of his sin. Without doubt his decision was a foolish thing to do. A wise man has sound, biblical morals and would find a good woman to marry if he felt pressured to engage in sexual pleasures. A fool has to enjoy his pleasures right now. A wise man can wait. This naïve man certainly personifies Prov. 10:21 when it says, *“The lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for lack of understanding.”* This is exactly what happened to this naïve man. Prov. 11:19 also tells us that *“He who is steadfast in righteousness will attain to life, and he who pursues evil will bring about his own death.”*

Reuben, Jacob’s firstborn son, did something similar to the naïve man in Proverbs chapter seven. Genesis 35:21-22 tell us that *“...Israel journeyed on and pitched his tent beyond the tower of Eder. It came about while*

Israel was dwelling in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine, and Israel heard of it." He could have found a woman and married her, but no, he disregarded sound morals and had to have his sexual passion satisfied without waiting. It is obvious that Reuben was a fool for doing such a thing. It not only ruined his reputation, but it ended up robbing him of the family inheritance.

Prov. 10:9 paints a picture of both of these men when it states, *"He who walks in integrity walks securely, but he who perverts his ways will be found out."* These men were certainly found out, and they had to pay the price for their sin.

Gregory, I pray that you will always discipline yourself to wait until you are married to enjoy sexual pleasures and that once you are married, you will enjoy these pleasures only with your wife. There is great reward in doing so, but the fool doesn't have such good and godly morals. You know better though, and I pray you always will.

Let's look at what Proverbs has to say about this fool.

1. The <0191> fool hates wisdom and the discipline it takes to acquire it.

Prov. 1:7b clearly states that *"fools<0191> despise wisdom and instruction."* Do you understand the significance of this statement? Look again at Prov. 1:2a. There you will see step one of the four steps to learning and living the book of Proverbs. The things the fool hates are the very things Solomon said that we are to learn if we want to find wisdom. It is no wonder the fool will never find wisdom. Besides, he wouldn't know what to do with wisdom if he were to stumble upon it. We will discuss *wisdom* and *instruction* later in this chapter, but for now it will be beneficial to briefly define these two words in order to understand the full import of Prov. 1:7b.

Wisdom → Strong's defines the word as 1) *skill (in war)*. This is the ability to plan and execute effective strategy which will enable a soldier to fight a winning battle; 2) *wisdom (in administration)*. This is the ability to manage a project or responsibility in an efficient and effective manner; 3) *shrewdness*. The dictionary defines "shrewd" as *keen-witted, clever, or sharp in practical affairs*. Therefore, a shrewd man has the mental ability to effectively and efficiently handle all the different affairs that come his way; 4) *wisdom, prudence (in religious affairs)*. A "prudent man" is one *who carefully considers the consequences of every choice presented to him. If the consequences will be good and beneficial, he will proceed, but if they will be hurtful or costly, he will refrain*. Therefore, wisdom is the ability to see and understand what the Scriptures say we should do and then obey them as instructed; and 5) *wisdom (ethical and religious)*. This is the ability to discipline ourselves to be good and godly in our dealings with others and with God Himself.

Instruction → Strong's defines this Hebrew word as *discipline, chastening, correction*. We touched on this earlier in this chapter. Discipline is the aspect of teaching, chastening is the aspect of calling one down or reprimanding him, and correction is the aspect of showing someone where he or she has done something wrong. The fool thinks he is right all the time and doesn't need to learn anything more than what he already knows. Therefore, he adamantly rejects any attempt by wise men to discipline, chasten, or correct him for his own good. You can bank on this kind of response from a fool.

A fool's downward spiral quite often starts in childhood where he refuses to listen to his parents as they try to teach or correct him. Prov. 15:5 tells us that *"A fool<0191> rejects his father's discipline, but he who regards reproof is sensible."* It may be that his parents did not discipline him as a child or that he was hell-bent on rebellion. In either case, a fool rejects parental authority. Unfortunately, disrespect for parental authority leads to disrespect for an employer and for governmental authority as well. The fool is convinced in his mind that he is right and feels his parents don't know what they are talking about. This was the case when Agur rebuked his two sons Ithiel and Ucal in Proverbs chapter thirty. Prov. 12:15 teaches us that *"The way of a fool<0191> is right in his own eyes, but a wise man is he who listens to counsel."* He is so certain he is right that he won't listen to anyone who tries to tell him differently. This approach to life ends in disaster. Prov. 16:5 sums up his condition by saying, *"There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death."* Unfortunately for the fool, he will likely experience a premature death before he will learn this lesson.

Application:

Even though I claim to be a believer, if I make a practice of rejecting my parents' advice and discipline, I am a fool. If I reject governmental authority, I am a fool. If I do either of these on rare occasions, I am being foolish. My parents have insight I might not have, and I am obligated to obey the laws of the land.

Gregory, when you ask your mom or me for advice, it is to your advantage to carefully evaluate our insight. You are an adult now and will make your own decision, of course. We will not attempt to give you advice unless you ask for it, but when you do, don't take lightly the wisdom God has given us on your behalf. I also caution you to obey the laws of the land. If some laws are unjust, do what you can to get them changed, but do it in a legal manner.

2. The <0191> fool is totally unteachable.

One prominent characteristic of a fool is that he will not let anyone teach him unless the one doing the teaching is another fool. The primary goal of discipline is to teach the offender how to do right and avoid the same error in the future. Prov. 15:32 tells us that *"He who neglects discipline despises himself, but he who listens to reproof acquires understanding."* A fool not only neglects discipline, but he also refuses to accept what his parents or those in authority have to say when they try to discipline or correct him. The dictionary defines the word *"despise"* as **to look down on with contempt and scorn**. Therefore, according to this verse, the fool looks down upon himself with contempt and scorn without even realizing he is doing it.

Another prominent characteristic of a fool is that he will never change. Proverbs 27:22 tells us that *"Though you pound a fool^{<0191>} in a mortar with a pestle along with crushed grain, yet his foolishness will not depart from him."* I have paraphrased this verse as, "A fool will never change. Even if you were to grind him to powder, he would still be proud, bull-headed, immoral, and argumentative. He will never abandon his passion for doing stupid and senseless things that produce bad and costly results because he is unteachable and thinks he is fine just the way he is." Don't waste your time trying to change him because you will not be successful.

Application:

Even though I claim to be a believer, if I commonly reject correction or discipline, I am a fool and only hurting myself. If I do this on rare occasions, I am being foolish. In either case, I am shortsighted and will miss God's best only to have to endure the consequences of my poor choices.

Gregory, determine in your heart and mind that you will never reject discipline, instruction, or correction. In Prov. 6:20-24a, Solomon encouraged his son to accept discipline. There he wrote,

²⁰ My son, observe the commandment of your father and do not forsake the teaching of your mother; ²¹ bind them continually on your heart; tie them around your neck. ²² When you walk about, they will guide you; when you sleep, they will watch over you; and when you awake, they will talk to you. ²³ For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching is light; and reproofs for discipline are the way of life ²⁴ to keep you from the evil woman, from the smooth tongue of the adulteress.....

Even a torpedo and a guided missile need course corrections on their way to the target. We do too.

3. You can recognize the <0191> fool by the way he talks.

A) A fool's continual talking will generate his ruin.

You don't have to listen to a fool for long before his talking verifies that he is indeed a fool. Not only does he say stupid and senseless things, but he keeps on talking long after he has finished what he has to say. Prov. 10:10 teaches us that *"He who winks the eye causes trouble, and a babbling fool^{<0191>} will be ruined."* What does it mean to *"babble?"* A paraphrase of the dictionary definition is **to talk, and talk, and talk about things of no importance**. Prov. 10:8 reinforces this truth when it says, *"The wise of heart will receive commands, but a babbling fool^{<0191>} will be ruined."* What does it mean to come to *ruin*? According to Strong's Concordance, it means **to be thrust down, be**

thrust away, be thrown down, be cast aside. In essence, it means to be discarded like a piece of garbage. That is the kind of ruin the fool will experience. Prov. 10:14 states that “*Wise men store up knowledge, but with the mouth of the foolish^{<0191>}, ruin is at hand.*” Fools don’t want to learn, so they won’t store knowledge for later use. All they want to do is talk and tell you about the stupid and senseless things they like to do. Ruin is unavoidable with this approach to life. It is unfortunate that the fool is blinded to this truth.

B) A fool’s talking will generate punishment for him.

Prov. 14:3 states, “*In the mouth of the foolish^{<0191>} is a rod for his back, but the lips of the wise will protect them.*” According to Reader’s Digest August 2010, Calvin Coolidge once said, “I have never been hurt by what I have not said.” I understand this statement to mean that he was never hurt by the words he could have said and didn’t. Not saying what does not need to be said is wisdom, but not saying what needs to be said is cowardice. Carefully evaluating what to say and when to say it shows wisdom and will keep us out of trouble. On the other hand, a fool will say anything that comes to mind without considering the damage it might cause. Consequently, his own words will generate punishment that he must endure.

There is a reason the fool’s mouth generates punishment for him. Since he is unteachable, he will not and cannot learn knowledge that leads to good understanding. As a result, Prov. 10:13 tells us that, “*On the lips of the discerning, wisdom is found, but a rod is for the back of him who lacks understanding.*” Then too, Prov. 16:22 teaches us that “*Understanding is a fountain of life to one who has it, but the discipline of fools^{<0191>} is folly.*” The fool cannot speak in a discerning manner because he lacks the knowledge and understanding that would enable him to speak with discernment. Thus, he only talks about the stupid and senseless things he likes. He will never comprehend or experience the joy and peace that permeates the life of a man who possess good understanding and discernment.

I have read about men who have had their tongues cut out so that they could not speak about Christ. The men I read about were people who were proclaiming the gospel and were silenced in this way. These people have great reward reserved in heaven when the LORD calls them home, but the fool is not so blessed. Because he only wants to talk about the stupid and senseless things he likes, his perverted words will generate severe punishment for him even to the point of having his tongue cut out. Prov. 10:31 teaches us that “*The mouth of the righteous flows with wisdom, but the perverted tongue will be cut out.*”

C) A fool might appear wise if he would ever stop talking.

Proverbs 17:28 states, “*Even a fool^{<0191>}, when he keeps silent, is considered wise; when he closes his lips, he is considered prudent.*” We have already talked about how the fool lacks knowledge and understanding, so he certainly is not willing to restrain his words or his anger. He says and does whatever he feels like doing whenever and wherever he feels like doing it. People who know him know full well that he is a fool, but if he were ever to keep his mouth shut long enough to listen, he could actually “appear” to be a wise man. It would be a logical mistake because a wise man does a lot more listening than talking.

Prov. 24:7 tells us that “*Wisdom is too exalted for a fool^{<0191>}, he does not open his mouth in the gate.*” It is unlikely that a fool will speak up and say wise words when he is in a crowd of wise men. Besides, he wouldn’t know what to say. Whatever he might have to say would only verify to all who hear him that he is a fool.

D) A fool makes promises he never intends to keep.

The last thing we need to look at regarding the fool’s speech is Prov. 20:25. It states, “*It is a trap for a man to say rashly, "It is holy!" and after the vows to make inquiry.*” A fool will make promises to God that he never intends to keep. We discussed this aspect before, so there is no need to belabor the point here. When you make a vow to God, keep it.

Application:

If I talk in a wise manner, that’s good, but if I talk in a foolish manner, that’s not good. In either case people will see me for what I am based upon what they hear me say. Therefore, I must choose to speak wisely.

Gregory, when you talk, follow the admonition in Colossians 4:6 which says, *“Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.”* You already do this for the most part. Please, please keep doing it.

4. The <0191> fool will argue with anyone, any time.

Prov. 20:3 states, *“Keeping away from strife is an honor for a man, but any fool<0191> will quarrel.”* One of the distinguishing characteristics of a fool is that he is quick to start an argument, or he will be quick to enter into an argument even if it has nothing whatsoever to do with him. He is often provoking someone in some way or another. Prov. 27:3 tells us that *“A stone is heavy and the sand weighty, but the provocation of a fool<0191> is heavier than both of them.”* Hauling heavy sand or rock will wear you out physically, but a fool’s continual agitation will wear you out emotionally. I’m sure you have met people like this. They always have an opinion, and they insist that you agree with them, or they will argue their point until you are tired of hearing them talk. If you don’t agree with them, they won’t let the argument die. Prov. 29:9 teaches us that *“When a wise man has a controversy with a foolish<0191> man, the foolish man either rages or laughs, and there is no rest.”* The best thing you can do around a fool is to turn and walk away from an argument as soon as you see it developing. Prov. 17:14 encourages us to abandon an argument when it says, *“The beginning of strife is like letting out water, so abandon the quarrel before it breaks out.”* A wise man knows better than to get into an argument with a fool. In fact, just last night I was on break and a young fellow came into the break room. As soon as he saw me, he tried to engage me in a conversation. I knew he loved to hear himself talk so he could share his opinion, so before he got started, I simply told him that I don’t care what he had to say, and I walked away. I hate to be rude to anyone, but it was the only way to have peace and quiet without an argument.

Application:

Even though I claim to be a believer, if I argue and disagree with others as a normal practice, I am a fool. If I argue with someone needlessly once in a while, I am being foolish. There is nothing wrong with a good debate where both parties agree to disagree without becoming defensive or upset. The problem with an argument is that it is usually heated, and most of the time, there is no resolve.

Gregory, it is good to debate when both parties agree to disagree without becoming angry or offended. I have heard it said that a sign of maturity is being able to know you are right without having to prove it to someone else. Avoid arguments because most of the time they are unproductive.

5. The <0191> fool gets angry easily.

Another distinguishing characteristic of this fool is that he will lose his temper at the slightest provocation. Prov. 12:16 teaches us that *“A fool’s<0191> anger is known at once, but a prudent man conceals dishonor.”* When he does get angry, he doesn’t try to hide it. In reality, he doesn’t have the sense to realize the damage he is doing when he flies off the handle. In the end, his anger will create serious problems for him. It may even cause his premature death. Job 5:1-5 supports this idea when it says,

¹ *“Call now, is there anyone who will answer you? and to which of the holy ones will you turn?*
² *For anger slays the foolish<0191> man, and jealousy kills the simple. ³ I have seen the foolish<0191>*
taking root, and I cursed his abode immediately. ⁴ His sons are far from safety, they are even
oppressed in the gate, and there is no deliverer. ⁵ His harvest the hungry devour and take it to a
place of thorns, and the schemer is eager for their wealth.” (Words underlined for emphasis).

You can expect a committed fool to experience an early death. There are exceptions to be sure, but as a general rule he will die relatively young. The results of his anger and his stupid and senseless manner of living will most likely dictate this kind of outcome.

Application:

Even though I claim to be a believer, if I lose my temper easily and often, I am a fool. Even during those infrequent times when I lose my temper, I am being foolish. In either case, I must endure the adverse consequences of having lost my temper.

Gregory, the best thing you can do is follow the advice of James 1:19-20 where we read, *"This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God."* On the contrary, your patience and temperance do work the righteousness of God.

6. The <0191> fool disregards moral, legal, or spiritual restraints.

One of the reasons a fool doesn't want anything to do with God is that he enjoys his sin. In fact, he enjoys it so much that he doesn't want anyone telling him he must repent and abandon it. Because he is so entrenched in this philosophy, he will experience hurts and hard times. Psalm 107:17 says, *"Fools^{<0191>}, because of their rebellious way, and because of their iniquities, were afflicted."* David saw this in his lifetime, and we can see it happen to fools in our lifetime too. It is the natural display of the principle of sow and reap.

Why does a fool hold so firmly to his evil ways? Jeremiah 4:22 sheds light on the reason. This passage states,

"For My people are foolish^{<0191>}, they know Me not; they are stupid children and have no understanding. They are shrewd to do evil, but to do good they do not know."

As you can see in this verse, the fool is a master at doing wicked things. He enjoys doing them, and he is always looking for more and better ways to do those wicked things. Unfortunately, he doesn't have a clue about how to do good to others or be good before the LORD. This truly fulfills the definition of this kind of a fool – he is wicked and does not have the sense to know better.

Application:

Even though I claim to be a believer, if I look lightly upon sin and feel I can indulge in some sins without experiencing the consequence, I am a fool. If I choose to indulge in a sinful activity now and then, I am acting foolishly. In either case I must endure the adverse consequences of my sinful actions.

Gregory, as we have discussed in part one of this chapter, if you have a genuine fear of the LORD, you will avoid or abandon every sinful practice out of love and respect for the LORD. To do anything else shows that you don't really fear the LORD no matter what you claim to believe. Son, you appear to have a genuine fear of the LORD. Praise God for that. I hope you will hold on to that conviction for the rest of your life.

7. The <0191> fool will steadfastly refuse to make restitution for the wrongs he has done to others.

Prov. 14:9 states, *"Fools^{<0191>} mock at sin, but among the upright there is good will."* This verse would seem to convey the idea that a fool ridicules the idea of sin and those who try to live in a good and godly manner. When we examine the meanings of the Hebrew words, such is not entirely the case. Fools do mock and ridicule the idea of sin, and they do look down upon those who want to live godly, but there is more. A fool mocks the very idea of making restitution for the things he has done against others and the damages that result from those actions.¹⁶ In a sense, this is a logical outcome of his approach to life. When we consider that a fool is a master at doing evil but doesn't have the sense to realize that he is sinning, it is natural for the fool to be incapable of understanding that he is responsible for the damage or loss he causes others to endure. In many cases, young people going through public schools in America are not held accountable for their actions. Therefore, many of them adopt the philosophy of a fool. The whole thing is pathetic. Many of our country's parents have really failed their children in this important area.

¹⁶Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, volume 1, page 19

Application:

Even though I claim to be a believer, if I can't be persuaded to be responsible enough to make restitution for the hurts or losses I have caused someone else, I am a fool. If I do it one time, I have been foolish.

Gregory, there is great joy and peace of mind when we make matters right with someone we have hurt or offended. A clean conscience makes all the difference in the life of a believer. Always strive to make things right so that you can have that clean conscience, void of offence.

8. The <0191> fool is hostile toward God.

This kind of fool doesn't want anything to do with God. Oh, but when the results of his stupid and senseless deeds cause hurts, heartaches, and losses to come back upon him, he will become angry with God for letting this happen to him. Prov. 19:3 states, "*The foolishness <0200> of man ruins his way, and his heart rages against the LORD.*" Since the fool feels he is the master of his own destiny, he will at some point fly off the handle at God because he feels God has singled him out for punishment. The fool simply cannot see that he has generated his own punishment by the stupid and senseless things he does, so he blames God. Prov. 14:2 supports this idea when it says, "*He who walks in his uprightness fears the LORD, but he who is devious in his ways despises Him (God).*" We who know the LORD in salvation understand that blaming God is a stupid thing to do, but a fool can't comprehend this because he doesn't understand spiritual things.

Application:

Even though I claim to be a believer, if I allow myself to become angry with God, I am a fool. If I blame God for something that happened to me and then get over it in a short period of time, I have been foolish. In either case, I will have destroyed any fellowship I might have had with the LORD until or unless I repent of my sin.

Gregory, you and I both remember how at one point you were so very bitter against the LORD, but by His mercy He helped you over it. Now you can do as Philippians 3:13b-14 tell us, "*...forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*" (KJV) Your future abounds with opportunities to love and trust the LORD even in the most difficult situations.

The <05036> Fool.

[Return to Index](#)

This kind of fool is mean, selfish, and closed to reason.

1. He is this way because he will not listen to reason.

This fool must certainly be an unhappy person because he simply will not listen to reason. He does what he wants, and no one is going to tell him differently. He is his own man, and he will fight you in order to keep on doing the things he loves. The best example of the <05036> fool is found in Proverbs chapter thirty. Here Agur was rebuking his two sons Ithiel and Ucal. Their father used some very, very sophisticated logic in the chapter, and during his oracle, he used the word for fool and foolish 2 times. Both occurrences were very appropriately placed in his rebuke. I highly suspect that Agur felt like the father in Prov. 17:21 which reads, "*He who sires a fool does so to his sorrow, and the father of a fool <05036> has no joy.*" Proverbs 30 is Agur's best attempt at salvaging his two wayward sons, but I suspect that his heart was broken over their rebellion and sin.

Near the end of Agur's rebuke, he tried to get across to his sons the truth that there are some things that people simply cannot stand, and these two boys were among those things. Prov. 30:21-23 tell us that "*Under three things the earth quakes, and under four, it cannot bear up: Under a slave when he becomes king, and a fool <05036> when he is satisfied with food, under an unloved woman when she gets a husband, and a maidservant when she supplants her mistress.*" The thing about a <05036> fool is that when he is full and satisfied after a meal there is nothing to keep him from being the mean, bull-headed, self-gratifying man that he is. He will provoke everyone around him to disgust and contempt, but he doesn't care. He is mean to the core. No one can live in peace with a fool like him.

When Agur had finishing his rebuke, he encouraged his boys to recognize the error of their ways and repent. Prov. 30:32-33 tells us, *“If you have been foolish^{<05034>} in exalting yourself or if you have plotted evil, put your hand on your mouth. For the churning of milk produces butter, and pressing the nose brings forth blood; so the churning of anger produces strife.”* Had these two boys exalted themselves in pride? Read my commentary on the chapter, and you’ll see for yourself that they had. They had no respect for their parents, they had a distorted view of sin and their own sinfulness, they were extremely proud, and they were overly critical of other people. They thought they were the best, and they expected the best in everything. So, they had indeed been foolish, and they were classic [fools](#). Since these boys were mean-spirited and closed to reason, it is highly unlikely that they saw the error of their ways and repented. I guess it is possible, but I doubt it. Prov. 13:10 says that *“Through insolence comes nothing but strife, but wisdom is with those who receive counsel.”* The dictionary defines *“insolence”* as [to be boldly disrespectful in speech or behavior](#). It also defines *“strife”* as [the act or state of fighting or quarreling](#). Insolent behavior is generally fueled by a proud heart accompanied by a mean spirit. Ithiel and Ucal were certainly this kind of young men. In Agur’s conclusion, he told the boys that if they continued giving other people grief, eventually the people they were mistreating would give them grief in return. The principle of sow and reap normally works that way. See my commentary on Proverbs chapter 30 for a better idea of what these two boys were doing that made Agur feel he must approach them about their sin.

Application:

Even though I claim to be a believer, if I am selfish and mean-spirited, I am a fool. If in some isolated situation I am selfish or mean toward someone else, I will have been very foolish. In either case, people will see my actions and reactions. These things will do real damage to my reputation and effectiveness for Christ.

Gregory, as First Peter 3:4b tells us, we should conduct ourselves *“with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.”* Kindness and generosity always reap good benefits in return and are often effective in reaching souls for Christ. In the end, others are more likely to listen when you give them the gospel. This is what Solomon was referring to when he wrote Prov. 3:3 which states in part, *“Do not let kindness and truth leave you.”*

2. He speaks harsh and cutting words.

Prov. 12:18 says, *“There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.”* The dictionary defines *“rashly”* as being [too hasty or incautious in acting or speaking; reckless](#). This is someone who says whatever comes to mind without considering the consequences of what he says. Someone like this almost always reaps hurtful and costly consequences in return. I can think of two Bible characters who illustrate this kind of fool.

The first was a rich man named Nabal. In First Samuel 25, the story is told of how David sent messengers to Nabal nicely asking for help with supplies for his men. Verses 2-11 tell how instead of treating David’s men nicely, **Nabal answered rashly**. I have paraphrased his answer something like this: “Who is this David? Does he think he is important or something? Lots of servants are running away from their masters, and he is just another one of them. Who do you think you are, asking me to give you my hard-earned food and water since I don’t even know where you have come from? Go take a hike !”

As a result, David told his men to arm themselves because they were going to squash this Nabal like a bug. In the meantime, one of Nabal’s servants told Abigail, Nabal’s wife, about how well David’s men had treated Nabal’s servants and how they had protected Nabal and all he owned. Then they told her how badly Nabal had treated David’s men. When she heard, she knew that Nabal was about to be on the receiving end of David’s wrath. So Abigail collected some really good food and went out to meet David and his men hoping to change his mind about killing Nabal. She encouraged him not to pay any attention to this worthless man called Nabal. David took Abigail’s gift and thanked her for convincing him to abandon his revenge. Later Abigail told Nabal what she had done, and he immediately died of a heart attack. David heard about Nabal’s death, and knowing how valuable and virtuous Abigail was, he sent for her to become his wife. All of this happened because Nabal was a mean, selfish man, and no one could change his mind. He fit the description of the [fool](#) perfectly. His demise was unfortunate, but the principle of sow and reap normally works this way.

The second Bible character was Haman in the book of Esther. He was a proud man, and he would do anything to gain a powerful position in the Persian court. Read the narrative in Esther and see how he hated a Jew named

Mordecai because the man would not bow down to Haman out of respect for his political position. In the story, Haman planned to kill all of the Jews in the kingdom and hang Mordecai. He spoke harsh and cutting words about the Jews and convinced the king to allow the king's citizens to kill all the Jews in the kingdom. He also had a tall gallows constructed specifically for Mordecai. He was mean and divisive. He would not listen to reason, so in the end Haman was hanged on his own gallows. Again, the principle of sow and reap proved true.

Application:

Even though I claim to be a believer, if I speak rash, harsh, or cutting words as a regular manner of living, I am a fool. If I slip and say them occasionally, I have acted foolishly. In either case, I will have to live with the consequences of my sin.

Gregory, always strive to speak in a kind and loving way. When you do, others will see your love and concern, and your testimony for Christ will be enhanced and effective.

3. He cannot say anything that is excellent or outstanding.

Every fool will say and do things that are stupid and senseless. They may be driven by different passions, but in the end, they produce the same results. Since a fool does and says stupid and senseless things and hates to be corrected or disciplined, he does not have sound understanding or discernment. Therefore, he is incapable of saying anything outstanding. Prov. 17:7 tells us that “*Excellent speech is not fitting for a fool^{<05036>}, much less are lying lips to a prince.*” The dictionary defines “*excellent*” as *outstandingly good of its kind; of exceptional merit, virtue, etc.* A great orator will speak great thoughts because he is a highly learned man, but a fool doesn't possess that kind of knowledge or understanding. Therefore, all he can speak about are the stupid and senseless things he knows.

4. He hates God and spurns Him.

Psalm 74:18 states, “*Remember this, O LORD, that the enemy has reviled, and a foolish^{<05036>} people has spurned Your name.*” In a similar manner Psalm 74:22 says, “*Arise, O God, and plead Your own cause; remember how the foolish^{<05036>} man reproaches You all day long.*” What does it mean to “*spurn*” or “*reproach*” God? The dictionary defines “*spurn*” as *to push or drive away contemptuously with or as with the foot or to refuse or reject with contempt or disdain.* It defines “*reproach*” as *to accuse of and blame for a fault so as to make feel ashamed.* Therefore, according to these verses, the ^{<05036>} fool rejects God, treats Him with contempt, and blames God for all of his own troubles. His mean spirit coupled with an unwillingness to listen to reason drive this kind of a fool to detest God and blame him for everything that goes wrong in his life.

Job's wife didn't necessarily detest God or try to reproach Him, but she took a fool's approach to Job's difficult situation. Instead of trusting in the goodness of God, she advised Job to curse God and die like she would have done if she were in his situation. Job's response to her is recorded in Job 2:10 where we read, “*But he said to her, 'You speak as one of the foolish^{<05036>} women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?' In all this Job did not sin with his lips.*” At least at this point in Job's trial, his wife's mind was closed to reason. This is what made her act like a fool for that period of time.

5. He will not allow God to rule over him.

Psalm 14:1 states, “*The fool^{<05036>} has said in his heart, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds; there is no one who does good.*” Psalm 53:1 reads almost the same. It states, “*The fool^{<05036>} has said in his heart, 'There is no God,' They are corrupt, and have committed abominable injustice; there is no one who does good.*” The fact that one verse uses the words “*abominable deeds*” and the other uses “*abominable injustice*” is of little importance to our discussion here. The thing to remember is that both verses state that in the fool's mind “*there is no God.*” I have heard several sermons by good preachers where they asserted that the phrase “*There is no God*” actually means in the Hebrew, “*There is no God for me.*” This makes sense when referring to this kind of a fool because he is undisciplined, opinionated, and closed-minded to reason. Simply put, the fool doesn't want anyone telling him what he can and can't do. He has determined in his heart what he wants to do, and he'll attempt to do it even if it gets him killed. This kind of person is stupid because as Prov. 12:1 states,

“Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid.” A fool will also get lost on the path of life and end up in disaster. Prov. 10:17 tells us that, *“He is on the path of life who heeds instruction, but he who ignores reproof goes astray.”* The fool will experience both of these things because he does both of them.

Application:

Even though I claim to be a believer, if I live in a manner that leaves God out of my life, I am a fool. If I live for Christ on a regular basis but choose to leave God out for a period of time so that I can enjoy some pet sin, I am foolish. Either way my fellowship with the Father is broken until or unless I repent and forsake my sin.

Gregory, if God is God, and He is, then He deserves our obedience. Try to be aware of the fact that He is watching you 24 hours a day. Therefore, live right so that he will be pleased with all that you do and think. Don't allow yourself to slip and live like He wasn't there. It leads to disaster, and you don't want to go there.

6. He will walk into a disastrous situation without seeing the danger.

Because a fool is ignorant and undisciplined, he cannot see the danger in some of the things he chooses to do. Abner was one such man. Second Samuel 3:33 tells us that *“The king chanted a lament for Abner and said, “Should Abner die as a fool ^{<05036>} dies?”* So, how does a fool die? Simply put, he will walk to his death totally unaware that he is about to die. To him the event was simply another opportunity to practice the stupid and senseless things he liked to do. In Abner's case he was a soldier, and he should have known that Joab hated him for killing Joab's brother in battle. Verse 30 of that chapter tells us *“So Joab and Abishai his brother killed Abner because he had put their brother Asahel to death in the battle at Gibeon.”* Instead of being cautious and keeping his distance from Joab, Abner walked right into an embrace with Joab where Joab could thrust a dagger into Abner's mid-section. Only a fool would walk into a situation like that. A wise man would never do such a thing.

Application:

Even though I claim to be a believer, if I am careless enough to go places and do things that will hurt me, I am a fool. If I am careful as a normal habit of life but occasionally lay aside discernment and good judgment so that I can do something or go somewhere that will hurt me, I have been foolish. In either case I must endure the consequences of my poor decisions.

Gregory, always approach both your walk with the LORD and the circumstances of life with the awareness and caution you use when you work security. Prudence is the normal practice of evaluating every choice in life. If the outcome will be good and beneficial, then proceed, but if the outcome will be hurtful or costly, it is best to refrain. Use prudence in your daily walk, and you will avoid walking blindly into some disastrous situation.

7. He will gladly go about amassing a fortune illegally or unethically.

Prov. 15:27 states, *“He who profits illicitly troubles his own house, but he who hates bribes will live.”* A fool will do a lot of things that will trouble his own house, and this is one of them. Jeremiah 17:11 warns us that *“As a partridge that hatches eggs which it has not laid, so is he who makes a fortune, but unjustly; in the midst of his days it will forsake him, and in the end he will be a fool.”* The emphasis here is on being dishonest and taking unfair financial advantage of innocent people. Anyone who does this is a fool and will someday experience the disastrous results of his sin. We understand that some men seem to prosper while they are cheating other people out of their money, but if such a person is not punished in this life, he must still stand before the LORD in judgment. He will pay dearly then. Any man who jeopardizes his future like this is a fool.

Laban was one such man. Genesis tells us that he tried numbers of times to take unfair advantage of Jacob, and if the LORD had not protected Jacob, Laban would have succeeded. In the end, Laban lost all that he had and returned home licking his wounds. This is just another example of the principle of sow and reap.

Application:

Even though I claim to be a believer, if I make acquiring great wealth the focus of my life, I am a fool, especially if I try to gain it by illegal, illicit, or unethical means. If I take unfair financial advantage of someone even one time, I will have acted foolishly. In either case the LORD will call me into account for my sin.

Gregory, I have found by experience that steady, hard work over the years is productive. When it is coupled with controlled spending and saving, it will cause a man to become well-to-do. I didn't say he would become rich, but he will have sufficient means to meet his needs, to give to others in need, and to have enough to retire in comfort. Working the multi-level, get-rich-quick schemes will work for a very few people, but most people will work at it for a short time and find that it isn't really all that productive. The grass isn't always greener on the other side of the hill.

A summary of the <05036> fool.

Isaiah 32:6 pretty much sums up the characteristics of this kind of fool when it says, "*For a fool <05036> speaks nonsense, and his heart inclines toward wickedness: to practice ungodliness and to speak error against the LORD, to keep the hungry person unsatisfied and to withhold drink from the thirsty.*" We've talked about most of these, but we'll close this section by taking a quick look at this verse.

The fool

Speaks nonsense—he speaks only the stupid and senseless things he knows. He doesn't have the understanding or discernment to do anything else.

Inclines toward wickedness—his heart is perverted—he doesn't have the sense to know better.

To practices ungodliness—he does all the things a godly man would never choose to do.

To speaks error toward God—He blames God for all of his troubles.

He is mean-spirited—He is willing to withhold from people what they justly deserve.

Having seen what Proverbs and other selected Scriptures have to say about this fool, let's make a general summarization. The fool is the exact opposite of a man who fears the LORD. For this summary I will compare a man who fears the LORD with a wise man.

A fool lives for himself while a wise man lives for his LORD.

A fool says whatever comes to mind while a wise man ponders what to say.

A fool lives for today while a wise man lives with eternity in mind.

A fool loses his temper while a wise man is patient.

A fool is greedy while a wise man is generous.

A fool is mean while a wise man is kind and truthful.

A fool is foolish and stupid while a wise man is wisely informed.

A fool is unteachable while a wise man is always in the process of learning.

Folly or foolishness <0200>

[Return to Index](#)

According to Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, this Hebrew word "*seems to be the special product of a fool.*"¹⁷ *Folly* and *foolishness* are the two words Proverbs uses for this Hebrew word. The "product" or "consequences" of a fool's actions are almost always detrimental and generate punishment, disgust, or loss. We will look at what Proverbs has to say about this "product."

¹⁷ Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, vol. 1, page 20.

1) The reason for folly <0200>

To begin with, a fool's stupid and senseless actions are an expression of what is in his heart. Prov. 12:23 tells us, "*A prudent man conceals knowledge, but the heart of fools proclaims folly <0200>.*" For reasons known only to

him, his whole inner being is consumed with foolish thoughts and actions. It is who he is, not simply what he does. Since this is what he is on the inside, it is only natural that he would speak and act so as to proclaim things that generate undesirable, hurtful, and/or costly results. He is apparently incapable of doing anything else. This truth is evident by Prov. 26:11 which says, *“Like a dog that returns to its vomit is a fool who repeats his folly ^{<0200>}.”* It doesn’t make sense that a fool will repeat the same stupid things and receive the same troublesome and costly results, but he will. I don’t understand it. This is just who he is and what is in his heart. That’s why Prov. 13:16 says, *“Every prudent man acts with knowledge, but a fool displays folly ^{<0200>}.”* Every time he does something stupid, senseless, or wicked, people see what he has done and know right away that he is a fool.

Children are born with a propensity to sin. Prov. 22:15 tells us that, *“Foolishness ^{<0200>} is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of discipline will remove it far from him.”* It is a parent’s responsibility to discipline his child so that he will learn to do good and obey. If a parent fails to do this, a child may grow up getting his own way all of the time and end up being a fool in his actions and approach to life. Foolishness starts in the heart of a child, and it will be deep-seated in the heart of a teen or adult if he isn’t disciplined properly. If a child is left to his own devices, he will more than likely become more and more entrenched in his folly because Prov. 29:15 tells us, *“The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother.”* Then too, Prov. 16:22 says, *“Understanding is a fountain of life to one who has it, but the discipline of fools is folly ^{<0200>}.”* Quite literally, a child who has not learned good discipline will learn sinful habits and become more and more committed to doing and saying foolish things that will produce undesirable consequences. In fact, he will get to where he actually enjoys being foolish. Prov. 15:21 tells us, *“Folly ^{<0200>} is joy to him who lacks sense, but a man of understanding walks straight.”* There is a problem, though. The fool is unable to see that his idea of a good and worthwhile life is actually a lie. Prov. 14:8 reads, *“The wisdom of the sensible is to understand his way, but the foolishness ^{<0200>} of fools is deceit.”* When life is over and the fool looks back, he will be devastated to learn that he was so foolish as to pursue such a wasteful and unproductive life.

2) Losing your temper is folly ^{<0200>}

Losing your temper is not good. Prov. 14:29 says, *“He who is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who is quick-tempered exalts folly ^{<0200>}.”* What does it mean to *exalt folly*? It simply means to lift it up high for all to see. It is certain that everyone will see his folly, but they will see it as disgusting and repulsive. Prov. 14:17 reinforces this idea when it says, *“A quick-tempered man acts foolishly ^{<0200>}, and a man of evil devices is hated.”* A man who loses his temper easily will do all sorts of destructive and hurtful things he would never do if he were calm and collected. Unfortunately, after the deed is done, it is too late. He simply has to live with the consequences. Folly, then, is the undesirable and costly result of a man’s angry words or actions.

3) The planning and executing of folly ^{<0200>} is sin

A fool is constantly dreaming up more and better ways to do mischief or immoral things. Prov. 24:9 tells us that, *“The devising of folly ^{<0200>} is sin, and the scoffer is an abomination to men.”* Both God and men hate it. The fool can’t seem to see the detriment that results from what he is doing, so he goes full steam ahead with his plans and desires to do more foolish things. He is blinded to what it will cost him in the end.

4) Naïve people experience folly ^{<0200>}

It is bad enough that a full-blown fool will waste his life the way he does, but a naive man will do some of the same foolish things that will generate consequences equally as costly. Prov. 14:18 teaches, *“The naive inherit foolishness ^{<0200>}, but the sensible are crowned with knowledge.”* Whereas the fool does these things because he thinks he knows better, a naïve man will do those things simply because he is ignorant and doesn’t know any better. Either way, the results are just as bad and costly.

5) Folly ^{<0200>} is all a fool can talk about

A fool says stupid and senseless things because he has little or no moral, spiritual, ethical, or legal restraints. Prov. 15:2 tells us, *“The tongue of the wise makes knowledge acceptable, but the mouth of fools spouts folly ^{<0200>}.”* This is all he wants to say. Prov. 15:14 says, *“The mind of the intelligent seeks knowledge, but the mouth of fools feeds on folly ^{<0200>}.”* Teaching from another fool is the only kind of instruction he will receive, and he will receive it eagerly. Don’t expect anything different from him. As I said before, a fool will talk, and talk, and talk long after he

has finished what he has to say. He will even give someone an answer before he has heard both sides of an issue. Prov. 18:13 warns, *“He who gives an answer before he hears, it is folly and shame to him.”* He will answer, and people will look down upon him with shame. He doesn’t care, though, because he’s not smart enough to realize what is happening to him. Even the godly man David did it. In Second Samuel chapter sixteen, Mephibosheth’s servant Ziba came to David with a sob story about how he was supportive of David as king while his master was glad David was temporarily removed from the throne. Without hearing both sides of the story, David told Ziba that all of Mephibosheth’s property now belonged to Ziba. At a later date Mephibosheth came to David to tell him the truth, but even then, David did not resolve the situation equitably.

There are right and wrong ways to approach a fool. We touched on this before, but Prov. 26:4 warns, *“Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you will also be like him.”* I have paraphrased this verse as *“Do not answer a fool in the same manner or from the same perspective as he would answer you, otherwise you will be just like him.”* Instead, you should do like Prov. 26:5 suggests. It says, *“Answer a fool as his folly deserves, that he not be wise in his own eyes.”* I have paraphrased this verse as, *“Answer a fool in a manner that exposes the pride and self-sufficiency of his sinful heart so that he does not walk away thinking he was right all the time.”* Responding to a fool in this manner will produce the best results, if any good results are to be had.

6) The results of foolishness are always detrimental

So, what will be the end result for the one who says and does the stupid and senseless things a fool does? The most prominent thing I see is that, in time, the fool will experience a premature death. Prov. 5:23 says, *“He will die for lack of instruction, and in the greatness of his folly he will go astray.”* In context this verse is talking about the consequences of committing adultery with another man’s wife, but the principle stands true. If you commit immoral acts, you will have to endure the adverse consequences of your sinful acts.

Next, all he will have to show for his wasted life will be a reputation of having created hurts, heartaches, and losses for himself and others. Prov. 14:24 says, *“The crown of the wise is their riches, but the folly of fools is foolishness.”* This is like saying that the foolishness of fools is foolishness. It is all a waste, and there is nothing good or productive in it.

His foolishness will hurt all of those who befriend him. Prov. 17:12 warns, *“Let a man meet a bear robbed of her cubs, rather than a fool in his folly.”* His words and actions will generate costly and possibly painful consequences. You would do well to stay as far away from him as possible. That way you won’t be hurt by or because of him.

Proverbs 31 tells about the virtuous woman, but there is a woman who is the exact opposite of her. This woman is heartless and destructive. Prov. 14:1 tells us that, *“The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish tears it down with her own hands.”* This wife is bull-headed, thinks she knows it all, and is contentious. Because she thinks she is always right and must have her way or else, she will literally destroy her home and her family. It is tragic to see this happen, but unfortunately, it happens all too often.

Finally, somewhere in time, the foolish words and actions of a fool will come back upon him to make his life miserable, and instead of trying to figure out what to do differently to correct the situation, the fool will simply blame God for his troubles. Prov. 19:3 tells us, *“The foolishness of man ruins his way, and his heart rages against the LORD.”* It is unlikely that he will ever see the truth that he alone is the cause of all his troubles. God had nothing to do with it. The disaster he must face is all of his own doing.

Practical applications with regard to the fool and folly.

Now that we have examined the fool, let’s consider some practical observations and applications with regard to a fool and folly. Do you see yourself in any of these?

A man who rejects God or the Bible is a fool.

A man who is unteachable (despises wisdom) is a fool.

A man who despises discipline is a fool.

A man who lives only for today and the pleasures it can afford is a fool.

A man who does not respect authority is a fool.

A man who rejects moral restraints is a fool.

A man who will do what he wants despite godly counsel is a fool.

A man who is overly opinionated is a fool.

A man who has a quick temper is a fool.

A man who has a mean disposition is a fool.
A man who does not display a Christ-like attitude before his wife and kids is a fool.
A man is a fool when he sees the hurts and losses that result from a foolish decision, and then makes the same foolish decision again.
A man is a fool who throws caution to the wind.
A man who engages in an adulterous relationship is a fool.
A man who does what the Word says not to do is a fool.

Conclusion

All of the actions and attitudes of a fool are worldly, ungodly, and are the exact opposite of what a wise and godly man will do. Whereas a wise man lives for the glory of the LORD and for the good of himself and others, the fool lives for himself and what he can get out of life. Keep this thought in mind because after we discuss the next two topics, we will revisit the difference between the wise man and the fool. Now we will do a word study on *wisdom*, and then we will examine *instruction*. When we finish these, we will make final comments on Prov. 1:7 as a whole and make application.

Part five—What is wisdom?

[Return to Index](#)

Gregory,

Tell me, what is wisdom in Proverbs? This is the question I had asked myself for several years. Unfortunately, until a few years ago, I had not been able to find what I felt was a good, livable definition for wisdom in Proverbs. The most concise definition of wisdom I have heard was stated by Dr. Jim Berg. According to Dr. Tony Miller, Dr. Berg said that *“Wisdom is the best means to the best end.”* This is obviously an over-simplification, but it does convey the essence of wisdom very well. I understand what he was saying, but what are the mechanics of accomplishing “the best means to the best end,” and what are the components that make up the whole? When I approached this study, I didn’t know. So, several years ago I embarked on a concentrated study to find out for myself what the five Hebrew words for wisdom in Proverbs meant. Now, after almost eleven months of study, they make good sense, and I will attempt to show you what I have learned.

Son, I want to say at the beginning that what I am sharing with you is what I understand Proverbs wisdom to mean. I have consulted several reference sources. They were helpful in some ways, but they didn’t answer my questions. I’m sure there are some Hebrew scholars out there who know exactly what the five Hebrew words for wisdom in Proverbs mean, but I could not gain access to any of them to get an explanation. A few godly pastors and teachers tried to help me, but it was obvious that they didn’t have the answers I sought. I tried to get help from any of the Hebrew instructors at our local Bible University, but they didn’t know me and either didn’t understand what I was asking or didn’t have the time. One day after church, I was talking with Dr. Doug Sprunger about my dilemma, and he made a comment that proved to be true. He said that it is sometimes better to muddle my way through something like this because doing so can yield much better learning in the end. He was right. After hundreds of hours of study and meditation, I now understand more about Proverbs wisdom than I had ever hoped, and I am grateful that I had to work almost a year in order to grasp this material. I suspect that in time someone with more knowledge than me will tell me that I missed the boat in a few areas, but I am giving you my best understanding of what Proverbs is teaching. I certainly do not have all of the answers, and I welcome constructive criticism where appropriate. Son, I only hope that this material will help you become a wise man and cause you to be a better and more godly servant of Christ. If this happens, then all of the work I have put into this study will have been worth it.

It is generally understood that Prov. 9:10 is the key verse of Proverbs. It states, *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”* Therefore, we can rightfully conclude that Proverbs wisdom is primarily a spiritual discipline. It spills over into the secular realm, but it is spiritual in its essence. Son, it seems clear to me that a prerequisite for acquiring real wisdom is salvation through faith in Jesus Christ and a thorough study of the Bible. If you will immerse yourself in the Scriptures and meditate upon them daily, you will learn what to do and what not to do. Then you will gain an understanding of who God is (Jesus Christ by name), what He is, and how He works in the affairs of men. Understanding these things is important because I believe wisdom is knowing what God wants us to do or be, and then making decisions and interacting with others by doing or being what He requires of us. In a very basic sense, it is being Christ like. You need to learn how He

lived, what He said, and how He interacted with other people. This will enable you to see how living like Christ is indeed wisdom. Once you gain this kind of knowledge and understanding, you will be able make good and productive decisions about how you should act, talk, and think. This approach will enable you to make the best decisions which will produce the best results in every area of life and practice. It will correctly guide your relationship with the LORD and with others around you. It will also guide you into a proper approach to science, politics, your job, your family, and everything else you do.

My earlier dilemma

Finding a clear definition for each of the five Hebrew words for wisdom has been difficult. To help you understand the dilemma I faced, read First Kings 2:1-10 below.

¹ As David's time to die drew near, he charged Solomon his son, saying, ² "I am going the way of all the earth. Be strong, therefore, and show yourself a man. ³ Keep the charge of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His ordinances, and His testimonies, according to what is written in the Law of Moses, that you may succeed in all that you do and wherever you turn, ⁴ so that the LORD may carry out His promise which He spoke concerning me, saying, 'If your sons are careful of their way, to walk before Me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.' ⁵ Now you also know what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me, what he did to the two commanders of the armies of Israel, to Abner the son of Ner, and to Amasa the son of Jether, whom he killed; he also shed the blood of war in peace. And he put the blood of war on his belt about his waist, and on his sandals on his feet. ⁶ So act according to your wisdom ^{<02451>}, and do not let his gray hair go down to Sheol in peace. ⁷ But show kindness to the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be among those who eat at your table; for they assisted me when I fled from Absalom your brother. ⁸ Behold, there is with you Shimei the son of Gera the Benjamite, of Bahurim; now it was he who cursed me with a violent curse on the day I went to Mahanaim. But when he came down to me at the Jordan, I swore to him by the LORD, saying, 'I will not put you to death with the sword.' ⁹ Now therefore, do not let him go unpunished, for you are a wise man ^{<02450>}; and you will know what you ought to do to him, and you will bring his gray hair down to Sheol with blood." ¹⁰ Then David slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of David. (Underlining added for clarity).

Here is the problem. The five words for wisdom are not easily definable individually. In the passage above, David knew that Solomon was a wise man (Strong's ^{<02450>}), and he instructed Solomon to use his wisdom (Strong's ^{<02451>}) to take care of those men who had mistreated him. So then, we can conclude that a wise man has wisdom. If wisdom is something a wise man has, then what is a wise man? Another word for wisdom in Proverbs is sound wisdom (Strong's ^{<08454>}). Ok then, what is the difference between wisdom and sound wisdom? There are two more words for wisdom in Proverbs. The first is defined by Strong's as wisdom (Strong's ^{07919>}). Imagine that! The second word is wisdom (Strong's ^{<02449>}), and it is the root word from which wise man ^{<02450>} and wisdom ^{<02451>} are derived. As I studied these five words and how they are used in Proverbs, it has for several months been confusing to say the least. Well, that has changed. With the help of one additional resource, the definitions and usages have become more understandable, and as a result, Solomon's intent in writing Proverbs has become much clearer.

I believe a note of explanation is due here. Since I do not know Hebrew, I am going to reference the five words for wisdom in Proverbs by using the numbers *Strong's Concordance* has assigned to them. This should make it easier for you to check and verify what I am sharing with you.

The five Hebrew words for wisdom in Proverbs are

be or become wise—Strong's ^{<02449>},
wise man—Strong's ^{<02450>},
wisdom—Strong's ^{<02451>},
acts wisely—Strong's ^{<07919>}, and
sound wisdom—Strong's ^{<08454>}.

Brief definitions of these words are as follows:

- <02449> one who is either learning or teaching others wisdom;
- <02450> one who practices using wisdom on a regular basis;
- <02451> the kind of wisdom God gave Solomon. (all of the other four words use this wisdom);
- <07919> one who is living and acting in a wise manner; and
- <08454> a practical, common-sense wisdom that brings good success.

The Wisdom Pyramid

Prov. 1:7, states, *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge,”* and Prov. 9:10a tells us that *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.”* It is clear from these verses that the fear of the LORD is the foundation upon which wisdom is built. The foundation of any structure is critical. It is what gives the structure stability. Christ himself taught the importance of the foundation in Mat 7:21-27 where he said,

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘LORD, LORD,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, ‘LORD, LORD, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; Depart from me, you who practice lawlessness.’ Therefore, everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded (its foundation) on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand (its foundation). The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell--and great was its fall.”

A foundation comprised of the fear of the LORD gives stability to the spiritual structure of one who will pursue wisdom Solomon’s way. It produces this stability because a man’s fear of the LORD will give him eyes to recognize the truth from God’s Word and will help him accurately learn more and more about who God really is, what He is, and how He works in the affairs of men. If, on the other hand, a student of the Bible does not possess a genuine, biblical fear of the LORD, what he sees and believes to be truth can in fact be error. If a man or woman were to study the scriptures with a belief that the Word of God is only partially true or believes that his religion is sufficient to get him to heaven, then that person will have built his spiritual house upon the sand. Notice in the verses above that both houses were buffeted by the same winds and rainstorms. It is not a matter of if hurts, heartaches, and trials will come our way. It is a matter of when they will come. If your foundation is a genuine fear of the LORD that has guided you to learn the truth of the Word of God and how the LORD works in the affairs of men, then you can weather the storms of life with joy and confidence in a loving and caring God. If a man does not have a genuine, biblical fear of the LORD, then when hurts, heartaches, and trials come, he will not have the strength and confidence in the LORD to weather the storm and come out on top. This kind of man is more likely to blame God for allowing him to experience such hard times.

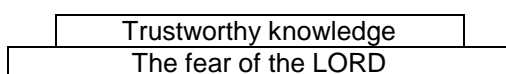
Earlier in this chapter we learned that a genuine fear of the LORD is a dynamic belief. It will drive a believer to do good and avoid every sinful practice. Every believer who has a genuine fear of the LORD knows that living this way will produce a blessed life, free from the hurts and heartaches experienced by those who choose to engage in sinful practices. So then, obtaining and maintaining a fear of the LORD is the first step toward finding wisdom. I have paraphrased Prov. 1:7 to help you see clearly what the verse is teaching. It would read,

“The fear of the LORD is the foundation upon which real knowledge of the truth and of God Himself¹ can be gained and is expressed as a strong desire to avoid or abandon every sinful practice. When you acquire and maintain this kind of attitude in your heart, you will learn the kind of knowledge that will ultimately lead to real wisdom. On the other hand, a fool lives according to perverted morals and makes light of the whole idea of sin and those who try to avoid it. Consequently, he insists that there is no God for him. With this kind of attitude in his heart, he will never learn the kind of knowledge that produces wisdom because he despises the very idea of wisdom and the discipline it takes to acquire it.”

As you can see, then, the fear of the LORD is indeed the foundation upon which wisdom is built. It is the perspective from which you can judge knowledge to be true and trustworthy. The knowledge you gain from this perspective will be knowledge of the truth and about God Himself.¹⁸ As you study and meditate upon the Scriptures, you will not only learn about God and His creation, but you will also learn what you should believe and do as well as how sinful practices will ruin a life. Always remember that for knowledge to be trustworthy, it must be in agreement with the principles of the Bible and the nature of God. As an example, when studying natural science, you and I should view it from the perspective that God created the earth and that it did not come into being through some evolutionary process. Understanding the immense wisdom God used in creating everything will give you a biblical worldview. So then, the fear of the LORD is the foundation—the perspective—from which all trustworthy knowledge is derived and checked for soundness. Trustworthy knowledge is built upon this foundation just like the walls of a structure are built upon the firm foundation below them. We will now build the first two layers of what I call **THE WISDOM PYRAMID**.

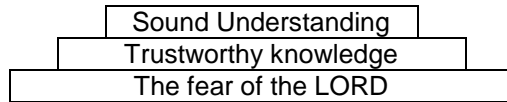
¹⁸ Kidner, Derek, *Proverbs*, page. 35

They will look like this:

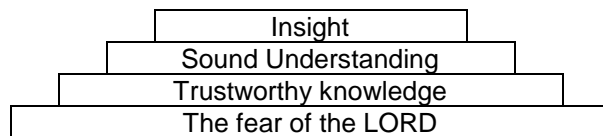


The second half of Prov. 9:10 states, *“the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”* In order for you to fully grasp what this verse is saying, we need to go to Prov. 2:1-11. We will discuss these verses in-detail when we dissect chapter two, but a brief look is in order here. In verses 1-4 Solomon taught that in order to find wisdom, we must engage in three types of searches for wisdom. The first is a **passive search**. This kind of search consists of hearing wisdom when it is spoken, preached, taught, or seen in practice, but in this search no work is exerted to find wisdom. The second is an **active search**. This kind of search consists of reading and meditating upon the Scriptures, reading good books, asking godly men for help, and making wise men your closest companions. It involves work. Therefore, very few believers will engage in this kind of search on a regular basis. It simply takes too much effort and self-discipline. The third is a **continual search**. Most people will not do this. They will go gung-ho for maybe three or four weeks and then get tired and quit. It takes discipline to search the Scriptures on a regular basis, and this is exactly why most people don’t have wisdom. They simply do not have the self-discipline to stick with it for the long run. Son, I hope you will decide to get involved in a search for wisdom Solomon’s way and do it for life. All three types of searches should be ongoing at the same time, and if you do this, I guarantee that your efforts will pay huge dividends in the end.

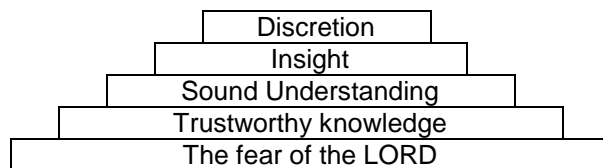
Still looking at Prov. 2, exactly what will Solomon’s recommended search for wisdom produce? There are several things. 1) According to Prov. 2:5-9, you will figure out (or discern) what it means to genuinely fear the LORD, and once you acquire a fear of the LORD, you will start learning who God is, what He is, and how He works in the affairs of men. According to Prov. 9:10b, *“knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”* This is where you will acquire the understanding necessary to fuel wisdom. 2) According to Prov. 2:10-11, God will start giving you wisdom, and you will enjoy gaining more and more trustworthy knowledge. As a result, the knowledge, understanding, insight, and discernment you gain will become the security that will protect you on every side. 3) According to Prov. 2:16-19, these things will deliver you from involvement with evil men (verses 12-15) and immoral women (verses 16-19). They will also free you from the hurts and heartaches sinners must endure as a result of their sinful practices. 4) According to Prov. 2:20-22, once you have learned all of these things, you will live in a good and godly manner, and you will choose wise and godly men and women as your closest companions. In the end, you will live a long life and blessed life. Isn’t it great that wisdom will do all of this for you if you will simply go to the effort of finding her? I think it is wonderful! So then, gaining knowledge is where you start to understand who God is, what He is, and how He works in the affairs of men. The more knowledge you gain about God, the more you will understand the heart of God and what He wants to accomplish in and through you. So then, sound understanding is built upon trustworthy knowledge which is gained from the perspective of the fear of the LORD. **The wisdom pyramid** would now look like this:



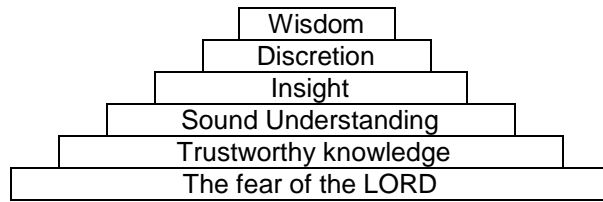
At this point in your learning experience, you will have gained some trustworthy knowledge that has resulted in some sound understanding. The problem here is that all of this is merely head knowledge. It is of no real benefit until or unless it is put into practice. Prov. 2:10-11 illustrates this well when it says, *“¹⁰ For wisdom will enter your heart and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul; ¹¹ discretion will guard you, understanding will watch over you.”* Verse ten is talking about what you know, and verse eleven is talking about what you do with what you know. You see, you can have knowledge and understanding, but insight and *discretion* are what you need. I have defined insight as *the ability to look at a problem or opportunity and see it for what it really is, not what it appears on the surface*. Without this ability, you would not be able to make reliable and productive decisions because your understanding of the problem or opportunity would not be accurate. Your decisions will only be as good as the facts you understand. Now our **wisdom pyramid** would look like this:



Once you gain insight, you need discretion. *Discretion* is *the ability to figure out all of the possible solutions that are available to rectify a problem or secure an opportunity*. It is interesting to note that insight and discretion together are the essence of *prudence*, and according to Prov. 1:4, prudence is exactly what a naïve man needs to learn in order to succeed in life. But keep in mind that prudence comes as a result of having the kind of sound understanding that generates discretion. So then, our **wisdom pyramid** would now look like this:



To progress to this point is good and admirable, but it is not wisdom. It is merely good decision-making. What is needed is the gift of being able to make **the best** decisions that will produce **the best** results in every area of life and practice. This is where the LORD steps in and provides the missing ingredient. Prov. 3:13 tells us, *“How blessed is the man who finds wisdom and the man who gains understanding.”* For years I wondered why Solomon wrote this verse the way he did. I would have expected the verse to read, *“Blessed is the man who gains wisdom and finds understanding.”* Oh, but that is not the way it works. Solomon was right. Wisdom is a gift from God. You and I can gain knowledge and understanding, and we can learn discretion based upon the knowledge and understanding we acquire. What we need and cannot GAIN is wisdom. It is a gift from God. Prov. 2:6 tells us, *“For the LORD gives wisdom <02451>; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding.”* There is no other way to acquire it. James 1:5 states, *“But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”* A casual reading of this verse would lead you to assuming that if we ask God for wisdom, He will grant it instantly and with no work or effort on our part. Oh, but Proverbs chapter two tells us that we must do our part before God will give us that wisdom. We will see this more clearly when we discuss Proverbs chapter two in detail. So then, as we study and meditate upon the Scriptures, we will learn the fear of the LORD. Based upon this premise, we will gain trustworthy knowledge and sound understanding resulting in clear insight and good discretion. Then the LORD will gladly give us wisdom. The completed **wisdom pyramid** now looks like this:



In a general sense then, we can say that wisdom is the ability to make the best decisions resulting in the best outcome in every area of life and practice. Those decisions are based upon discretion that comes as a result of clear insight. This insight is guided by trustworthy knowledge and sound understanding. Evangelist Tom Farrell summed up wisdom well. As best I remember, he said, "Wisdom is not knowledge, but it is knowing what to do with that knowledge" As you read and study Proverbs, you will notice that nothing is said about wisdom in the area of science or other technical areas. That is because wisdom in Proverbs is primarily a spiritual endeavor. It is a function of knowing God and doing what is best to and for you, your neighbor, and God's glory. It, in essence, is learning how to live a good and godly life before the LORD. This, son, is a general explanation of wisdom in Proverbs. It has been a very brief overview, but I hope it will give you a reasonable understanding of where this study will be going from here.

The five Hebrew words for wisdom in Proverbs

As we discuss these words, keep in mind that they are not independent of each other but are actually different aspects of the same wisdom. A man once told me that these five Hebrew words are like a prism casting different colors from the same stone. Wisdom in Proverbs is much the same. It has several aspects, but they are all part of the general term *wisdom*, and many of their characteristics overlap. As we discuss these five words, we will take the time to define and explain each one in terms that I believe you and I can understand. This is important because if I am not sure of a word's meaning, then you might not know it either. I do not know Hebrew, so I am weighing heavily upon what good Hebrew scholars have written about these five Hebrew words for *wisdom*. After we discuss all five words, I will try to put all of the pieces together so that you can get a complete picture of what Solomon was trying to get across in the book of Proverbs.

It is important to note that Bible wisdom has both a spiritual and a secular function. First Kings 4:29-34 tells us,

²⁹ Now God gave Solomon *wisdom* ^{<02451>} and *very great discernment and breadth of mind, like the sand that is on the seashore.* ³⁰ Solomon's *wisdom* ^{<02451>} surpassed the *wisdom* ^{<02451>} of all the sons of the east and all the *wisdom* ^{<02451>} of Egypt. ³¹ For he was *wiser* ^{<02449>} than all men, than Ethan the Ezrahite, Heman, Calcol and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was known in all the surrounding nations. ³² He also spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were 1,005. ³³ He spoke of *trees*, from the cedar that is in Lebanon even to the hyssop that grows on the wall; he spoke also of *animals and birds and creeping things and fish.* ³⁴ Men came from all peoples to hear the *wisdom* ^{<02451>} of Solomon, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his ^{<02451>} wisdom.

From this passage we learn that Solomon had wisdom, discretion, and broad intellectual knowledge with regard to poetry, song writing, animals, birds, insects, and fish. We also know that he had good understanding of the nature of people. Some men of the east had wisdom too, but they did not believe in Jehovah God. It must have been that their wisdom was in agreement with the principles of the Word of God even though they were not aware of it. As I said before, wisdom in Proverbs is primarily spiritual, and secular wisdom is just one expression of spiritual wisdom. In our passage above, all of these men of foreign nations had wisdom, but Solomon's wisdom excelled above all of them because it was based upon the knowledge of God and of His teachings. That is the kind of wisdom we should pursue.

The Old Testament patriarch Daniel was also a wise man. He was probably just a teenager when he and his friends were taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. These boys were being groomed to become servants in the king's court, and during their training the king had a dream. He demanded that his wise men tell him his dream and give the interpretation. Obviously, none of the king's worldly-wise men could do this. Therefore, the king decreed that since they were not able to tell him his secret dream, all of them would to be put to death, including Daniel and his three friends. When Daniel heard of this, he got permission to take a few days to ask his

God for the answer, and God told him the dream and the interpretation. Immediately Daniel prayed and thanked the LORD for answering his request. Below is his prayer.

Daniel 2:12b-23

Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven; Daniel said, "Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, for wisdom and power belong to Him. It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom^{<02451>} to wise men^{<02450>} and knowledge to men of understanding. It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with Him. To You, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for You have given me wisdom and power; even now You have made known to me what we requested of You, for You have made known to us the king's matter."

What I want you to see here is that as Daniel said, "God gives wisdom^{<02451>} to wise men^{<02450>}." Keep in mind that wise men are those who already have and use wisdom on a regular basis. As we saw above, Solomon was a wise man before God gave him all of the extra wisdom. Daniel was already a wise man when God gave him the wisdom to tell the king his dream. The wisdom Daniel needed had to come from God because Daniel's knowledge and understanding were not sufficient to come up with the answer by himself.

When he told the king the dream, Daniel was quick to tell him that God didn't give Daniel wisdom so that he could gloat about how wise he was. No, God gave it to him so that the king could learn what God had in store for him. In Daniel 2:30 he said, "*But as for me, this mystery has not been revealed to me for any wisdom residing in me more than in any other living man, but for the purpose of making the interpretation known to the king, and that you may understand the thoughts of your mind.*" In the same manner, the LORD has given me knowledge and understanding about Proverbs so that you and countless other young men in the future can learn and live the book through this commentary and through the teaching of it. God is to be thanked and praised for all He has shown me, and I hope and pray that in time you will learn the same wisdom God has given me through this study.

Note: in the verses above wisdom^{<02452>} is derived from the word wisdom^{<02451>}, and wise man^{<02445>} is derived from wisdom^{<02450>}. There are only minor differences here, but I did want to make you aware that there is a slight difference.

1) Word one – <02451> Wisdom

[Return to Index](#)

This Hebrew word occurs 41 times in Proverbs and 24 times in Ecclesiastes. It is the kind of wisdom that God gave Solomon. This Hebrew word drives the functions of the other four Hebrew words in Proverbs, so we will examine it first. According to Strong's Concordance, <02451> wisdom is defined as:

- a) skill (in war)
- b) wisdom (in administration)
- c) shrewdness, wisdom (The dictionary defines Shrewd as to be "marked by clever discerning awareness and common sense." --- an aspect of wisdom is to "possess an unusual power to see through and understand what is puzzling or hidden.")
- d) wisdom, prudence (in religious affairs)
- e) wisdom (ethical and religious)

John MacArthur wrote that the wise believer will have the ability to guide or govern others with truth.¹⁹

Based upon these definitions, <02451> wisdom is having the ability to affect a winning war strategy, administering others effectively, having the uncanny ability to see through a problem and quickly come up with a winning solution, having the ability to guide or govern others with truth, and having the conviction to use good ethics in all of one's dealings.

With reference to <02451> *wisdom*, John MacArthur also wrote that wisdom “was not knowledge alone, but the skill of living a godly life as God intended man to live (Deut. 4:5-9).”²⁰ This kind of skill is based upon the fear of the LORD so that everything we do in the realm of <02451> *wisdom* is done from this perspective. As I said above, wisdom is not primarily a secular endeavor, but many times it rolls over into secular activities. Even when it does, wisdom is guided and directed by a proper understanding of the principles of the Word of God and a knowledge of who God is, what He is, and how He works in the affairs of men. That is what makes this kind of wisdom so valuable. As we look at verses containing <02451> *wisdom* in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, we will see how it plays out in every area of the life of a wise man.

It must be noted that wisdom can also be learned from life’s experiences. When we see someone do something wise that produces excellent results, we can learn to do the same. Then too, when we do something that is hurtful or costly, we can learn to make better choices the next time and avoid more hurts or losses.

¹⁹ MacArthur, John, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, Copyright © 1977, Word Publishing, page 877

²⁰ Ibid.

Here is a simplified explanation of <02451> wisdom.

The mechanics of wisdom are of follows: The **trustworthy knowledge** and **sound understanding** you gain from the perspective of the fear of the LORD will result in **insight** and **discretion**. **Insight** will give you the ability to see into a problem or opportunity for what it actually is and not only what it might appear on the surface. Then **discretion** will give you the ability to see all of the possible solutions that could correct a problem or secure an opportunity. Once these solutions are known, **wisdom** will step in and give you the ability to make the best choice that will produce the best outcome in every area of life and practice.

In some books of the Old Testament <02451> *wisdom* is a skill or an art. This is not Proverbs wisdom, but it is interesting to note. Exodus 31:1-6 tells us,

“¹ Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ² “See, I have called by name Bezalel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. ³ I have filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom <02451>, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all kinds of craftsmanship, ⁴ to make artistic designs for work in gold, in silver, and in bronze, ⁵ and in the cutting of stones for settings, and in the carving of wood, that he may work in all kinds of craftsmanship. ⁶ And behold, I Myself have appointed with him Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan; and in the hearts of all who are skillful I have put skill, that they may make all that I have commanded you.”

Notice that God filled Bezalel with a unique ability. He was already skilled, but the LORD gave him wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and skill in workmanship far above and beyond what he possessed before the LORD gave him wisdom. His gift was the ability to know the right design, the right materials to use, the right tools to use on the job, the right strokes to make on the objects, and the right skills to teach others. It is interesting to note that in verse six above that God gave skill to those who were already skillful. That is like giving wisdom to a wise man. Come to think of it, isn’t that exactly what God did in the case of Solomon and Daniel? Whereas these skillful workers could use their hands and minds to make things that by men’s standards were very good, after God endowed them with a skillful heart, each of them made masterpieces. This is the benefit of wisdom. Think about it.

Wisdom in Proverbs is more about life and life’s choices. As an example, in Second Samuel 20:22 we read, *“Then the woman wisely <02451> (the uncanny ability to see through a problem and quickly come up with a winning solution,) came to all the people. And they cut off the head of Sheba the son of Bichri and threw it to Joab. So he blew the trumpet, and they were dispersed from the city, each to his tent. Joab also returned to the king at Jerusalem.”* In this narrative a man named Sheba had rebelled against king David along with many of the men of Israel. In the process, this man became somewhat of a spokesman of those who were disgruntled. David knew that Sheba would create real problems for the kingdom, so he dispatched his commander, Joab, to go to the town of Abel Beth-maacah to kill him. Joab’s army completely surrounded the city, and no one could go in or out of the gates. A wise woman came to the top of the wall and asked why Joab had besieged the city. He explained that he wanted Sheba and told her that if they surrendered Sheba, they would be spared. This wise woman had the knowledge and understanding to go to the people, explain the situation, and convince them to kill Sheba and toss his head over the wall. Others may have wanted to protect Sheba, but she knew that giving Joab what he wanted was the wise thing to do. So, wisdom in this instance was making the best choice that produced the best results. That is what wisdom <02451> is all about.

Another example is found in First Kings 3:16-28 where two mothers came before Solomon asking him to solve their dilemma. Both women claimed to be the mother of the same baby, but it seemed to be merely one woman's word against another. This didn't thwart Solomon though. Knowing the nature of a mother and the love she has for her own child, he called for a sword. He then commanded his servant to cut the baby in half and give half to each mother. Without hesitation the real mother begged him not to kill the baby but give it to the other woman. The other woman told him to go ahead and kill the baby. It didn't matter to her. Immediately, Solomon told the servant to give the baby to the real mother, the one who couldn't stand to see the baby die. Everyone was amazed at Solomon's wisdom, and rightfully so. You see, Solomon's insight into the nature of a mother's love gave him what he needed to discern which woman was the real mother. First Kings 3:28 tells us the result. It states, "*When all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had handed down, they feared the king (Solomon), for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him to administer justice.*" Understand something here though. It is not enough to know a truth, understand the importance of that truth, or have the discernment to make a choice. No, no! Carrying out of the decision is what makes wisdom complete and effective. What good would it be if you knew exactly what to do to rescue your friend in a time of war and didn't go in there to get him out safely? Your knowledge would be no more than a mental exercise. Knowing what to do "and" doing it successfully constitute wisdom. Think about it.

In First Kings 4:29-34 above, we saw that Solomon was *a wise man*. In fact, God made him *wiser* than any of the men in the known world at the time. Notice that Solomon was not only wise in the spiritual realm but also in the realm of natural sciences. He was excellent at writing poetry and songs. Proverbs and Ecclesiastes are examples of his poetry, and the Song of Solomon is an example of his songwriting. He was also well versed in the understanding of plants and animals. He was "the intellectual" of his day, and along with intellect, he had great discernment to understand exactly the right thing to do with what he knew. His knowledge, understanding, and discernment were so broad that when the queen of Sheba visited him and asked questions of all that was in her heart, Solomon answered every question to her complete satisfaction. Now that's wisdom. Read the text for yourself.

1 Kings 10:1-9 ¹ *Now when the queen of Sheba heard about the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, she came to test him with difficult questions.* ² *So she came to Jerusalem with a very large retinue, with camels carrying spices and very much gold and precious stones. When she came to Solomon, she spoke with him about all that was in her heart.* ³ *Solomon answered all her questions; nothing was hidden from the king which he did not explain to her.* ⁴ *When the queen of Sheba perceived all the wisdom (the ability to affect a winning war strategy, the ability to effectively administer whatever group he might lead, the uncanny ability to see through a problem and quickly come up with a winning solution, the ability to govern and discipline oneself in spiritual areas by the use of reason, and the ability and desire to use good ethics in all of his dealings) of Solomon, the house that he had built, ⁵ the food of his table, the seating of his servants, the attendance of his waiters and their attire, his cupbearers, and his stairway by which he went up to the house of the LORD, there was no more spirit in her.* ⁶ *Then she said to the king, "It was a true report which I heard in my own land about your words and your wisdom . Nevertheless I did not believe the reports, until I came and my eyes had seen it. And behold, the half was not told me. You exceed in wisdom and prosperity the report which I heard.* ⁷ *How blessed are your men, how blessed are these your servants who stand before you continually and hear your wisdom .* ⁸ *Blessed be the LORD your God who delighted in you to set you on the throne of Israel; because the LORD loved Israel forever, therefore He made you king, to do justice and righteousness."* (Grayed text definition and underlining added for clarity).

Notice in verse one that Solomon's wisdom brought glory to the name of his God. That is why the queen of Sheba traveled such a great distance to hear his wisdom. Once she heard him, she praised his God for giving him such knowledge and wisdom. When God gives believers wisdom, he does so for the purpose of bringing glory to his name through that believer. This is what ought to happen although it is not always the case.

David wanted his son Solomon to learn wisdom, and he mentioned wisdom several times in his Psalms. We will look at two such verses, and then we will examine all of the verses in Proverbs that contain the word wisdom. Psalms 90:12 says, "*So teach us to number our days, that we may present to You a heart of wisdom .*" The KJV renders this verse as "*So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom .*" The wisdom in this Psalm is to recognize the brevity of life and take life seriously enough to live with the LORD and eternity in mind. This is the kind of wise thinking David wanted Solomon to learn. Then in Psalms 111:10, David wrote, "*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom ; a good understanding have all those who do His*

commandments; His praise endures forever.” As we have seen, the fear of the LORD is indeed the foundation upon which wisdom is built, and obeying the Word produces good understanding. It is no wonder Solomon had a desire to pursue wisdom. His dad taught him to seek it.

We will now look at all of the <02451> verses in Proverbs.

Note: Throughout this commentary I will be repeating things previously discussed, but I feel it is necessary in order to adequately explain the text in a way that will help you thoroughly understand what it says, what it means, and how to apply it to your daily life.

A) How and where do you find wisdom.

The starting point of any search is having the desire and the discipline to initiate the search. This is why David instructed Solomon to get involved in seeking wisdom. In Prov. 4:5 David was having a one-on-one teaching session with his son, and there he said, *“Acquire wisdom <02451> ! Acquire understanding! Do not forget nor turn away from the words of my mouth.”* Then in verse 7 he said, *“The beginning of wisdom <02451> is: Acquire wisdom <02451>; and with all your acquiring, get understanding.”* Without doubt, wanting to be wise is the starting point of becoming wise. (It is interesting to note that verse seven is what prompted me to start this study of Proverbs. Thank the LORD I did start my own search for wisdom, and it has paid big dividends over the years.) Solomon valued David’s teaching so much that he wrote Prov. 2:2 to his own son. It says, *“Make your ear attentive to wisdom <02451>, incline your heart to understanding.”* Simply make up your mind that gaining wisdom is so important that you will listen for wisdom whenever and wherever you hear it. When we discuss Proverbs 2, you will see that this verse is describing a passive search for wisdom. A proper search for wisdom entails much more than passive listening, but it is a start and a good one at that. In Prov. 5:1, Solomon asked his son to give him his undivided attention because what he had to say was extremely important. In verse one he said, *“My son, give attention to my wisdom <02451>, incline your ear to my understanding.”* Here Solomon’s was asking his son to practice a passive search for wisdom by listening with interest to what his dad had to teach him. In Prov. 7:4, Solomon approached the discussion of illicit sexual relations the same way he did with the discussion of adultery in the beginning of Proverbs chapter five. There he said, *“Say to wisdom <02451>, “You are my sister,” and call understanding your intimate friend.”* In other words, become so thoroughly acquainted with wisdom and understanding that they become an intimate part of your life.

Wisdom wants you to find her. Proverbs 8:1 is wisdom’s testimony about herself, and there she said, *“Does not wisdom <02451> call, and understanding lift up her voice?”* It does not take performing some dangerous or heroic feat to find wisdom. It merely takes a consistent search of God’s Word to find her. It is that simple even though it takes a great deal of time and effort.

The more familiar you become with the teachings of Proverbs, the more you will understand that all of its teachings are an extension of a genuine fear of the LORD. We discussed the fear of the LORD earlier in this chapter, but it is worth repeating. Prov. 1:7a says, *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge,”* while Prov. 9:10a reads, *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom <02451>.”* Prov. 15:33a states this truth in a slightly different way when it says, *“The fear of the LORD is the instruction for wisdom <02451>.”* So, you start by gaining knowledge and end up finding wisdom. These three verses clarify this truth once and for all. Keep in mind, as I said above, that knowledge is [learning about the truth and about God Himself](#).²¹ This is the best perspective from which to gain knowledge and understanding. As you will see by the time we finish this commentary, the instructions in Proverbs are wise instructions. It doesn’t matter whether they are things we should do or things we should avoid. All of them are for our good and for the LORD’s glory. Therefore, a wise man will do the things Proverbs teaches, and he will abstain from the things Proverbs instructs us not to do. Both are wise choices. A fool will do the exact opposite, and that is why he must endure hurts, heartaches, and losses in abundance.

As you study and meditate upon the Scriptures, it will become clear that the more knowledge you gain about the truth and the LORD Himself, the more understanding and insight you will gain. That is why Prov. 14:6 says, *“A scoffer seeks wisdom <02451> and finds none, but knowledge is easy to one who has understanding.”* The more knowledge and understanding you gain, the easier it will be to assimilate new truth. Wisdom herself stated this in Prov. 8:12 where she said, *“I, wisdom <02451>, dwell with prudence, and I find knowledge and discretion.”* So then, you and I need to start finding knowledge through a proper search of the Scriptures so that we can gain the kind of facts that lead to understanding. Then somewhere during the process, the LORD will give us wisdom. Two verses support this idea. Prov. 14:33a declares, *“Wisdom <02451> rests in the heart of one who has understanding.”* Then Prov. 17:24a states, *“Wisdom <02451> is in the presence of the one who has understanding.”* So then, we need to gain knowledge and understanding so that we can gain the insight to be able to see a difficulty or opportunity for what it

really is instead of what it may appear to be on the surface. Then our discretion will enable us to see all of the possible solutions for a given difficulty or opportunity. Finally, God will step in and give us the wisdom to evaluate all of the possible solutions and make the best choice that will produce the best results in every area of life and practice. Once God gives us wisdom, our manner of living will be filled with good discretion. Prov. 10:13 tells us, *"On the lips of the discerning, wisdom <02451> is found, but a rod is for the back of him who lacks understanding."* Let's work at this so that we can have and use wisdom.

As I said before, knowledge, understanding, insight, and discretion are the things that fuel wisdom? Where do we find these? The answer is simple. In the Word of God. Prov. 2:6 plainly states, *"For the LORD gives wisdom <02451>; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding."* As we saw in the wisdom pyramid, knowledge and understanding are judged to be true and trustworthy through the filter of fear of the LORD. Therefore, when we are presented with knowledge and understanding from the secular realm, we must test them against the fear of the LORD and the nature of God to see if that knowledge is trustworthy and the understanding is sound. But when we read and study the Word of God, no filter is needed because what God says is true. Proverbs 3:13 tells us, *"How blessed is the man who finds wisdom <02451> and the man who gains understanding."* It is worth mentioning again that wisdom is a gift from God. From His perspective, He gives it to us; from our perspective, we stumble upon it during our search for knowledge, understanding, insight, and discernment. Prov. 2:10 reminds us, *"For wisdom <02451> will enter your heart and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul."* When you reach this point in your search for wisdom, you will literally enjoy learning more and more truths that will help you live a good and godly life for the LORD's glory.

In his later years, Solomon understood that wisdom comes from the LORD. In Eccl. 2:26 he wrote, *"For to a person who is good in His sight He has given wisdom <02451> and knowledge and joy, while to the sinner He has given the task of gathering and collecting so that he may give to one who is good in God's sight. This too is vanity and striving after wind."* Even though he spent a lifetime searching for more and more wisdom, as he grew old, he had to admit that God was the source of wisdom and not his own hard work. He came to this conclusion in Eccl. 7:23 where he admitted, *"I tested all this with wisdom <02451>, and I said, 'I will be wise <02449> (become wise),' but it was far from me."* This is an interesting verse in that Solomon tried to use his wisdom <02451> to become wise <02449>. How can he become wise when he is already wise? Beats me! Since the LORD had already made him extremely wise, why did he need more wisdom? It was because he never seemed to be content with what he had or knew. He was always seeking something new or different that would give him fulfillment and cause people to remember him for generations to come as someone really great and important. He discovered too late that this wasn't going to happen no matter how hard or how long he tried. (Read my paraphrase of Ecclesiastes and see. You will find it on my website, www.jlsparaphrase.org).

²¹ Kidner, Derek, *Proverbs*, page. 35

B) <02451> wisdom is the best thing to have.

What do you own that is especially valuable to you? Whatever it is, wisdom is more valuable. Prov. 3:13-18 tells about wisdom's value. This passage states, *"¹³ How blessed is the man who finds wisdom and the man who gains understanding. ¹⁴ For her profit is better than the profit of silver and her gain better than fine gold. ¹⁵ She is more precious than jewels; and nothing you desire compares with her. ¹⁶ Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. ¹⁷ Her ways are pleasant ways and all her paths are peace. ¹⁸ She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, and happy are all who hold her fast."* No possession can generate long life, honor, and a deep settled peace for its owner. Only having and using wisdom can do this. Prov. 16:16 tells us, *"How much better it is to get wisdom <02451> than gold! and to get understanding is to be chosen above silver."* Solomon was an extremely wealthy man, and even he recognized the benefit of wisdom over riches. That's why he wrote in Prov. 23:23, *"Buy truth, and do not sell it, get wisdom <02451> and instruction and understanding."* He knew that you and I cannot actually buy wisdom, but this verse was his poetic way of saying that we should pursue wisdom with all of our being. We know that we cannot purchase wisdom, but a fool does not. Prov. 17:16 says, *"Why is there a price in the hand of a fool to buy wisdom <02451>, when he has no sense?"* There are lots of things a fool doesn't understand, and this is just one of them. Besides, he wouldn't know what to do with wisdom if it were handed to him on a platter.

When a man finds and uses wisdom, he will actually enjoy being wise. Proverbs 10:23 teaches that, *"Doing wickedness is like sport to a fool, and so is wisdom <02451> to a man of understanding."* A wise man gets as much of a thrill out of using wisdom as a fool gets out of doing his foolishness. The difference is that the wise man experiences good and is at peace. The fool experiences one difficulty after another as his foolishness comes

crashing down upon him. This must be why Solomon wrote in Eccl. 2:13, “*And I saw that wisdom <02451> excels (above) folly as light excels darkness.*” (Grayed text added for clarity). The two are worlds apart.

C) <02451> wisdom has wonderful benefits.

- 1) <02451> Wisdom brings good success.

Wisdom is making the best choice that produces the best results in every area of life and practice. Eccl. 10:10 gives a good example of this when it says, “*If the axe is dull and he does not sharpen its edge, then he must exert more strength. Wisdom <02451> has the advantage of giving success.*” Wisdom in this case is sharpening the axe when it gets dull in order to accomplish more work with less effort. There are many areas in life and vocation where wisdom makes life easier and more productive.

When you decide to build a house, wisdom makes it all happen in the best way and with the best results. Prov. 24:3 tells us, “*By wisdom <02451> a house is built, and by understanding it is established; and by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches.*” Wisdom knows the best way to plan, the best way to build, and the best way to furnish a house. Let’s insert these comments into the verse. I would read “*By wisdom <02451> a house is built* (Wisdom knows the best way to plan), *and by understanding it is established* (Wisdom knows the best way to build); *and by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches* (Wisdom knows the best way to furnish a house).” Since wisdom has more to do with how to live than it does with technical skills, it would be better to think of this verse as discussing how to establish a home rather than building a physical house.

- 2) <02451> Wisdom produces security.

In Proverbs 4:10-14 Solomon taught his son the importance of gaining wisdom. There he wrote,

¹⁰ “Hear, my son, and accept my sayings and the years of your life will be many. ¹¹ I have directed you in the way of wisdom <02451>; I have led you in upright paths.” ¹² When you walk, your steps will not be impeded; and if you run, you will not stumble. ¹³ Take hold of instruction; do not let go. Guard her, for she is your life.” (Underlining added for emphasis).

As you read and study Proverbs you will notice that a wise man will, in general, live a long and secure life, while a wicked man will, in general, experience problems and die a premature death. There are exceptions to be sure, but by and large, this is what will happen. A wise man will be safe because he listens carefully and responds well when he is instructed or corrected. Prov. 24:13-14 reinforces this truth when it says, “*My son, eat honey, for it is good, yes, the honey from the comb is sweet to your taste; know that wisdom <02451> is thus for your soul; if you find it, then there will be a future, and your hope will not be cut off.*” This is one of the important reasons why I want you to be a wise man.

When Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes, he was expressing his frustration over the fact that all he had worked so hard to gain by wisdom was going to be left to a man he didn’t even know. In spite of the fact that he was disappointed and depressed, he still tried to teach the truth through Ecclesiastes. As an example, Eccl. 7:11-12 teaches, “*¹¹ Wisdom <02451> along with an inheritance is good and an advantage to those who see the sun. ¹² For wisdom <02451> is protection just as money is protection, but the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom <02451> preserves the lives of its possessors.*” Using wisdom on a regular basis generates security and protects her owner from danger and a premature death. This is real security, and it cannot be found anywhere else. Not just anyone can find this kind of security. Only those who conduct themselves wisely experience it. Prov. 28:26 confirms this when it says, “*He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, but he who walks wisely <02451> will be delivered.*”

A wise man is strong. Eccl. 7:19 says, “*Wisdom <02451> strengthens a wise man <02450> more than ten rulers who are in a city.*” A wise man may not be strong physically, but his wisdom gives him the ability to be more successful at accomplishing his goals than numbers of rulers banding together. This is a valuable possession.

- 3) <02451> Wisdom gives a wise man a real sense of satisfaction.

Are you happy with who you are and what you have accomplished? If you want real satisfaction, then pursue wisdom. Eccl. 8:1 shares a real truth when it says, “*Who is like the wise man <02450> and who knows the interpretation of a matter? A man’s wisdom <02451> illumines him and causes his stern face to beam.*” Having and using wisdom will cause a wise man to see many things others will miss and knowing these things will give him

great joy. When this happens, his smile will convey a quiet happiness that results from knowing and experiencing success. The New Testament sums up this principle in First Tim. 6:6 where we read, *“But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment.”* We all would do well to learn this truth and practice it daily.

4) ^{<02451>} Wisdom is intimate with humility.

The proud man and the humble man are totally opposite. A proud man is, in reality, a fool while a humble man displays wisdom. Prov. 11:2 teaches that, *“When pride comes, then comes dishonor, but with the humble is wisdom ^{<02451>}.”* The humble man displays wisdom by his actions and will in time be honored for his genuine humility.

5) ^{<02451>} Wisdom is teachable.

The prominent difference between a fool and a wise man is teachability. The fool is totally unteachable while a wise man is eager and quick to learn new truth. Prov. 13:10 tells us, *“Through insolence comes nothing but strife, but wisdom ^{<02451>} is with those who receive counsel.”* It is not always easy to listen when someone counsels or corrects us for our own good, but a wise man will appreciate the concern and will respond well to being corrected. That is part of what wisdom will do for a man, and being teachable will generate real security in the end.

D) <02451> wisdom cannot be found by human reasoning.

As you read and study Proverbs, you will discover that wisdom ^{<02451>} is beyond human reasoning. You must search for her through a passive, an active, and a continual search of the Scriptures. After Solomon worshipped his wives’ gods, the true God told him that his kingdom would be taken away from him and given to another man. It wasn’t long before he went into severe depression. In this state of depression, he wrote the book of Ecclesiastes to express his disappointment over all that he had tried to do for himself in life. In Eccl. 2:21 he wrote, *“When there is a man who has labored with wisdom ^{<02451>}, knowledge and skill, then he gives his legacy to one who has not labored with them. This too is vanity and a great evil.”* One of the things that disappointed him most was the fact that he couldn’t find wisdom through his own intellectual pursuits. He expressed this fact in Eccl. 8:16-17 where he wrote, *“When I gave my heart to know wisdom ^{<02451>} and to see the task which has been done on the earth (even though one should never sleep day or night), and I saw every work of God, I concluded that man cannot discover the work which has been done under the sun. Even though man should seek laboriously, he will not discover; and though the wise man ^{<02450>} should say, “I know,” he cannot discover.”* As wise as Solomon was, even he could not grasp wisdom through his own human reasoning. This is because God is the One who gives wisdom. It cannot be acquired any other way.

It is not only impossible to find wisdom through your own human reasoning, but you cannot use wisdom to convince God to change His mind on a matter. Solomon stated this truth well when he wrote Prov. 21:30. There he said, *“There is no wisdom ^{<02451>} and no understanding and no counsel against the LORD.”* Arguing with the LORD is a total waste of time. With very few exceptions, once He has made up His mind, you aren’t going to change His plans. It is as simple as that—no ifs, ands, or buts.

E) <02451> wisdom profits both the child and his parents.

When a husband and wife have children, they hope their kids will grow up to be good and godly men and women. Hopefully parents will consistently discipline their children because Prov. 29:15 tells us what will happen if they don’t. It says, *“The rod and reproof give wisdom ^{<02451>}, but a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother.”* Disciplining children is not a pleasant task, but it is a rewarding one. If you succeed in rearing a wise son or daughter, your child will give you great joy. Prov. 29:3a tells us that, *“A man who loves wisdom ^{<02451>} makes his father glad.”* A reward like this is well worth pursuing. Therefore, every parent should consistently and lovingly discipline his children.

As I mentioned earlier, in Proverbs chapter thirty a father named Agur was rebuking his two wayward sons named Ithiel and Ucal. As part of his rebuke, he made himself out to be the most stupid man who had ever walked on two feet. He did this in order to help his sons see that they didn’t know everything like they thought they did. Verses 1-3 state, *“The words of Agur the son of Jakeh, the oracle. The man declares to Ithiel, to Ithiel and Ucal: Surely I am more stupid than any man, and I do not have the understanding of a man. Neither have I learned wisdom ^{<02451>}, nor do I have the knowledge of the Holy One.”* He made these statements in order to ask these two

young men a question he knew they couldn't answer. After asking the question he firmly said, "...*Surely you know!!*" Sure enough, they didn't know the answer. His rebuke was his best effort to help these two young men see the error of their ways and repent. Agur was a wise man indeed, but he did not have the joy that comes from having wise sons. Instead, he experienced the pain that comes from having sons that were fools and rebels. (See my commentary on Proverbs chapter thirty).

F) <02451> wisdom is for this life only.

What we do with Christ in this life will determine whether we will go to heaven or hell when we die. How we live in this life will determine what rewards or losses we will receive when we get there. It is important, then, that we make our lives count for Christ. The same holds true for wisdom because Eccl. 9:10 tells us that we can only use wisdom while we are alive. After we die, we will no longer be able to practice wisdom. This verse reads, "*Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might; for there is no activity or planning or knowledge or wisdom ^{<02451>} in Sheol where you are going.*" Wisdom and acting wisely are only for the living. Once a man is in the grave, all such exercises cease for him. It is important, then, that you and I search for and use wisdom to the fullest so that our lives can be the best and most productive for the LORD.

G) <02451> wisdom won't be appreciated by some.

We all want to be liked and appreciated, but there are many times in life when we are neither liked nor appreciated. It is unfortunate, but it is a fact of life. If we keep our eyes on the LORD and live for His glory, it won't matter nearly as much what others think about us because we will be absorbed with pleasing our heavenly Father. Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes about a poor man who used good wisdom to rescue a city only to be forgotten after the whole event was over. Eccl. 9:13-18 tell us, "*¹³ Also this I came to see as wisdom ^{<02451>} under the sun, and it impressed me. ¹⁴ There was a small city with few men in it and a great king came to it, surrounded it and constructed large siegeworks against it. ¹⁵ But there was found in it a poor wise man ^{<02450>} and he delivered the city by his wisdom ^{<02451>}. Yet no one remembered that poor man. ¹⁶ So I said, "Wisdom ^{<02451>} is better than strength." But the wisdom ^{<02451>} of the poor man is despised and his words are not heeded. ¹⁷ The words of the wise ^{<02450>} heard in quietness are better than the shouting of a ruler among fools. ¹⁸ Wisdom ^{<02451>} is better than weapons of war, but one sinner destroys much good.*" Solomon stated a definite truth, so don't allow yourself to be down in the dumps when others don't appreciate your wisdom. After all, Prov. 9:12a reminds us, "*If you are wise, you are wise for yourself.*" Be content with knowing and appreciating the wisdom God has given you and use it for His glory without considering what reward you might receive from those around you.

H) <02451> wisdom teaches you where you are going in life.

Gregory, where are you going in life? Have you figured it out? Proverbs teaches that you can know. Prov. 14:8 tells us, "*The wisdom ^{<02451>} of the sensible is to understand his way, but the foolishness of fools is deceit.*" According to this verse, we would do well to be or become a *sensible* man. Strong's Concordance defines this word as *subtle, shrewd, crafty, sly, sensible*. The dictionary defines *sensible* as *having or showing good sense or sound judgment*. The good sense in this definition sounds an awful lot like prudence to me. So then, the wisdom a sensible man possesses and uses is the very thing that will enable him to understand where he is going in life. This is why it is so important to search for and acquire real wisdom.

Some people wish they were back in the good old days. Solomon wrote that this kind of thinking is not wise. The better way of thinking is to be wise and sensible in order to make the most of today and thus make life better. Eccl. 7:10 teaches, "*Do not say, "Why is it that the former days were better than these?" For it is not from wisdom ^{<02451>} that you ask about this.*" Every believer would do well to be content to make today the best it can possibly be, and let all of the yesterdays rest in the past. This is the best way to live.

J) <02451> wisdom only speaks what is good and right.

James 1:19 teaches that a wise man is "*quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger.*" When he does speak, his words are well-thought-through and calculated to accomplish the most good possible. The excellent wife in Proverbs 31 did just that. Verse 26 tells us, "*She opens her mouth in wisdom ^{<02451>}, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.*" She not only spoke wisdom, but she loved to teach others how to do the same. A good and godly man should do this too. Prov. 10:31 teaches that, "*The mouth of the righteous flows with wisdom ^{<02451>}, but the*

perverted tongue will be cut out.” A righteous man is good, legal, right, and ethical. It is no wonder he speaks with wisdom. In fact, he speaks wisdom continually. Prov. 18:4 says, *“The words of a man’s mouth are deep waters; the fountain of wisdom ^{<02451>} is a bubbling brook.”* When he speaks, wisdom simply gushes forth from his mouth.

Wisdom word two – <07919>, “to act wisely”

[Return to Index](#)

This Hebrew word occurs 13 times in Proverbs and is translated in the NASB as “wise behavior, acts wisely, gives attention, prospers, becomes wise, considers, or the way of understanding.” Although this Hebrew word includes all these aspects, I have chosen *acts wisely* as the best simple description to convey the meaning of the word.

Strong’s Concordance indicates that there are three aspects of *acting wisely* with a fourth aspect being the result. They are 1) *prudence*, 2) *understanding*, and 3) *insight*, all of which produce 4) *good success*. How then do you and I *act wisely*?

1) John MacArthur wrote that the Hebrew word for “*acts wisely*” is “discreet counsel or the ability to govern oneself by choice.”²² TWOT states that “There is also the meaning of acting circumspectly or prudently.”²³ What does it mean to be circumspect or prudent? The dictionary defines prudent as having “the ability to govern and discipline oneself by the use of reason.” As such, prudence must be a big part of acting wisely. “Circumspect” is a close synonym for “prudent.” A paraphrase of the dictionary definition would be to “carefully consider all circumstances and possible consequences.” Based upon these two definitions I have paraphrased “prudent” as “someone who carefully considers the consequences of his choices in life. If the result will be hurtful or costly, he will abstain, but if the result will be good and beneficial, he will proceed.” (I have used this definition throughout the paraphrase of the book of Proverbs.) So, first we must be prudent.

2) In addition to prudence we must have sound *understanding*. You might ask, “Understanding of what?” When I first started studying Proverbs, I thought understanding was merely knowing how to put into practice the facts that have been learned. I was wrong. Proverbs 9:10 defines understanding in its proper context. This verse reads, *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”* So then, understanding is learning who God really is, what He is, and how He works in the affairs of men. This verse puts understanding more on a spiritual plane where it belongs rather than merely an academic exercise. In fact, Proverbs is not merely a book to teach us how to be good and treat others right. It is more than that. The emphasis is more on interacting with my neighbor in a good and godly way based upon a right relationship with the LORD. This must be the case because wisdom is built upon a fear of the LORD, and if we fear the LORD the way we should, we will avoid or abandon every sinful practice. As a result, we will treat others right. This kind of godly conduct should be the normal and natural expression of a right relationship with the LORD. TWOT states that *acting wisely* includes “the process of thinking through a complex arrangement of thoughts resulting in a wise dealing and use of good practical common sense.”²⁴ This is where good understanding comes into play.

3) Derek Kidner, in his commentary on Proverbs, wrote that the Hebrew word for *acts wisely* “occurs in Prov. 1:3 where it is stated that the book was written to give young men “*insight*” into wise behavior.”²⁵ (Text color added for emphasis) So, we know that we must have good insight, but what does it mean to have insight? I mentioned this earlier, but it bears repeating. The dictionary defines the word as having “the ability to see and understand clearly the inner nature of things, esp. by intuition.” A companion word for insight is “comprehension.” The dictionary defines it as “to grasp mentally, understand.” Therefore, insight is the ability to look at a problem or opportunity and see it for what it really is, not what it appears to be at a casual glance. You and I must be able to do this before we can make the best decision that will bring about the best results.

4) If we do all three of the things listed above and do them well, then *good success* is certain to follow. One of the aspects of Strong’s definition for *act wisely* is “to prosper, have success.” Derek Kidner says of *acts wisely*, “Its particular character shows in its verb form, which often means be successful.”²⁶ TWOT agrees when it states “Another end result is the emphasis upon being successful.”²⁷ So then, when we acquire and use prudence, understanding, and insight, we can confidently expect success to be the outcome of every endeavor. It is a promise from the Word of God, and you can bank on it.

As a result of all that we have discussed so far, I have concluded that a good paraphrase/definition for *acts wisely* is “One whose understanding and insight will enable him to carefully evaluate all of the options and their consequences in order to choose the best plan of action that will bring about good success in all of his personal dealings.” I have purposely chosen the phrase “in all of his personal dealings” based upon John MacArthur’s comment in the notes of his Study Bible where he wrote that this Hebrew word “means discreet counsel or the

ability to govern oneself by choice.”²⁸ We will use this paraphrase in subsequent discussions and in the paraphrase of Proverbs.

²² MacArthur, John, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, pg. 877

²³ Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, vol. 2, pg. 877

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Kidner, Derek, *Proverbs*, page. 34

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, vol. 2, pg. 877

²⁸ MacArthur, John, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, pg. 877

Verses in Proverbs that use <07919> *acts wisely*

We saw in the discussion of Prov. 1:1-6 that there are four steps to learning and living the book of Proverbs. Verse 3 is step three, and it states, “to receive instruction in wise behavior^{<07919>}, righteousness, justice and equity.” We have already discussed this verse in chapter three of this commentary, but a refresher here would be helpful. In order to understand this verse thoroughly, we must use step one of the four steps to gain an understanding of what this verse is saying to do.

What does *instruction* mean in verse three? As I explained in chapter three (Prov. 1:1-6), Strong’s defines *instruction* as discipline, chastening, correction. The dictionary defines discipline as training that develops self-control, character, or orderliness and efficiency, chastening as to punish in order to correct or make better, and correction as to affect a change that corrects a mistake; change from wrong to right, or from abnormal to normal. So then, instruction’s goal is to 1) train young men so that they will have more self-control and character, 2) punish young men so that they will become better people, or 3) correct young men so that they will abandon wrong practices and choose to do the right things instead. It is obvious that all three aspects of instruction are designed to benefit a son even though it may be painful when they are applied.

According to verse three above, we should be receptive to discipline, chastening, and/or correction so that we can learn to *act wisely* (verse 3). Basically, verse three is saying that we need to allow the truths we learn in Proverbs to discipline, chasten, or correct us so that we will become good and godly neighbors and better followers of the LORD. Now let’s paraphrase Proverbs 1:3.

“We need to be ready to receive the truths presented in Proverbs and live them. If we allow its truths to teach and correct us,^{<receive instruction>} then the understanding, prudence, and insight we gain will enable us to carefully evaluate every situation in order to determine all of the solutions and their consequences. That way we can choose the best plan of action that will bring about good success in all our personal dealings^{<in wise behavior>}. This kind of approach to life will enable us to live in a good, lawful, and right manner^{<righteousness>}, do for and to others what they deserve^{<justice>}, and treat everyone the same regardless of their financial or social status^{<equity>}.” (JLSParaphrase)

So then, we can conclude that the discipline, chastening, and/or correction we learn as we are instructed by God’s Word will teach us to use understanding, prudence, and insight in order to carefully evaluate all our problems or opportunities. Then we can choose the best plan of action that will bring about good success in all our personal dealings.

Now that we have seen what *act wisely* means, let’s examine all the verses in Proverbs that address this word. This will help us see the kind of things we should do in order to show others that we are indeed acting wisely. The above paraphrase definition will be inserted in each of the verses we discuss in “acts wisely.”

1) How to approach work

To act wisely is to work when it is time to work and do a good job. Prov. 10:5 says, “*He who gathers in summer is a son who acts wisely*^{<07919>} (One whose understanding and insight will enable him to carefully evaluate all the options and their consequences in order to choose the best plan of action that will bring about good success in all his personal dealings.), *but he who sleeps in harvest is a son who acts shamefully.*” A man who acts wisely does so because he has at least some wisdom, and he recognizes the consequences if he doesn’t work when it is time to work. So then, acting wisely is doing what needs to be done when it needs to be done and in the way it needs to be done. A wise son will do this on a regular basis.

One thing we all need to learn is that when we look out for our boss's interest, we are acting wisely, and by doing so, we are looking out for our own interest as well. Prov. 14:35 teaches that, '*The king's favor is toward a servant who acts wisely*'^{<07919>} (One whose understanding and insight will enable him to carefully evaluate all of the options and their consequences in order to choose the best plan of action that will bring about good success in all of his personal dealings.), *but his anger is toward him who acts shamefully.*" A ruler (or an employer) appreciates an employee who acts wisely by looking out for the employer's interest. This is the kind of response Pharaoh showed toward Joseph. Then too, when an employee acts wisely toward his employer, there is a good chance that he will be rewarded for his faithful service. Prov. 17:2 says, "*A servant who acts wisely*"^{<07919>} (One whose understanding and insight will enable him to carefully evaluate all the options and their consequences in order to choose the best plan of action that will bring about good success in all of his personal dealings.) *will rule over a son who acts shamefully, and will share in the inheritance among brothers.*" An employee who acts wisely will show up on time, work hard and smart, do what the boss wants, and be a good example to the other employees. If someone is to be moved into management, he will be the one.

2) Watching what we say

To act wisely is to listen carefully before speaking and then think carefully about what you are going to say. Then say only what will be good and beneficial to the hearer. Prov. 10:19 tells us, "*When there are many words, transgression* (to go beyond the limits and say something you shouldn't. This results in sin) *is unavoidable, but he who restrains his lips is wise*"^{<07919>}. (This word wise is actually acts wisely. It is one whose understanding and insight will enable him to carefully evaluate all of the options and their consequences in order to choose the best plan of action that will bring about good success in all of his personal dealings.). This is why James 1:19-20 states, "*This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.*" Therefore, we need to listen more than we talk and then choose our words carefully. Prov. 16:23 states, "*The heart of the wise*"^{<02450>} (we will examine him later) *instructs*"^{<07919>} (teaches to act wisely) *his mouth and adds persuasiveness to his lips.*" This is why I said above that we need to think carefully about what we are going to say and say only what will be good and beneficial to all involved.

3) Having self-control

Acting wisely is to be the kind of person who takes a lot of abuse before becoming angry. Two verses in Proverbs show this to be true. Prov. 19:11 reads, "*A man's discretion*"^{<07919>} (his ability to use understanding, prudence, and insight in order to carefully evaluate all of his options and their consequences and then choose the best plan of action that will bring about good success in all of his personal dealings) *makes him slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook a transgression* (when someone else wrongs him)." Then Prov. 14:29 tells us, "*He who is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who is quick-tempered exalts folly.*" We will do an in-depth study of anger when we examine Proverbs chapter thirty, but the thing to remember here is that being patient and slow to get angry demonstrates *acting wisely*.

4) Being teachable

To act wisely is to be open to new truth, be receptive to constructive criticism, and be willing to learn both from others' mistakes and from our own. Prov. 21:11 states, "*When the scoffer is punished, the naive becomes wise; but when the wise is instructed*"^{<07919>}, *he receives knowledge.*" I feel that it is necessary to define a few words in this verse so that by the time we finish discussing it, you will have a better understand of what the verse is really teaching. As I said before, a *naïve* person is not necessarily a bad person. He merely fails to carefully evaluate the consequences of the decisions he faces in life. As a result, he makes choices based upon the emotions of the moment. Then his bad decisions end up being painful or costly. A *scoffer* is someone who openly and aggressively belittles the Bible, the LORD, and those who believe in and follow the LORD. The word instruction was fully explained above. Note that the word *instructed* in verse eleven above is the same Hebrew word as "*acts wisely.*" In other words, he is instructed about how to act wisely. It is this instruction that leads to a knowledge of God. Now let's look at the verse again.

"When the scoffer is punished, the naive (one who seldom considers the consequences of his choices in life) *becomes wise*"^{<02449>} (learns how to act so that he will not be punished for the same offenses the scoffer committed); *but when the wise*"^{<02449>} (someone who is learning or is

being taught wisdom – we will examine this Hebrew word later) *is instructed* ^{<07919>} (is taught how to act wisely), *he receives knowledge*.

Unlike a naïve man, a wise man doesn't have to be punished in order to learn how he can live better. He regularly learns by study and observation. There is a big difference.

Prov. 21:16 says that *"A man who wanders from the way of understanding* ^{<07919>} (continually learning more and better ways to act wisely) *will rest in the assembly of the dead."* What does it mean to *wander from*? It means that at one time he was living and acting in a wise manner, and then through neglect or outright rebellion he walked away from a good, right, and acceptable manner of living in order to satisfy his own passions and desires. The only thing he wants is to be free to do whatever he wants whenever and wherever he wants to do it. It is unfortunate for him because once he gets his way, he will most likely experience a premature death. The principle of sow and reap normally works that way. A wise man will not do this because he realizes the adverse consequences of doing such a foolish thing.

A man who acts wisely will gain knowledge and understanding through consistent study and meditation upon the Bible. Prov. 16:20 says, *"He who gives attention* ^{<07919>} (studies the Scriptures in order to gain godly understanding, prudence, and insight. These will enable him to carefully evaluate all of what the Scriptures teach and then obey them) *to the word will find good* (be successful), *and blessed is he who trusts in the LORD."* The Bible is the source of all wisdom, and anyone who consistently studies and meditates upon the Scriptures will enjoy a good and joyful life. Good things will come to the man who spends time in the Word and then practices what he learns. The word *blessed* in the second half of this verse means *to be happy or joyful*. Anyone who trusts the LORD for guidance, protection, and provision will indeed be a joyful person.

5) Being a good citizen

A man acts wisely by reporting illegal activities to the authorities so that they can apprehend the criminals and see that they are brought before the courts to be tried and sentenced. Prov. 21:12 substantiates this when it says, *"The righteous one considers* ^{<07919>} (uses understanding, prudence, and insight to carefully evaluate what the wicked are doing and the consequences of their actions in order to choose the best plan of action that will bring them to justice) *the house of the wicked, turning the wicked to ruin."* Legal, just, and good people (righteous people) don't have to sit by and watch criminals oppress innocent people. They can and should do something about it. This is acting wisely.

6) Finding a good wife

When it comes to wives who act wisely, the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 is the supreme example. Prov. 19:14 says, *"House and wealth are an inheritance from fathers, but a prudent wife* ^{<07919>} (a woman who uses her understanding, insight, and discretion to carefully evaluate all of her options and their consequences and then chooses the best plan of action that will bring about good success in all of her personal dealings in and around the home) *is from the LORD."* You might be asking, "Are there any women like this out there for me to find as a wife? The answer is a resounding "yes." The LORD is the one who makes a woman into the prudent (acts wisely) woman. There are certainly some of these women out there. You simply need to find them. Read Prov. 31:10-31 and see for yourself. In addition, you would do well to read my commentary on Proverbs thirty-one. It will really help you understand the passage.

7) Looking forward to the future

When it comes to a person's approach to the future, by acting wisely you set in motion the security, protection, and confidence in the LORD that will cause you to live a long and full life. Prov. 15:24 tells us, *"The path of life leads upward for the wise* ^{<07919>} (One whose understanding and insight will enable him to carefully evaluate all of the options and their consequences in order to choose the best plan of action that will bring about good success in all of his personal dealings.) *that he may keep away from Sheol* (the grave) *below."* A wise man will carefully evaluate the gift of eternal life found in Jesus Christ. As a result, he will accept that gift by faith alone and be saved from his sins. Then when he dies, Christ will take him to heaven to be with Him forever. This is such a wonderful reward for acting wisely. It nets the gift of eternal life and sweet fellowship with the God we love.

8) One negative verse

There is one negative verse in Proverbs about acting wisely. It is about one who takes unfair advantage of another. Prov. 17:8 says, “A *bribe is a charm in the sight of its owner; wherever he turns, he prospers* ^{<07919>} (prosper – that is, he has good success until he is discovered by the authorities).” Strong’s defines *bribe* as a *present or bribe*. This is nothing more than offering something to another in exchange for a favor. Even though a man who bribes others seems to prosper and have good success, he is not to be imitated because this man is either illegal, unethical, or immoral. This verse does stress the success factor of <07919>, but we must remember the results of such actions. The one who bribes another person may experience short-term success, but he will only experience punishment and loss in the end.

Wisdom word three – <08454>, “Sound Wisdom”

[Return to Index](#)

This Hebrew word occurs only four times in Proverbs, and in all four cases it is translated in the NASB as *sound wisdom*. Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, states that “Among the usages of this technical word is *sound efficient wisdom*, i.e., *sound judgment, wisdom that leads to practical success*.”²⁹ Strong’s Concordance indicates that this Hebrew word also carries with it the idea of “*abiding success*.” In essence, *sound wisdom* is the everyday kind of wisdom grandma used to teach—the kind that just makes good, practical sense. It is the sort of thing a wise man will do on a regular basis. The question still remains, though, what is it? By definition, this kind of wisdom is *sound, efficient, and successful*. It is *sound* in that it is practical, and it works every time it is put to use; it is *efficient* in that it gets things done without a lot of wasted time and effort; and it is *successful* in that it brings about good results for the user. TWOT states that in addition “Sound wisdom needs discretion also.”³⁰ Do you remember the definition we used earlier for discretion? The dictionary defines it as being “*careful about what one does and says*.” It also includes prudence in the definition. Doesn’t this sound a lot like what we talked about when we discussed “*acts wisely*?” This is part of what I meant when I said that many of the characteristics of the five Hebrew words for wisdom in Proverbs overlap. So, now that we see the components of *sound wisdom*, let’s construct a paraphrase to make its meaning more clear.

It is obvious from the TWOT definition that this kind of wisdom is *practical*. This is the kind of wisdom that makes perfect sense to those who understand it. Therefore, it stands to reason that this kind of wisdom is also *efficient*. It gets things done in the best way and with the least amount of wasted time and energy. Since it is practical and efficient, it is no wonder that it brings *regular and lasting* (abiding) *success*. So then, *sound wisdom* is *where the rubber meets the road*. It is what a wise man does on a regular basis. This is the kind of wisdom that anyone can attain to if they are willing to learn and understand the principles of the Word of God and apply them on a regular basis. This is the kind of wisdom that makes us successful and enables us to enjoy a long and peaceful life. We can sum up *sound wisdom*, then, as the practical, efficient things a godly man does day after day that brings good success. These are the things anyone can do if they possess and use godly understanding and discernment.

A good example of *sound wisdom* is what your mom and I covenanted to do when we married. We agreed that individually we would do our best not to be alone with an adult of the opposite sex. I would not drive somewhere with a woman or be in a house alone with her. Your mom does the same with regard to men. We realized early in our marriage that rumors can easily get started, and once made public, they can ruin a man or woman’s reputation even though the allegation is totally false. By avoiding the appearance of evil, we are more likely to avoid any charges of impropriety. This makes good sense, and it has produced good results in our 52 years of marriage. This is godly, practical advice for anyone, married or not.

²⁹ Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, Vol. 1. Pg. 413

³⁰ Ibid

Verses in Proverbs that use *sound wisdom*.

The first verse

Proverbs chapter two shows us what will result if we seek wisdom God’s way. Verses 1-4 show us the need to seek wisdom and keep on seeking it for life. If we will do this, several things will result. Verses 5-9 state, ⁵ *Then you will discern the fear of the LORD and discover the knowledge of God.* ⁶ *For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding.* ⁷ *He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk in integrity,* ⁸ *guarding the paths of justice, and He preserves the way of His godly ones.* ⁹ *Then you will*

discern righteousness and justice and equity and every good course.” This section of Scripture teaches that the first result of a continual search for wisdom is to discern (figure out) a genuine fear the LORD, and the next step is to discover who God is, what He is, and how He works in the affairs of men. I want to call your attention to verse six. It tells us that wisdom, knowledge, and understanding come from the LORD. Then in verse seven, we see that He has a storehouse of *sound wisdom* that He wants to give to those of His children who are *upright*. As I mentioned before, to be *upright* is to do what is right in the sight of the LORD. Therefore, *sound wisdom* is a godly discipline that God gives to those of His children who practice doing things that are pleasing in His sight. So, when *sound wisdom* is mentioned in Proverbs, it is not talking about mere mundane or intellectual exercises that any unsaved man or woman can do. No, it is something only believers in Jesus Christ can have and do—those who are walking in fellowship with Him. This is the kind of efficient wisdom that produces continued good success in every area of life and practice. Verse nine tells us that the end result of gaining *sound wisdom* is that we will discern (figure out) how to be righteousness (do what is good, right, and lawful), how to administer justice (give people what they deserve), how to treat people with equity (be impartial with others), and how to follow every good course.

Sound wisdom in this case is helpful insight that leads to success in a given venture. It is not primarily secular, but *sound wisdom* uses good judgment in secular areas as well. An example is what my dad taught me when I was learning to drive a car. He told me that I should drive no more than 35 mph for the first mile on a cold engine. This will greatly prolong the life of the engine, and once I understood the damage that driving hard on a cold engine will do, it just made good, practical sense to drive the car easy until it warms up. Consequently, all our cars have kept running well beyond 200,000 miles.

The second verse

In chapter three of Proverbs, we see another instance of *sound wisdom*. Verses 1-12 of this chapter teach us the right way to act and react before our God. Verses 13-20 teach us that knowledge, understanding, and wisdom are essential for success. Then in verses 21-26, we are shown the benefits of having and using *wisdom* along with her counterparts, *knowledge* and *understanding*. Proverbs 3:19-26 state,

¹⁹ *“The LORD by wisdom ^{<02451>} founded the earth, by understanding He established the heavens.* ²⁰ *By His knowledge the deeps were broken up and the skies drip with dew.* ²¹ *“My son, let them ^(wisdom, knowledge, and understanding) not vanish from your sight; Keep sound wisdom ^{<08454>} (the practical, efficient things a godly man does day after day that bring good success. These are the things anyone can do if they possess and use godly understanding and discernment) and discretion (having the knowledge and understanding to see a thing for what it really is and be able to come up with good solutions), ²² so they will be life to your soul and adornment to your neck. ²³ Then you will walk in your way securely and your foot will not stumble. ²⁴ When you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet. ²⁵ Do not be afraid of sudden fear nor of the onslaught of the wicked when it comes; ²⁶ for the LORD will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being caught.”* (Grayed text added for clarity).

The word *them* in verse 21 above refers to *knowledge*, *understanding*, and *wisdom* (the kind God gave to Solomon). Since the verse says, *“Let them not vanish from your sight,”* then they must have been in sight at some point. I hope you have gained these three things because they are a prerequisite for anyone who desires to have *sound wisdom* and *discretion*. It appears that *sound wisdom* is not *discretion*, but *sound wisdom* uses *discretion* to function. Therefore, someone with *sound wisdom* has *knowledge*, *understanding*, *insight*, and *discretion* at his disposal. In order to have these things, you must study and meditate on the Word of God. It is interesting that this is exactly what Proverbs chapter two teaches us.

Verses 22-26 show us the benefits of having *sound wisdom*. Those benefits are a life filled with vim and vigor (verse 22a), real security (verse 23), accompanied by peace of mind (verses 24-25), and a confidence in the LORD’s protection (verse 26). Rewards like these are certainly good reasons for you to strive to gain and use *sound wisdom*.

The third verse

Proverbs 8:12-21 tells about Wisdom’s companions. These verses state, ¹² *“I, wisdom, dwell with prudence, and I find knowledge and discretion.* ¹³ *The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverted mouth, I hate.* ¹⁴ *Counsel is mine and sound wisdom (the practical, efficient things a godly man*

does day after day that bring good success. These are the things anyone can do if they possess and use godly understanding and discernment); *I am understanding, power is mine.*¹⁵ *By me kings reign, and rulers decree justice.*¹⁶ *By me princes rule, and nobles, all who judge rightly.*¹⁷ *I love those who love me; and those who diligently seek me will find me.* Notice in verse fourteen that **sound wisdom** belongs to wisdom. Wisdom in chapter eight is the same kind of wisdom ^{<02451>} God gave Solomon. So then, **sound wisdom** is a function of the kind of wisdom Solomon had. That is encouraging because it means that you and I can acquire both kinds of wisdom. This may sound like circular reasoning, but I trust you will understand since we discussed ^{<02451>} wisdom earlier in this chapter.

The fourth verse

Prov. 18:1 is the last verse in Proverbs to use **sound wisdom**. It reads, *“He who separates himself seeks his own desire, he quarrels against all **sound wisdom**.”* This verse is describing a young man who is bound and determined to go his own way and do his own thing. Usually someone of this persuasion will join a worldly crowd and seek to indulge in their sinful practices. Psalm 1:1 says, *“How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers!”* The KJV renders this verse as, *“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.”* The phrase *stand in the path (or in the way) of sinners* literally means “to take a stand with” sinners. He chooses to be on their side and in full support of what they are doing. A man like this has tunnel vision, and no one can talk him out of doing what he desires. Notice that his choice is all about him and what he wants. He totally disregards others and what they need. As long as he gets what he wants, he’s happy. When wise men use **sound, godly wisdom**, (the practical, efficient things a godly man does day after day that bring good success. These are the things anyone can do if they possess and use godly understanding and discernment) in an attempt to try to persuade him to abandon his foolishness, he will argue his case and not heed their advice. Even though their counsel is logical and practical, he couldn’t care less. He is like the prodigal son who wants to leave his father’s house, and no one will convince him otherwise until sin has taken him so far down that he has nowhere to look but up.

We have looked at each of the four verses in Proverbs that use **sound wisdom**, but we would do well to address one more verse. Job 5:12 tells us that *“He (the LORD) frustrates the plotting of the shrewd, so that their hands cannot attain success”*^{<08454>}. (Grayed text added for clarity). The KJV reads, *“He disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise”*^{<08454>}. The words *attain success* and *perform their enterprise* are both translations of the Hebrew word for **sound wisdom**. The simple truth is that the LORD will not allow a sinful man to be successful in his ventures or reach his crafty goals because he is self-seeking and greedy. It doesn’t mean he won’t do sinful acts, but it does mean that those sinful acts will not produce long-term success. The dictionary defines *shrewd* as *keen-witted, clever, or sharp in practical affairs*. This could be a good thing, but in this verse the shrewd man is seen as less than desirable. We can rightfully assume that this *shrewd* or *crafty* man is looking out for himself and no one else. It is clear that he dreams up clever schemes in order to take unfair advantage of others. **Sound wisdom** would never do such a thing. In fact, a wise man will do just the opposite. **Sound wisdom** uses trustworthy knowledge, sound understanding, and tested discernment all wrapped up under the umbrella of sound principles and practices. The shrewd man in this verse may see quick gains, but he will also see long-term losses, whereas the godly man with **sound wisdom** may not see large short-term gains, but he will be very successful in the long run. It is obvious which one is better.

Gregory, I know that you want to have and use **sound wisdom**. You can have it if you will seek it in the right way and continue seeking it for life. Unfortunately, the road that leads to **sound wisdom** is paved with self-discipline and diligent study of and meditation upon the Bible. Simply put, it is a lot of hard work. Are you willing to exert the effort, or will you coast along hoping to find **sound wisdom** down the road without having to work for it? The choice is yours. On page 35 of his book *Proverbs*, Derek Kidner stated, “...the book (Proverbs) is largely concerned to show that the godly man is in the best sense a man of affairs, who takes the trouble to know his way about, and plan his course realistically (cf. Prov. 22:3, *A shrewd man sees the danger and hides himself; but the simple go on, and suffer for it.*)”³¹ (Grayed text and green italics added for clarity.) You need to learn what life is all about and where you are going in life. You also need to make realistic plans about how you are going to attain those goals. That, son, is **sound wisdom**.

We have discussed *wisdom* <02451>, *acts wisely* <07919>, and *sound wisdom* <08454>. Now we will discuss the last two words for wisdom in Proverbs. They are *wisdom* <02449> and *wise man* <02450>. It is interesting to note that *wisdom* <02449> is the root word from which *wise man* <02450> and *wisdom* <02451> are derived. As best I can understand, <02449> *wisdom* is more the aspect of learning or teaching wisdom while <02450> *wisdom* is being a wise man on a regular basis. Keep in mind as we discuss them that all five Hebrew words are different aspects of the same wisdom. Know also that knowledge, understanding, insight, and discernment are the things that fuel wisdom. These abilities can be learned from the Bible and from practical experience. The goal is to discover who God is, what He is, and how He works in the affairs of men. Therefore, how we interact with people, how we approach our work, how we plan for the future, and how we conduct ourselves in general are all based upon our relationship with the LORD and our obedience to the Word of God. It seems logical then that the *wisdom* Proverbs teaches is primarily a spiritual exercise even though it may spill over into the secular function. You and I must always keep this in mind. Now let's look at the last two words for wisdom.

³¹ Kidner, Derek, *Proverbs*, page. 35

Wisdom word four – <02449> Wisdom

[Return to Index](#)

This Hebrew word appears twelve times in Proverbs. Let me say from the start that based upon all I have learned about this Hebrew word, <02449> *wisdom* appears to be more the aspect of learning or teaching wisdom whereas <02451> is more the aspect of using wisdom. Consider the following:

Strong's Concordance defines <02449> as

- 1) to learn to act wisely,
- 2) to teach others to act wisely, or
- 3) to show the wisdom you have learned.

TWOT states that “The essential idea of (*hakam*) represents a manner of thinking and attitude concerning life's experiences; including matters of general interest and basic morality. These concerns relate to
prudence in secular affairs,
skills in the arts,
moral sensitivity, and
experience in the ways of the LORD.”³²

TWOT also says that “The emphasis of OT wisdom was that the human will, in the realm of practical matters, was to be subject to divine causes. Therefore, Hebrew wisdom was not theoretical and speculative. It was practical, based on revealed principles of right and wrong, to be lived out in daily life.”³³ (Underlining added for clarity).

Then too, TWOT says that “The wisdom literature, while sometimes using wisdom as prudence and cleverness, majors on ethical and spiritual conduct. Because God revealed Himself to Israel, their sacred literature has the effect of a divine imperative; *hakam* refers to godly cleverness and skill, which results in practical action. The one who hears (Prov. 8:33; 23:19; 27:11), will be industrious, will know how to talk, and his will, will be in captivity to God's. He will have life. This wins divine approbation”³⁴ (Underlining added for clarity).

³² Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, vol.1, pg. 282

³³ Ibid., pg. 283

³⁴ Ibid.

Taking into account all of the above definitions, we can conclude that <02449> *wisdom* is

“the learning or the teaching of prudence in secular affairs, skill in work, and the exercise of practical godly living, all of which are based upon a genuine fear of the LORD and the principles of the Word of God. This is practical wisdom, and it is to be lived out daily.”

Now let's look at each of the verses in Proverbs that use this Hebrew word “*wisdom*.”

Proverbs 6:6-8

It is good that we start with Proverbs 6:6-8 because these verses convey so well the practical aspect of ^{<02449>}wisdom. The text states, ⁶ *“Go to the ant, O sluggard, observe her ways and be (become) wise ^{<02449>}, ⁷ *which, having no chief, officer or ruler, ⁸ prepares her food in the summer and gathers her provision in the harvest.”* (Grayed text and underling added for clarity). We have all watched ants and have seen how they work hard and smart through the summer months gathering provisions and storing them for the winter months. They do wise things, but they are not wise in the sense of Proverbs wisdom. They work hard, smart, and as a team because God has programmed them to do so. These are the normal and natural things ants to do. When we learn to follow the same work ethic and prepare ahead of time for a need that we know will follow, we are being wise because this is not something a man lacking understanding will do. Note that the emphasis here is upon learning to be wise. So, let’s paraphrase these verses so that they will make more sense. They would read something like this:*

“If you are a lazy man, find an ant hill, and study how the ants work hard, smart, and as a team throughout the summer and fall months gathering provisions and storing them for the winter months to come ^{<her ways>}. If you see and understand her activities ^{<observe>}, you will learn to be prudent and willingly work as a team to prepare for needs before they arrive ^{<be wise>}. The ant is not wise. God programmed her to work the way she does, but when you learn to plan ahead and work hard like she does, you will become wise.” (Prov. 6:6-8, JLSParaphrase)

So, it is apparent from this verse that the phrase *“be wise”* would be more appropriately stated *“become wise”*. It is a learning process consistent with our definition above.

Proverbs 8:33

In this verse we see another illustration of the learning aspect of becoming wise. In chapter eight, wisdom is giving her testimony about who she is, what she does, and how she tries to convince men to embrace her and her ways. Proverbs 8:32-36 states her conclusion. This passage says, ³² *“Now therefore, O sons, listen to me, for blessed are they who keep my ways. ³³ Heed instruction and be wise ^{<02449>} (or become wise), and do not neglect it. ³⁴ Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at my doorposts. ³⁵ For he who finds me finds life and obtains favor from the LORD. ³⁶ But he who sins against me injures himself; all those who hate me love death.”* (Grayed text added for clarity). It is clear from the context of these verses that *wisdom* ^{<02451>} desires both you and me to learn her ways and experience the blessings that result. Let’s paraphrase verse thirty-three. It would read,

“When someone tries to teach you things that will develop self-control, character, or orderliness and efficiency, or they must punish you in order to correct your conduct so that you will become a better person ^{<instruction>}, listen with great interest and with the intent of obeying what they teach you ^{<heed>}. When you listen and obey, you will learn to be ^{<02449>} prudent in your affairs, skilled in your work, and live in a good and godly manner ^{<become wise>}. Don’t brush this kind of instruction off as frivolous ^{<neglect it>} because if you accept the instruction it will result in the best outcome in every area of life and practice. This is good advice indeed, and we all would do well to follow it.”

Proverbs 9:9

The first and last paragraphs of chapter nine are inverse parallels. The first paragraph is a call to pursue wisdom—God’s best. The last is a call to pursue the physical pleasures this world has to offer—Satan’s imitation. Tucked neatly between these two paragraphs is paragraph two. The essence of the second paragraph is that a wise man will know what kind of person you are by how you respond to correction. It teaches that if you correct or rebuke a scoffer, he will reject your concern and end up hating you. If you correct or rebuke a wise man, he will love you for it and become an even wiser man. So, as I said, you can tell what kind of person someone is by how they respond to rebuke. We will deal with this more fully when we get to chapter nine in the commentary, but for now, let’s take a brief look at Proverbs 9:9 to see what we can learn.

Verses 8b and 9 state, *“Reprove a wise man ^{<02450>} and he will love you. Give instruction to a wise man ^{<02450>} and he will be still wiser ^{<02449>}, teach a righteous man and he will increase his learning.”* We have yet to discuss the *“wise man”* ^{<02450>}, but to make it simple, a wise man is one who uses practical wisdom day in and day out as a

regular manner of living. We will look at him in depth in the next section of our discussion on wisdom. The lesson we can learn from this verse is that a wise man will learn additional wisdom when rebuked or corrected. It is not necessarily a comfortable way to learn, but it is a productive way to learn

A wise man is one who has gained a certain level of wisdom, but he is always eager to learn more. If you correct a wise man or call him down about something he is doing wrong or needs to improve (*reprove*), he will appreciate your concern (*love you*). It may hurt to be corrected, but he understands and appreciates the fact that discipline will keep him on the correct path of life. When you teach him more *wisdom* ^{<02451>} he will take it to heart, and the end result will be that he *becomes wiser* ^{<02449>} than he was before. A paraphrase of verse nine would read something like this:

“A wise man ^{<02450>} is someone who has acquired and uses prudence and self-control on a daily basis. When you teach a man like him things that develop or enhance self-control, character, or orderliness and efficiency, or if you reprimand him in order to correct his conduct with the intent of helping him become a better person ^{<instruction dd>}, he will learn to act even more prudently and with more self-control ^{<become still wiser 02449>}.”

Proverbs 9:12

When you *become wise* ^{<02449>} you are the primary beneficiary. Family and friends benefit to some degree, but you benefit the most from your own wise conduct. Consider verse twelve, “*If you are wise* (are learning wisdom) ^{<02449>}, *you are wise* (are learning wisdom) ^{<02449>} for yourself, and if you scoff, you alone will bear it.” This verse is pretty much self-explanatory, so we’ll move on.

Proverbs 19:20

This verse teaches how you can become wise and stay that way for the rest of your life. It states, “*Listen to counsel and accept discipline, that you may be wise* (become wise and continue to learn more and more wisdom) ^{<02449>} *the rest of your days.*” The word *listen* means more than casually hearing what someone has to say. It means to listen carefully with the intent of understanding what is being said and then doing it. Derek Kinder writes that *counsel* means “someone who knows the ropes.”³⁵ The person giving the counsel literally knows the best way to get things done and the best time to do them. If you and I will take sound counsel to heart, we will have done the first step of what is required. Yet there is something more we need to accept. We need to readily accept another’s help when they teach us the best way to act or think, or when they call us down for our own good ^{<discipline>}. Others are usually able to see our faults long before we see them, and when a concerned friend is so kind as to lovingly show us our faults, we benefit a great deal. If you and I will listen when taught and accept discipline, then we will learn more wisdom. If we will keep on listening when taught and accept discipline, we will remain wise for the rest of our lives. This kind of advice sounds like the ticket we need to experience life at its best. I don’t know about you, but this is what I want. Now let’s paraphrase this verse. It would read,

“Pay close attention and listen with interest when a man who “knows the ropes” ^{<counsel>} tries to correct or discipline you. If you accept what he teaches and follow his advice as an ongoing practice of life, you will *become wiser* ^{<02449>} than you were before, and you will remain that way for the rest of your life.”

³⁵ Kidner, Derek, *Proverbs*, page. 35

Proverbs 21:11

When the scoffer is punished, the naive becomes wise ^{<02449>}; *But when the wise is instructed, he receives knowledge.*

This is one of those verses that will require us to define several words in order to understand what is really being taught here. We have discussed these before, but let’s review them individually. A *scoffer* is someone who is adamantly opposed to God, the Bible, and anyone who tries to live godly. He is vocally opposed to all of them. Without question, he is unteachable. A *naïve* man is not necessarily a bad man. It is simply that he seldom evaluates the consequences of his choices, and as a result, he makes many foolish and costly mistakes. Once the decision has been made, he must endure the consequences of his poor choices. He doesn’t seem to be able, on

his own, to see the stupidity of his choices in life. The word *instructed* in this verse means instruction or training. We discussed this word earlier in this commentary, but it bears repeating. It involves discipline, chastening, or correction. The dictionary defines these three words as: discipline = training that develops self-control, character, or orderliness and efficiency, chastening = to punish in order to correct or make better, correction = punishment or scolding to correct faults. So then, *instruction* includes training that develops character, punishment that produces correct actions or attitudes, or punishment that corrects faults. Finally, we must define *knowledge*. As I said earlier, Derek Kidner writes that *knowledge* ^{<01847>} is "...implying not so much an informed mind as a knowledge of truth and indeed God Himself."³⁶ Knowledge, then, is not a mere accumulation of facts, but it is learning truths based upon our understanding of the Word of God and what we know about who God is, what He is, and how He works in the affairs of men. Now, armed with these definitions, we can dissect Proverbs 21:11 and be reasonably sure that we understand what it is really saying.

Proverbs 21:11 states, "*When the scoffer is punished, the naive becomes wise* ^{<02449>}; *but when the wise* ^{<02449>} *is instructed, he receives knowledge.*" I think it would be best here to paraphrase the verse so that its meaning will become more clear.

"A naïve man makes many foolish and costly mistakes because he seldom evaluates the consequences of his choices ^{<the naive>}. When he watches severe punishment being applied to the back of one who openly ridicules God, the Bible, and those who try to live godly ^{<the scoffer>}, the naïve man will learn to seriously evaluate the consequences of his own choices ^{<becomes wise 02449>} so that he can avoid being punished like the scoffer. On the other hand ^{<but>}, when someone disciplines, chastens, or corrects ^{<instructs>} a man who has learned or is in the process of learning wisdom ^{<02449>}, he will accept and retain ^{<receives>} those truths based upon his understanding of the Word of God and what he knows about who God is, what He is, and how He works in the affairs of men ^{<knowledge>}. As a result, he will be better off for it."

When a naïve man sees another punished, he should gain the knowledge to avoid doing that same wrong deed knowing that punishment will result if he proceeds. When a wise man is taught, he gains more wisdom so that he can live an even better life. There is a world of difference between the two. Take a few minutes and think about it.

³⁶ Kidner, Derek, *Proverbs*, page. 35

Proverbs 23:19

In Proverbs 23:19-28, a father is warning his son about the dangers of companions who are drunks, gluttons, or prostitutes. Heeding warnings like these leads to sound wisdom. Let's read the text, and then we will discuss it.

Proverbs 23:19-28 ¹⁹ *Listen, my son, and be wise* ^{<02449>} (become wise), *and direct your heart in the way.* ²⁰ *Do not be with heavy drinkers of wine, or with gluttonous eaters of meat;* ²¹ *for the heavy drinker and the glutton will come to poverty, and drowsiness will clothe one with rags.* ²² *Listen to your father who begot you, and do not despise your mother when she is old.* ²³ *Buy truth, and do not sell it, get wisdom* ^{<02451>} *and instruction and understanding.* ²⁴ *The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice, and he who sires a wise son* ^{<02450>} *will be glad in him.* ²⁵ *Let your father and your mother be glad, and let her rejoice who gave birth to you.* ²⁶ *Give me your heart, my son, and let your eyes delight in my ways.* ²⁷ *For a harlot is a deep pit and an adulterous woman is a narrow well.* ²⁸ *Surely she lurks as a robber, and increases the faithless among men.* (Grayed text and underlining added for clarity).

As I mentioned earlier, the word *listen* means more than simply hearing a father's advice. It is to listen carefully with the intent of doing what you hear. You *become wise* ^{<02449>} when you hear what a wise counselor has to say and then follow his advice. To *direct your heart in the way* is to order your life in such a way that you avoid or abandon relationships with any of the undesirable kinds of people mentioned in this passage. If you do this and become a wise son, you will make your dad the happiest man on earth. It is to your benefit and the benefit of your parents for you to *become wise* ^{<02449>}. When you do, everyone wins.

Proverbs 13:20

Our friends affect us either for good or to our detriment. First Corinthians 15:33 tells us, *“Do not be deceived: Bad company corrupts good morals.”* So then, friends can affect us adversely. Proverbs 27:17 tells us, *“Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.”* So then, friends can also affect us for good. These good people are the kind of friends we should desire, but we would do well to choose friends who are not only good but wise as well. Proverbs 13:20 sums up both the good and the bad. It states, *“He who walks with wise men ^{<02450>} will be wise ^{<02449>} (become wise), but the companion of fools will suffer harm.”* The simple truth is that choosing companions who are prudent in secular affairs, skilled in their work, and live a practical, godly life based upon a genuine fear of the LORD and the principles of the Word of God ^{<02450>} will, in turn, teach you to become just like them ^{<02449>}. Those who choose fools as their close companions will always be hurt by them. The principle of sow and reap works that way. Therefore, choose your friends carefully. See chapter five of this commentary for more details on this subject.

Proverbs 20:1

Alcoholic beverages are not good for you. If you ingest enough of the drink, it will make you drunk. When a man gets drunk, he will lose control of his faculties, and he may not even be aware of it. As a believer in Christ, there are more legitimate ways to find satisfaction. When we examine Proverbs 31, we will see that King Lemuel was instructed by his mother not to desire alcoholic beverages because he was a responsible leader. People depended upon him for justice. You and I are not rulers, but we should still be responsible men. Our verse reads, *“Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is intoxicated by it is not wise ^{<02449>}.”* The meaning of the verse is quite obvious. Anyone who drinks until he is drunk *has not learned ^{<02449>}* how to discipline himself to act, think, and speak so as to achieve the best results in life. It is as simple as that. Some believers indulge in social drinking, but as our pastor has stated from the pulpit, more people are involved in automobile accidents as a result of social drinking than those who are totally plastered. If you drink, you are not wise. There is no other way to say it. Therefore, since I want to be wise, I will not drink alcoholic beverages. Period! I trust you feel the same way.

Proverbs 23:15-16

I suspect that any parent would be thrilled to have a wise son. Unfortunately, most are never blessed with one, but those who are know that it is a sweet experience. Proverbs 23:15-16 state, *“My son, if your heart is wise ^{<02449>} (has learned wisdom), my own heart also will be glad; and my inmost being will rejoice when your lips speak what is right.”* (Grayed text added for clarity). Basically, the verse is saying that your dad will be thrilled if you have learned to be prudent and skilled ^{<02449>} in your speech and actions. Notice that these verses state that dad will be glad when *your heart* and not just your mind becomes wise. There is a great deal of difference. Intellect alone won't hold a candle to wisdom of the heart. That is what we should strive to attain because a right heart attitude will last a lifetime.

Proverbs 27:11

This verse is almost a match for Proverbs 23:15-16. It states, *“Be wise ^{<02449>} (become wise), my son, and make my heart glad, that I may reply to him who reproaches me.”* (Grayed text added for clarity). Notice that when you learn to be prudent, skilled, and live a good and godly life ^{<wisdom 02449>}, it will thrill your parents, and your dad will have all the ammunition he needs to defend the way he raised you. Son, go ahead and make your mom and me happy!

Proverbs 30:24

As we will see when we get to Proverbs chapter thirty, Agur was rebuking his two sons Ithiel and Ucal. In Prov. 30:14 Agur said, *“There is a kind of man whose teeth are like swords and his jaw teeth like knives, to devour the afflicted from the earth and the needy from among men.”* It is obvious that these two young men were critical of those they felt didn't deserve to live, and they were going about trying to destroy them. In verses 24-28, Agur was trying to show these boys that every living thing has some value even if it is not apparent at the moment. We will deal with this verse in detail when we get to chapter 30, but for now we will take an abbreviated look at the passage. Proverbs 30:24-28 reads,

²⁴ *Four things are small on the earth, but they are exceedingly* ^{<02449>} (have learned a lot about) *wise* ^{<02450>} (and how to practice wisdom on a regular basis): ²⁵ *The ants are not a strong people, but they prepare their food in the summer;* ²⁶ *the badgers are not mighty people, yet they make their houses in the rocks;* ²⁷ *the locusts have no king, yet all of them go out in ranks;* ²⁸ *the lizard you may grasp with the hands, yet it is in kings' palaces."*

We saw the skill and prudence of ants in Proverbs chapter six; badgers burrow into rocky areas in order to protect themselves from stronger enemies; grasshoppers survive by virtue of their sheer numbers; and lizards survive by camouflaging themselves so well. Now if each of these creatures has value, certainly the people Ithiel and Ucal wanted to destroy had some value too.

Notice the Strong's numbers in verse 24. The word *exceeding* is the same Hebrew word for *to be or to become wise* ^{<02449>}, and the word *wise* is the same Hebrew word as *wise man* ^{<02450>}. Basically, what the verse is saying is that these animals have learned (*exceeding*) to put wisdom into practice day by day on a regular basis (*wise*). This is a fascinating concept. Think about it for a while. This is exactly what you and I need to do.

Eccl. 2:15

As we examine verses or passages in Ecclesiastes, we must remember that Solomon was in deep depression when he wrote the book. God had already told him that his kingdom was going to be taken away from him and given to someone he didn't even know. As a result, he was in the dumps after realizing that everything he had worked so hard to gain was going to be given to someone who might squander all he had worked so hard to acquire. In his eyes, his whole life had been wasted, and he viewed everything he had done throughout his life as nothing more than empty pursuits. If you keep this in mind as you read Ecclesiastes, you will understand more of what Solomon was trying to convey to his readers.

In Ecclesiastes 2:15 Solomon wrote, *"Then I said to myself, "As is the fate of the fool, it will also befall me. Why then have I been extremely wise* ^{<02449>} (why have I learned so much wisdom)?" *So I said to myself, "This too is vanity."* (Grayed text and underlining added for clarity). What was he trying to get across in this verse? Let's look at the whole passage in order to see the context of the passage.

Eccl. 2:9-16 ⁹ *Then I (Solomon) became great and increased more than all who preceded me in Jerusalem. My wisdom also stood by me.* ¹⁰ *All that my eyes desired I did not refuse them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, for my heart was pleased because of all my labor and this was my reward for all my labor.* ¹¹ *Thus I considered all my activities which my hands had done and the labor which I had exerted, and behold all was vanity and striving after wind and there was no profit under the sun.*

¹² *So I turned to consider wisdom, madness and folly; for what will the man do who will come after the king except what has already been done?* ¹³ *And I saw that wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness.* ¹⁴ *The wise man's eyes are in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. And yet I know that one fate befalls them both.* ¹⁵ *Then I said to myself, "As is the fate of the fool, it will also befall me. Why then have I been extremely wise* (learned to be so wise) ^{<02449>}?" *So I said to myself, "This too is vanity."* ¹⁶ *For there is no lasting remembrance of the wise man as with the fool, inasmuch as in the coming days all will be forgotten. And how the wise man and the fool alike die!* (Grayed text and underlining added for clarity).

In Eccl. 2:1-8 Solomon told of all the possessions he had gained, and in verses 9-11 he said that he acquired everything his eyes desired. It is unfortunate that those things didn't satisfy him. Since they didn't satisfy his soul, verses 12-15 show how he abandoned his search for acquiring possessions and turned to a concentrated search for more wisdom. When he reached the pinnacle of learning, he realized that it didn't satisfy his soul either. He knew more about life's experiences, matters of general interest, and basic morality than anyone else in his day. He was prudent in secular affairs, skilled in the arts, had a moral sensitivity, and was experienced in the ways of the LORD ^{<02449 had learned wisdom>}. Yet although he had gained so much, he considered all of it a total waste of his time. You see, verse 16 tells us that he wanted to do something that people would remember for generations to come. When he realized that this was never going to happen, he was crushed. The thing I want you to see about *wisdom* in verse 15 is that the verse is referring to the "learning" of wisdom rather than the "using" of wisdom.

Ecclesiastes 7:23

Every once in a while, we read something that seems to define itself by itself. This verse is one of those situations. Consider the text. It states, “I tested all this with wisdom ^{<02451>}, and I said, “I will be (become wise) wise ^{<02449>},” but it was far from me.” In Eccl. 7:1-22 Solomon discussed several matters about living, and in verse 23 he stated his conclusion. It is interesting that there were things the wisest man of his day couldn’t understand. They were simply beyond his grasp. What is more interesting to me is the way he went about trying to understand them. He said that he tried to use wisdom to become wise. Explain that one to me, will you? You see, he tried to use all of the knowledge, understanding, insight, discernment, and the experiences of life he had gained with wisdom ^{<02451>} in order to become more wise ^{<02449>}. It is an interesting concept, but it doesn’t work.

Psalms 105:16-22

¹⁶ And He (God) called for a famine upon the land; He (God) broke the whole staff of bread. ¹⁷ He (God) sent a man before them, Joseph, who was sold as a slave. ¹⁸ They afflicted his feet (Joseph’s) with fetters, he (Joseph) himself was laid in irons; ¹⁹ until the time that his (God’s) word came to pass, the word of the LORD tested him (Joseph). ²⁰ The king sent and released him (Joseph), the ruler of peoples, and set him (Joseph) free. ²¹ He (Pharaoh) made him (Joseph) LORD of his (Pharaoh’s) house and ruler over all his (Pharaoh’s) possessions, ²² to imprison his (Pharaoh’s) princes at will, that he (Joseph) might teach ^{<02449>} his (Pharaoh’s) elders wisdom ^{<02449>}. (Grayed text and underlining added for clarity). Joseph was a wise man, and he knew what it takes to teach stubborn men wisdom. So, he threw Egypt’s unruly princes into jail in order to teach them prudence in serving Pharaoh and his kingdom. This punishment also helped these unruly men learn good morals in general ^{<teach wisdom>}. Notice once again that the ^{<02449>} kind of wisdom is either the learning or the teaching of wisdom. Here it was the teaching aspect.

Wisdom word five – <02450> The Wise Man

[Return to Index](#)

Wise man or its equivalent occurs 46 times in Proverbs and 22 times in Ecclesiastes. As I mentioned before, Strong’s ^{<02449>} is to act wisely, majoring on the learning or teaching aspect of wisdom. According to Strong’s Concordance, the ^{<02450>} wise man is derived from ^{<02449>} wisdom. We will now look at several sources to determine a practical definition for the wise man.

Strong’s Concordance defines this Hebrew word as:

- 1) skillful (in technical work)
- 2) wise (in administration)
- 3) shrewd, crafty, cunning, subtle
- 4) learned, shrewd (class of men)
- 5) prudent
- 6) wise (ethically and religiously)

In order to better understand the six parts of Strong’s definitions, it will help to examine dictionary definitions for some of the words used here.

Shrewd means [keen-witted, clever, or sharp in practical affairs](#)
Crafty means [subtly deceitful, cunning](#)
Subtle means [delicately skillful or clever; deft or ingenious](#)
Cunning means [skillful or clever](#)

So, according to Strong’s definition, “a wise man is skillful in technical areas (i.e. building the temple), administers and counsels people in the best way and with the best results (i.e. Joseph in Egypt), is clever and quick to come up with workable solutions (i.e. woman of Tekoah 2 Sam. 14:2), has a lot of knowledge and understanding in practical matters, can discern the essence of a situation and determine what it takes to produce the best resolution (i.e. Solomon – two mothers), and is always willing to do right by others and by his God.”

TWOT states that "...the wise man gives practical advice based on divine revelation as well as his own experience and observation."³⁷ John MacArthur wrote, "The wise believer will have the ability to guide or govern others with truth."³⁸

So, taking all of these definitions into account, what are the components of *a wise man*? He does these things on a daily basis. He acts wisely in whatever area of need that arises at the moment. He is intelligent, a quick learner, always ready to learn more ways of doing things the best way, and always ready to instruct someone who wants to be wise.

So, let's consolidate the above definition. He is one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem, is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and by his God. Armed with this definition, let's see what Proverbs has to say about *the wise man*.

³⁷ Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, vol. 1, pg. 284

³⁸ MacArthur, John, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, page 877

1) A wise man is a genuinely humble man.

A wise man is not proud. On the contrary, a truly wise man is humble. Prov. 29:23 tells us, "*A man's pride will bring him low, but a humble spirit will obtain honor.*" A wise man doesn't merely think he is wise. No, he actually is wise, and he displays it daily through humble words and actions. A proud man thinks he is someone important and wise, but he is deceived. Prov. 3:7 states, "*Do not be wise ^{<02450>} in your own eyes;* (falsely thinks he is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is clever and quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God) *fear the LORD and turn away from evil.*" A companion verse is Prov. 26:12 which says, "*Do you see a man wise in his own eyes ^{<02450>}* (falsely thinks he is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is clever and quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God)? *There is more hope for a fool than for him.*" A proud man and average rich man are not that much different. Proverbs 28:11 tells us, "*The rich man is wise ^{<02450>}* (one who falsely thinks that he is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is clever and quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God) *in his own eyes, but the poor who has understanding sees through him.*" The main problem with a man who sees himself as wise when he really isn't is the fact that although he is deceived, others can see right through him. So, you will never see a truly wise man thinking more highly of himself than he should. In fact, it will be obvious to all that he is a humble man. Romans 12:3 says, "*For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.*" This is the right way to view ourselves.

2) A wise man will live a good and godly life — the exact opposite of a fool.

A wise man is cautious and will avoid or abandon every form of sin and evil. Prov. 14:16 says, "*A wise man ^{<02450>}* (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God) *is cautious and turns away from evil, but a fool is arrogant and careless.*" A wise man's fear of the LORD is what will drive him to turn away from evil. He does this because he is a prudent man, and a prudent man will evaluate the consequences of his actions. His insight into the consequences of sinful actions coupled with his discernment are what will give him the understanding he needs to choose not to sin. Because a wise man is cautious, Prov. 3:35 tells us, "*The wise ^{<02450>}* (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God) *will inherit honor, but fools display dishonor.*" Notice how the wise man receives honor from people who see his good deeds and words while the fool's foolish and destructive lifestyle show people his foolishness and cause them to look down upon him with disgust.

In order to avoid sin and live in a good and godly manner, a wise man will choose wise men as his closest companions. Prov. 13:20 tells us, "*He who walks with wise men ^{<02450>}* (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God) *will be wise* (become wise) ^{<02449>}, *but the companion of fools will suffer harm.*" He chooses wise friends because he understands that as Prov. 27:17

teaches, *“Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.”* The simple truth is that our friends affect us for good or to our hurt. Wise men will sharpen their understanding and discernment by being around wise friends while people who have a fool for a friend will end up being hurt by him. The second half of Prov. 13:20 above substantiates this truth.

3) A wise man saves for the future.

Prov. 21:20 teaches, *“There is precious treasure and oil in the dwelling of the wise ^{<02450>} (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God), but a foolish man swallows it up.”* Dr. Bob Jones Senior once said, “Don’t sacrifice the permanent on the altar of the immediate.” This was wise counsel indeed. A wise man looks beyond today and sees the future. A fool is only concerned with the pleasures of today and cannot see that he may have a need in the future that could be met by saving today. Consequently, the fool spends all he gets on the pleasures of today. The fool cannot seem to understand the truth of Prov. 21:17. It says, *“He who loves pleasure will become a poor man; he who loves wine and oil will not become rich.”* The wise man knows better. Because the wise man sacrifices today in order to enjoy life later, Prov. 14:24 reminds us that, *“The crown of the wise ^{<02450>} (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God) is their riches, but the folly of fools is foolishness.”* In the future, the wise man will enjoy retirement without worrying about finances while the fool will simply have to go without.

4) A wise man takes life seriously and knows where he is going in life.

A wise man will take life seriously because he knows that judgment day is coming, and he doesn’t want to be ashamed when he stands before the LORD in judgment. Solomon had it right when he wrote Eccl. 7:4. It says, *“The mind of the wise ^{<02450>} (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God) is in the house of mourning, while the mind of fools is in the house of pleasure.”* Each time we attend a funeral, we are reminded that life is short and death is coming, and a wise man will prepare for it. Eccl. 2:14-16 supports this idea when it says, *“¹⁴ The wise man’s ^{<02450>} (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God) eyes are in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. And yet I know that one fate befalls them both. ¹⁵ Then I said to myself, “As is the fate of the fool, it will also befall me. Why then have I been extremely wise ^{<02450>} (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God) ?” ¹⁶ So I said to myself, “This too is vanity.” ¹⁶ For there is no lasting remembrance of the wise man ^{<02450>} (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God) as with the fool, inasmuch as in the coming days all will be forgotten. And how the wise man and the fool alike die!” We need to be less concerned about how others will remember us when we are gone and more concerned about what the LORD will think of us when we stand before Him in the judgment.*

5) A wise man is always teachable.

A wise man is always seeking more knowledge to add to his collection. Prov. 18:15 reads, *“The mind of the prudent acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise ^{<02450>} (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God) seeks knowledge.”* He knows that the more he learns, the better he will be able to make excellent decisions in every area of life and practice. That’s why Solomon wrote in Prov. 10:14, *“Wise men ^{<02450>} (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God) store up knowledge, but with the mouth of the foolish, ruin is at hand.”* A wise man knows the value of acquiring and remembering trustworthy knowledge.

A wise man not only seeks knowledge, but he listens to and follows wise counsel. Prov. 10:8 says, “*The wise of heart* ^{<02450>} (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God) *will receive commands, but a babbling fool will be ruined.*” A fool doesn’t want anyone telling him what to do, but a wise man knows and appreciates the value of being told what is required of him. Each time he learns new truth, he becomes better equipped to live a good and godly life. Each time he is taught, he gains more knowledge. Prov. 21:11 teaches that, “*When the scoffer is punished, the naive becomes wise* ^{<02449>} (learns to act wisely); *but when the wise* ^{<02450>} (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God) *is instructed, he receives knowledge.*” So then, a wise man is not only open to being taught, but he welcomes it. In fact, a wise man enjoys the fact that each time he is taught, he becomes a little bit wiser. Prov. 9:9 substantiates this truth when it says, “*Give instruction* (discipline, chastening, or correction) *to a wise man* ^{<02450>} (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God) *and he will be still wiser* ^{<02449>} (learn more wisdom), *teach a righteous man and he will increase his learning.*” Gregory, this is the kind of man I always want to be. I hope you do too.

A wise man is not only open to being taught, but he is also open to being corrected when there is a deficiency in his life. Prov. 12:15 tells us, “*The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man* (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God) *is he who listens to counsel.*” The wise man knows that he has blind spots and that he doesn’t have all of the answers. In fact, a wise man will love and appreciate the man who corrects him for his own good. Prov. 9:8 states, “*Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you, reprove a wise man* ^{<02450>} (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God) *and he will love you.*” This section of Proverbs 9 is teaching that others will know what type of man you are by how you respond to rebuke. You’ll know a wise man when he is called down because he will be grateful for the love and concern others have for him even though being corrected may hurt at the time. He knows that he will be a better man in the long run.

What really sets the wise man apart from the fool is the fact that a wise man truly appreciates being corrected. Ecclesiastes 7:5-6 teaches, “⁵ *It is better to listen to the rebuke of a wise man* ^{<02450>} (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God) *than for one to listen to the song of fools.* ⁶ *For as the crackling of thorn bushes under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool; And this too is futility.* This passage is dealing more with someone being corrected by a wise man than a wise man being corrected, but it works both ways. If I am not a wise man, I should still appreciate being corrected by a wise man. I know the wise man does. It makes good sense to listen to correction and follow it because the benefits are well worth the effort. Prov. 15:31 states, “*He whose ear listens to the life-giving reproof will dwell among the wise* ^{<02450>} (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God).” If you want to be wise, then you must listen to a wise man when he teaches you or calls you down for some deficiency. Doing what he advises makes you that much closer to becoming a wise man. A fool will never do this, but a wise man will. Prov. 12:15 tells us that, “*The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man* ^{<02450>} *is he who listens to counsel.*” I always want to be willing to listen to counsel and rebuke because I want to be that wise man.

6) A wise man will control his temper.

There is one thing about a wise man that is very obvious. It is that he is a very self-disciplined man. Prov. 29:11 tells us that, “*A fool always loses his temper, but a wise man* ^{<02450>} (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God) *holds it back* (is slow to become angry).” A man who has a hot temper and becomes angry at the slightest provocation is a fool. On the other hand, it takes a lot of abuse for a wise man to become angry. He knows the consequences of losing his temper, so he is careful to maintain control of his emotions. This doesn’t mean that a wise man will never become angry, but it will take a lot of abuse to make him angry.

Prov. 29:8 says, “*Scorners set a city aflame, but wise men* ^{<02450>} (Those who are highly skilled in their work, are a very good leaders of people, know a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and are quick to come up with the right solution, and always do right by others and his God) *turn away anger.*” A wise man not only knows how to control his emotions, but he is also able to show others how to control theirs. Scorners are people who ridicule God, the Bible, and those who want to live godly. They will say all sorts of cutting and degrading things that result in disagreements and fights. The wise man, on the other hand, always tries to bring peace to every situation. His words are designed to appease the anger of men who have been riled up by the scorner. This is a great benefit to the political leaders of any city.

7) A wise man will try to win others to Christ.

Prov. 11:30 says, “*The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who is wise* ^{<02450>} (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God) *wins souls.*” Simply put, a wise man will witness to men and women about trusting Christ as their savior by faith alone. If we really fear the LORD like we should, we won’t fear what men will think of us when we try to tell them about Christ. The problem is that most of us are afraid to witness to people about Christ. The better thing to do is to simply dive in and tell them. This is a convicting truth, one we all would do well to master.

8) A wise man will listen first and then choose his words carefully when responding.

A) A wise man’s words are valuable because they are well thought-through.

There is value in what a wise man has to say. Solomon summed it up in Prov. 25:12 where he wrote, “*Like an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold is a wise* ^{<02450>} (one who can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution) *reprover to a listening ear.*” In the same way the earring and the necklace stand out as something beautiful and valuable, so the words of a wise man are seen as beautiful and valuable to anyone who is ready to hear what he has to say. Why are the wise man’s words so valuable? It is because they are an expression of what is in his heart. Prov. 16:23 says, “*The heart of the wise* ^{<02450>} (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God) *instructs* (disciplines, chastens, or corrects) *his mouth and adds persuasiveness to his lips.*” Every word spoken by a wise man is calculated to edify the hearer and make him a better person.

A truly wise man will, as James 1:19 says, “*be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger.*” Solomon approached this subject from the back door when he wrote Proverbs 17:28. It says, “*Even a fool, when he keeps silent, is considered wise* ^{<02450>} (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God.); *when he closes his lips, he is considered prudent.*” The insinuation here is that a wise man will not say anything until he has something worthwhile to say. He is not like the fool who keeps talking long after he has finished what he has to say. Prov. 26:16 says, “*The sluggard (the lazy man) is wiser* ^{<02450>} (thinks he knows more about life and everything else than the wise men counseling him) *in his own eyes than seven men who can give a discreet* (carefully thought through) *answer.*” A wise man will give a discrete answer, but what does this mean? It means that his words will be well-thought-through and calculated to produce the most benefit to the listener. How can a wise man do this? It is because as Prov. 15:7 says, “*The lips of the wise* ^{<02450>} (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God) *spread knowledge, but the hearts of fools are not so.*” The wise man’s talking does not consist of whatever comes to mind. Rather, his words are based upon the trustworthy knowledge and sound understanding he has gained over the years. Armed with these, he is able to persuade others to agree with him. Prov. 16:21 supports this when it says, “*The wise in heart* ^{<02450>} (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God) *will be called understanding, and sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness.*”

There is one thing that stands out about a wise man’s words. It is that his words are to the point, and you can be sure that what he has to say is truthful and applicable to the need. Ecclesiastes 12:11 tells us, “*The words of wise men* ^{<02450>} (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical

matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God) *are like goads, and masters of these collections are like well-driven nails; they are given by one Shepherd.*" I am told that a goad is a pointed stick or rod. It was used to prod animals to go when and where you want them to go. A wise man's words are to the point and designed to prod the hearer into action. Well-driven nails are something that won't move. Tent nails are driven into the ground, and ropes are tied to them to secure the tent. If they are driven into a wall, they are secure, and you can know that they will stay in place. Men who have mastered the book of Proverbs are like those well-driven nails. They are people who you can depend upon to give you good counsel based upon trustworthy knowledge and sound understanding. This makes the words of a wise man extremely valuable.

B) A wise man's words will benefit the hearer.

Valuing and doing what a wise man suggests produces pleasant results. Prov. 22:17-18 tell us, "*Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise*"^{<02450>} (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God), *and apply your mind to my knowledge; for it will be pleasant if you keep them within you, that they may be ready on your lips.*" His words are only pleasant if you have a mindset to listen to what he has to say and make it part of you. This way you can use it in your defense when people question you about what you believe. In addition to this, what a wise man has to say and how he says it will make learning reasonable and desirable. Prov. 15:2 says, "*The tongue of the wise*"^{<02450>} (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God) *makes knowledge acceptable, but the mouth of fools spouts folly.*" When you hear what a wise man has to say, you will respond by thinking that it makes perfect sense. A wise man can even call you down in such a nice way that you almost want to thank him for the rebuke. The reason you can feel this way about what he has to say is because when he speaks, he will display kindness and compassion. Eccl. 10:12 reads, "*Words from the mouth of a wise man*"^{<02450>} (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God) *are gracious, while the lips of a fool consume him.*" The dictionary defines the word gracious as *having or showing kindness or courtesy; merciful; compassionate; indulgent and polite.* The wise man speaks like this because he is deeply concerned about the welfare of the listener.

Prov. 13:14 tells us that, "*The teaching of the wise*"^{<02450>} (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God) *is a fountain of life, to turn aside from the snares of death.*" The words a wise man speaks revive and refresh the hearer giving him renewed vim and vigor^{<fountain of life>}. We all need this from time to time, and it is so nice to be on the receiving end of this kind of conversation. His words not only give refreshment, but they also bring healing. Prov. 12:18 says, "*There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword, but the tongue of the wise*"^{<02450>} (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God) *brings healing.*" It is easy for a man to speak his mind without considering the consequences of what he says. Cutting words do real damage to the listener, but a wise man will never purposely do this. On the contrary, he will speak with the welfare of the listener in mind. He wants to build up the listener, not tear him down. This is one way you can tell a wise man when you hear him. You and I must always try to say things that will edify the other person.

A wise man's words are security both for him and those who hear him. Prov. 14:3 states, "*In the mouth of the foolish is a rod for his back, but the lips of the wise*"^{<02450>} (those who are highly skilled in his work, are very good leaders of people, know a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and quickly to come up with the right solution, and always do right by others and their God) *will protect them.*" By carefully choosing what he says, a wise man will not say things that will result in punishment or loss. His knowledge, understanding, insight, and discernment will guide what he has to say resulting in real security. This is what you and I need to learn.

C) A wise man's words teach us to be impartial and not attempt to get even with anyone.

Some examples of a wise man's words are found in Proverbs chapter twenty-four. The first is Prov. 24:23-26 which states, "²³ *These also are sayings of the wise* ^{<02450>} (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God). *To show partiality in judgment is not good.* ²⁴ *He who says to the wicked, "You are righteous," peoples will curse him, nations will abhor him;* ²⁵ *but to those who rebuke the wicked will be delight, and a good blessing will come upon them.* ²⁶ *He kisses the lips who gives a right answer.*" Wicked men will try to justify the actions of their wicked friends, but people will curse them for doing so. A wise man teaches that good people will look with favor upon a man who tries to have wicked men apprehended by law enforcement, tried for their crimes, and punished. This is something wise men should do.

Wise men also teach that we should not be divisive or try to get even with our neighbor. Prov. 24:28-29 teaches, "²⁸ *Do not be a witness against your neighbor without cause, and do not deceive with your lips.* ²⁹ *Do not say, "Thus I shall do to him as he has done to me; I will render to the man according to his work."* Prov. 3:29-30 are companion verses which say, "²⁹ *Do not devise harm against your neighbor, while he lives securely beside you.* ³⁰ *Do not contend with a man without cause, if he has done you no harm.*" The simple fact is that we need to love our neighbors as ourselves and be truthful with them. This is what a wise man will do. The LORD will get even with a neighbor who has wronged a wise man. You don't have to do it yourself. After all, Romans 12:19 reminds us, "*Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the LORD.*" Let the LORD repay the other guy. He'll do a much better job of it than you or I could ever do.

D) A wise man knows how to plan his work.

It is not wise to build a house without detailed plans made by an architect who knows local codes and building practices. This is what Solomon was referring to when he wrote Prov. 24:27 which says, "²⁷ *Prepare your work outside and make it ready for yourself in the field; afterwards, then, build your house.* Careful planning always makes a project go smoother and results in a better building. It is the wise thing to do.

E) A wise man will rebuke the unruly.

We discussed this verse earlier, but it bears repeating. Prov. 26:5 says, "*Answer a fool as his folly deserves, that he not be wise* ^{<02450>} (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God) *in his own eyes.*" A wise man will certainly try to set a fool straight if the opportunity presents itself, but he will not argue with a fool. If a wise man disagrees with a fool, it is best to avoid an argument because the wise man will not win. The fool won't let him. Prov. 29:9 states, "*When a wise man* ^{<02450>} (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God) *has a controversy with a foolish man, the foolish man either rages or laughs, and there is no rest.*" The fool is convinced that he is right, and nothing the wise man can say will change his mind. Don't even bother trying.

9) A wise man is a benefit to political leaders.

When a political leader becomes angry, a wise man can calm him down so that he doesn't do something he will regret. Prov. 16:14 tells us, "*The fury of a king is like messengers of death, but a wise man* ^{<02450>} (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God) *will appease it.*" Not everyone can do this, but a wise man can.

A wise man can also become a powerful influence on the political scene. Eccl. 7:19 says that "*Wisdom* ^{<02451>} *strengthens a wise man* ^{<02450>} (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God) *more than ten rulers who are in a city.*" His wisdom gives a wise man the power to excel in the political arena and be of great value to political leaders. The wisdom of the wise man will guide him far better than 10 rulers who are driven by greed or a passion for personal gain.

A wise man is especially valuable in times of war. Prov. 24:5-6 says that "A wise man ^{<02450>} (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God) *is strong, and a man of knowledge increases power. For by wise guidance you will wage war, and in abundance of counselors* (those who know the ropes) *there is victory.*" Knowledge is an invaluable tool in times of war. Understanding the enemy's strengths and weaknesses is crucial. A wise man's wisdom will enable him to choose the best plan of attack that will produce the best results. Then too, this is how a wise man can break down the defenses of his enemy. Prov. 21:22 tells us, "A wise man ^{<02450>} (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God) *scales the city of the mighty and brings down the stronghold in which they trust.*" His knowledge, understanding, insight, and discernment will enable him to choose the best plan of attack that will disable his enemy's defenses and win the battle.

A wise king will purge his kingdom of criminals by apprehending them, trying them in court, and quickly punishing them. He will administer punishment that is severe enough to make criminals afraid to be caught committing crimes in his jurisdiction. Prov. 20:26 says, "A wise king ^{<02450>} (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God) *winnows* (culls out) *the wicked, and drives the threshing wheel over them.*" A wise king (political leader) understands that punishment needs to be severe, and it needs to be administered without delay. He will arrest lawbreakers, try them in court, convict the guilty, and punish them severely, even to the death if it is warranted.

10) A wise man acts and reacts in a way that makes his parents glad.

Prov. 10:1 says, "A wise son ^{<02450>} (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God) *makes a father glad, but a foolish son is a grief to his mother.*" A companion verse is Proverbs 15:20 which says, "A wise son ^{<02450>} (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God) *makes a father glad, but a foolish man despises his mother.* In both verses the father will be glad because his son lives a good and godly life while the fool causes his parents grief and heartache as a result of his foolish, destructive, and disrespectful words and actions. The major reason why parents feel this way about a wise son is because as Prov. 13:1 says, "A wise son ^{<02450>} (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God) *accepts his father's discipline, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.*" The parents of a wise man rejoice in the fact that their son listens to their advice and does what they counsel him. Not so for the fool. He is unteachable and bull-headed. He will not listen to what his parents have to teach him. As a result, he will be disrespectful to and rebellious toward his parents. Prov. 30:1-4 illustrate this truth. The reason why a fool is this way is because as Prov. 12:15 says, "*The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man* ^{<02450>} (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God) *is he who listens to counsel.*" The fool will not listen to advice and counsel because he thinks he already knows all he needs, but the wise man knows he doesn't know everything. Therefore, he is quick to listen to sound teaching and counsel. He knows that it is for his own good.

Proverbs 23:22-25 gives sons some good advice. This passage says, ²² *Listen to your father who begot you, and do not despise your mother when she is old.* ²³ *Buy truth, and do not sell it, get wisdom and instruction and understanding.* ²⁴ *The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice, and he who sires a wise son* ^{<02450>} (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God) *will be glad in him.* ²⁵ *Let your father and your mother be glad, and let her rejoice who gave birth to you.*" Gregory, I hope you will always remember what mom and I have taught you. If you obey these verses, you will make us the happiest parents on earth.

11) A wise man knows how, when, and why to act.

A wise man will support his country's political leader and be very slow to abandon him. He will keep the law of the land because he knows the proper time and the proper process for changing the laws if they need to be improved. Eccl. 8:1-5 tells us, ¹ *Who is like the wise man ^{<02450>}* (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God) *and who knows the interpretation of a matter? A man's wisdom ^{<02451>} illumines him and causes his stern face to beam.* ² *I say, "Keep the command of the king because of the oath before God.* ³ *"Do not be in a hurry to leave him (to abandon him for another). Do not join in an evil matter (join a cause to displace him by force), for he will do whatever he pleases."* ⁴ *Since the word of the king is authoritative, who will say to him, "What are you doing?"* ⁵ *He who keeps a royal command experiences no trouble, for a wise heart ^{<02450>}* (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God) *knows the proper time and procedure."* A wise man is a law-abiding citizen, and he will not take part in an attempt to overthrow a ruler by illegal means. He understands the consequences.

A wise man knows that he and his deeds are under the LORD's control. Eccl. 9:1 says, *"For I have taken all this to my heart and explain it that righteous men, wise men ^{<02450>}* (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God), *and their deeds are in the hand of God. Man does not know whether it will be love or hatred; anything awaits him."* Because of this a wise man will plan for the worst and hope for the best. This kind of mindset always pays off in the end.

A wise man knows his limitations, and he knows that wisdom doesn't always guarantee success. Solomon had it right when he wrote Eccl. 9:11-12. It reads, *"I again saw under the sun that the race is not to the swift and the battle is not to the warriors, and neither is bread to the wise ^{<02450>}* (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God) *nor wealth to the discerning nor favor to men of ability; for time and chance overtake them all. Moreover, man does not know his time: like fish caught in a treacherous net and birds trapped in a snare, so the sons of men are ensnared at an evil time when it suddenly falls on them."* We can plan and prepare down to the last detail, but sometimes circumstances are simply beyond our control. They just happen to happen when and how they happen. That's life. A wise man understands this truth.

A wise man works hard and smart. He doesn't leave anything to chance. Prov. 11:29 says that *"He who troubles his own house will inherit wind, and the foolish will be servant to the wise-hearted ^{<02450>}* (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God).*"* A wise man is likely to become a manager, and when he does, he will manage those who will not work hard and smart. This is a fact of life.

It is obvious from my study of Proverbs that a man cannot be a truly wise man until or unless he has been born again by faith in Jesus Christ. Since the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, we can conclude once again that wisdom in the Proverbs sense is a spiritual exercise. Eccl. 10:2 states that, *"A wise man's heart ^{<02450>}* (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God) *directs him toward the right, but the foolish man's heart directs him toward the left."* It is interesting to me how people who come to the LORD in salvation change. As an example, I have seen several cases where a man held a liberal viewpoint (the left) before he was saved, and after trusting Christ, he became a staunch conservative (the right).

12) A wise man understands that there are those who will not appreciate his wise counsel.

Not everyone will appreciate the wisdom of a wise man. We have already seen that a scoffer of the Word of God will not appreciate a wise man's wisdom. Prov. 15:12 tells us that, *"A scoffer does not love one who reproves him, He will not go to the wise ^{<02450>}* (one who is highly skilled in his work, is a very good leader of people, knows a lot about practical matters, can discern the essence of a problem and is quick to come up with the right solution, and always does right by others and his God) *"Don't waste your time trying to get him to listen to you. It is a lost cause.*

Solomon tells of a poor young lad who used his wisdom to save a city from destruction, but after the event was over people forgot about him because he was poor. We discussed this event earlier, but it is unfortunate that wisdom is not appreciated at times. This is a fact of life, and a truly wise man will not let it bother him.

Gregory, this ends the discussion of wisdom in Proverbs. I hope you have been able to understand what wisdom is and how it functions in the five Hebrew words for wisdom in Proverbs. You may need to read this portion of the commentary several times before you fully understand wisdom, but if that is what it takes to learn, I hope you will do it.

Part six—What is instruction?

[Return to Index](#)

We have already discussed this word a couple of times in this chapter, so we'll do a simple review here. Strong's defines *instruction* as [discipline](#), [chastening](#), [correction](#). Therefore, instruction's goal is to 1) train young men so that they will have more self-control and character, 2) punish young men so that they will become better people, and/or 3) correct young men so that they will abandon wrong practices and choose to do the right things instead. It is obvious that all three aspects of instruction are designed to benefit a young man even though it may be painful when they are applied. Wise men appreciate this kind of guidance, but fools want no part of it.

1) Being teachable is the key to acquiring wisdom.

Our text verse, Prov. 1:7 says, "*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and [instruction](#) ^{<04148>}.*" A fool doesn't want anyone trying to tell him what he can or cannot do. A wise man is different. He knows the value of discipline, chastening, and correction. It is not that he enjoys being corrected, but he knows the benefits that result from loving correction. He has learned the truth of Prov. 15:33 where we read, "*The fear of the LORD is the [instruction](#) ^{<04148>} for wisdom, and before honor comes humility.*" As we saw earlier in this chapter, the fear of the LORD is the foundation upon which we learn trustworthy knowledge and sound understanding. Therefore, the fear of the LORD disciplines, chastens, and corrects us along life's path. It does this by constantly reminding us that the LORD is watching everything we do and think. This is a valuable tool that causes us to see the detriment of doing anything wrong. Praise the LORD that it works this way instead of us trying to find our own way in life.

2) Instruction is useless unless its teaching is heeded and put into practice.

Several places in Proverbs show how Solomon encouraged his son to heed his instruction. Prov. 1:8 says, "*Hear, my son, your father's [instruction](#) ^{<04148>} and do not forsake your mother's teaching.*" Prov. 4:1 tells us, "*Hear, O sons, the [instruction](#) ^{<04148>} of a father, and give attention that you may gain understanding.*" Prov. 8:10 reminds us, "*Take my [instruction](#) ^{<04148>} and not silver, and knowledge (knowledge of the truth and of God Himself) rather than choicest gold.*" And Prov. 8:33 says, "*Heed [instruction](#) ^{<04148>} and be wise, and do not neglect it.*" In each case, Solomon was trying to drive home the importance of heeding sound instruction that leads to wisdom. This is all well and good, but how do you accomplish the task of heeding instruction? Prov. 23:12 sums it up when it says, "*Apply your heart to [discipline](#) ^{<04148>} and your ears to words of knowledge.*" Prov. 19:20 adds to this when it says, "*Listen to counsel and accept [discipline](#) ^{<04148>}, that you may be wise the rest of your days.*" Notice that *discipline* in the previous two verses is the same Hebrew word as *instruction* in the other verses at the beginning of this paragraph. It is not enough to merely listen respectfully to discipline, chastening, and/or correction. No, you must do what is being advised and make it a part of your life. That is when instruction becomes valuable. In Proverbs chapter four, Solomon was trying to teach his son the value of acquiring wisdom, and in verse 13 he said, "*Take hold of [instruction](#) ^{<04148>}; do not let go. Guard her, for she is your life.*" Instruction is indeed the thing that will enable a pursuer of wisdom to succeed in becoming a wise man, and it is the thing that will enable him to enjoy the security that results. Do you want to be a wise man? Then do as Prov. 13:1 teaches. It says, "*A wise son accepts his father's [discipline](#) ^{<04148>}, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.*" Therefore, make up your mind that you will accept instruction and do it. Determine in your mind that it is that valuable. Solomon got it right in Prov. 23:23 where he wrote, "*Buy truth, and do not sell it, get wisdom and [instruction](#) ^{<04148>} and understanding.*" This is your task, and this is your privilege. You can't actually buy wisdom and instruction, but you can consider them that valuable and pursue them with every ounce of your being.

3) Instruction will empower you to live a good and godly life.

Solomon wrote in Prov. 10:17 that, *“He is on the path of life who heeds instruction ^{<04148>}, but he who ignores reproof goes astray.”* The path of life in this verse is a manner of living that produces a genuinely good and godly life. Discipline, chastening, and correction will keep you on this right path. It is important that you and I listen to instruction and do it because Prov. 19:27 tells us, *“Cease listening, my son, to discipline ^{<04148>}, and you will stray from the words of knowledge.”* If you were to disregard instruction, you would, in time, wander into all sorts of sin and evil. In reality, the Scriptures provide all the help we will need to stay on the right path of life and live a good and godly life. Therefore, we need to stay in the Word. Prov. 6:23 reminds us, *“For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching is light; and reproofs for discipline ^{<04148>} are the way of life.”* Read the Bible, study it, meditate upon it, and live it. This will enable you to succeed in living a good and godly life. This is the smart way to live. Prov. 12:1 tells us the kind of person we will become if we reject instruction. It says, *“Whoever loves discipline ^{<04148>} loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid.”* That’s right. If we reject instruction we are stupid. It is that simple. As for me, I want to be a wise man. I hope you do too. Therefore, we need to listen to instruction and then do what we are advised.

4) Rejecting instruction brings severe consequences.

So, what happens to those who reject instruction? In Proverbs chapter five, Solomon was advising his son to avoid getting involved with an adulterous woman or a prostitute. He started the chapter by encouraging his son to pay close attention to what he had to say. Then he talked about the hurts that result from becoming sexually involved with such women. In the last section of the chapter, he taught his son that a man’s own wife is the best and safest choice rather than an adulteress. He can enjoy all of the physical and emotional thrill with his wife that he could ever find in the arms of an adulteress. Then in verses 7-14 Solomon taught about the tragic results of an adulterous relationship. This passage reads,

“⁷ Now then, my sons, listen to me and do not depart from the words of my mouth. ⁸ Keep your way far from her and do not go near the door of her house, ⁹ or you will give your vigor to others and your years to the cruel one; ¹⁰ and strangers will be filled with your strength and your hard-earned goods will go to the house of an alien; ¹¹ and you groan at your final end, when your flesh and your body are consumed; ¹² and you say, ‘How I have hated instruction ^{<04148>}! and my heart spurned reproof! ¹³ I have not listened to the voice of my teachers, nor inclined my ear to my instructors! ¹⁴ I was almost in utter ruin in the midst of the assembly and congregation.”

Notice in verse 23 why he will die. It says, *“He will die for lack of instruction ^{<04148>}, and in the greatness of his folly he will go astray.”* A man who will reject instruction (as in the paragraph above) will either lose everything he possesses, lose his life, or both. This is why Solomon wrote in Prov. 15:10, *“Grievous punishment ^{<04148>} is for him who forsakes the way; he who hates reproof will die.”*

There is one more verse that deals with the same thing. In Proverbs chapter seven Solomon once again warned his son about the hurts and losses that will result from becoming sexually involved with an adulterous woman. In verse 22, he showed how a naive man allowed an adulterous woman to seduce him into going to bed with her. This verse says, *“Suddenly he follows her as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as one in fetters to the discipline ^{<04148>} of a fool.”* Once again, Solomon showed the hurts and heartaches that come back upon the one who abandons or rejects instruction. You see, a fool will walk right into punishment like a cow going to slaughter without the slightest notion that he is going to be punished or killed. A man who listens to instruction is aware of the adverse consequences of such a sin and will avoid becoming involved.

5) A man who rejects instruction is a fool.

We discussed the fool earlier in this chapter so I won’t repeat it here. What I want you to see here is that the man who rejects instruction will be hurt personally by it. In fact, Prov. 15:32 says that the man who rejects instruction actually looks down upon himself with disgust and contempt without even knowing it. The verse says, *“He who neglects discipline ^{<04148>} despises himself, but he who listens to reproof acquires understanding.”* It is important to acquire understanding, but a fool cannot find it because he is too wrapped up in his folly. Prov. 16:22 says, *“Understanding is a fountain of life to one who has it, but the discipline ^{<04148>} of fools is folly.”* Those of us who have gained at least some understanding enjoy the way it gives its owner life and vitality. A fool cannot

experience this because the only instruction he will heed is the advice of another fool. He won't even allow his parents to instruct him. Prov. 15:5 teaches, *"A fool rejects his father's discipline <04148>, but he who regards reproof is sensible."* What will be the result for one who neglects instruction? Prov. 13:18 tells us, *"Poverty and shame will come to him who neglects discipline <04148>, but he who regards reproof will be honored."* An undisciplined man will not work hard and smart, so he will end up a poor man. In the end, good people will look down upon him with disgust. Oh, but the man who listens to instruction will be honored for his good and godly lifestyle.

Proverbs chapter three is "wisdom in action." The first twelve verses teach us the right way to live before the LORD. In verses 11-12 Solomon wrote, *"My son, do not reject the discipline <04148> of the LORD or loathe His reproof, for whom the LORD loves He reproves, even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights."* The LORD wants us to experience life at its best and serve Him in a manner that pleases Him. In order to accomplish this, He will at times discipline, chasten, or correct us in order to make us conform more closely to the image of His Son Jesus Christ. Some of the difficulties He brings our way are hard, but when we realize that He intends them for our good and for His glory, we can and should endure them with joy. He actually delights in correcting us so that we can become all that He wants us to be.

6) Parents have a responsibility to instruct their children.

Every child is born with a sin nature. This sin nature will cause him to lie and do wrong without being taught how to do so. A parent's job is to discipline his child so that he will learn to do good and avoid sinful deeds. Prov. 22:15 tells parents, *"Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of discipline <04148> will remove it far from him."* By disciplining, chastening, and correcting a child in love, he will learn to be a good child. Some parents don't want to discipline their children because they say they love them too much. Solomon warned just the opposite in Prov. 23:13. It says, *"Do not hold back discipline <04148> from the child, although you strike him with the rod, he will not die."* The pain that results from administering discipline many times gets the message across much better than mere words or "time out." In fact, Prov. 13:24 says that *"He who withholds his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines <04148> him diligently."* (Color added for clarity) So instructing a child is a necessity for the one who loves his child.

A summary of instruction

- 1) We need to be teachable.
- 2) We need to do what we are instructed.
- 3) We need instruction in order to stay on the right path of life.
- 4) We need to remember that rejecting instruction has severe consequences.
- 5) Anyone who rejects instruction is a fool.
- 6) Parents have a responsibility to instruct their children.
- 7) We need to recognize instruction as an opportunity to learn to be better.

Part seven—the commentary of Proverbs 1:7

[Return to Index](#)

Prov. 1:7 *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction."*

We have covered a lot of ground in this chapter, but I felt it was necessary in order to fully understand what our text verse is teaching. Now that we have arrived, let's look at this verse as a whole. We will look at the first half of the verse first, and then we will discuss the second half.

Prov. 1:7a *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge."*

First, we saw in Part One that a genuine fear of the LORD is having such an elevated view of the LORD that we will give Him His rightful place in our lives. A genuine fear of the LORD will drive us to obey His Word and do good so that we won't disappoint our heavenly Father. It will also drive us to avoid or abandon every sinful practice so that our fellowship with the LORD is not broken. By avoiding or abandoning sin, we won't have to endure the

penalty of sin like wicked people do. This is a dynamic fear of the LORD because it drives us to act upon our convictions.

In a very real sense, Proverbs 3:5-8 summarize the attitude and actions of one who genuinely fears the LORD. Prov. 3:5-6 state, *“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.”* Since the LORD is God we need to let Him be God, and we must be willing to be His obedient and trusting servants. This is giving the LORD His rightful place in our lives. Prov. 3:7-8 states, *“Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your body and refreshment to your bones.”* Since the LORD is God, we need to be holy like He is holy. We do this by turning away from sin. These two aspects together describe what it means to fear the LORD.

Okay, we understand that we should fear the LORD, but who is the LORD in Proverbs? We saw in Part Two of this chapter that it is none other than pre-incarnate Jesus Christ. He is the creator and sustainer of all things. So to fear the LORD is to fear the LORD Jesus Christ. It is important to understand this truth because Second Corinthians 5:10 reminds us, *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”* So then, we must do good and avoid sinful practices not only to please our heavenly Father, but also so that we will not be ashamed when we stand before the LORD Jesus on judgment day.

Next we learned in Part Three that knowledge is “knowledge of the truth and of God Himself.”³⁹ In its essence, *knowledge* is an accumulation of facts in areas that will help us live a good and godly life. This will please our heavenly Father. We gain this trustworthy knowledge from the perspective of the fear of the LORD. In the area of science, we should test knowledge with reference to the fact that the LORD Jesus Christ, the Son of God, created everything and is in control of everything. He made the stars and galaxies and is intimately acquainted with every heavenly body. Therefore, basing facts upon the theory of evolution should be discarded because it is not based upon the truth. The facts presented to us must be consistent with what the Word of God teaches. If knowledge does not agree, it should be discarded. So then, *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge.”* Since trustworthy knowledge is the first building block in the wisdom pyramid, then Prov. 9:10 is right when it says, *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.”* It is obvious to me, then, that Prov. 1:7 is a pivotal verse, and everything from this point in Proverbs to the end of chapter nine hinges upon this verse. If a man does not have and maintain a genuine fear of the LORD he cannot successfully live the book of Proverbs. It just won't happen.

In chapter three of this commentary, we discussed Prov. 1:1-6 which teaches the four steps to learning and living the book of Proverbs. If you and I faithfully practice these four steps, they will lead us to a genuine fear of the LORD, but until or unless we discover the fear of the LORD, we will not be successful in living the book of Proverbs. When we discuss Proverbs chapter two, we will learn the steps we must take in order to figure out the fear of the LORD, but for now, it is enough to understand that the fear of the LORD is the attitude we should strive to gain and maintain in order to be successful in our search for wisdom.

³⁹ Kidner, Derek, *Proverbs*, page. 35

Prov. 1:7b *“Fools despise wisdom and instruction.”*

Now we will discuss the second half of verse seven. Part Four of this chapter taught us how to recognize a fool. As you will remember, a fool thinks he already knows all that he will ever need to know in life, and he doesn't want anyone telling him what to do. He lives for this life, and he is adamant about the fact that he doesn't want God telling him what he can and can't do. His approach to life, in general, is worldly, and if something is fun he wants to do it. Not all fools are like this, but many are. We saw in Part Five of this chapter that wisdom is using knowledge, understanding, insight, and discernment to look into a problem or opportunity and come up with possible solutions. Then God will give the wisdom to make the best choice that will bring about the best results in every area of life and practice. We also saw in Part Six that instruction included 1) discipline (teaching) that will produce self-control, 2) chastening that will correct or make a person better, and 3) correction that will rectify wrong behavior. This is the very reason a fool hates wisdom and instruction. He doesn't want any part of the self-discipline that is necessary to become wise. He only wants to do what he wants, when he wants, and where he wants. He doesn't want anything to do with instruction because he hates to have anyone discipline, chasten, or correct him. He only wants people of his own persuasion to endorse the stupid and senseless things he does. It is interesting to see that the wisdom and instruction a fool hates are the very things we need to learn in step one of the four steps to learning and living the book of Proverbs. Without these, we could never succeed in finding wisdom, at least not the kind of wisdom the LORD offers in Proverbs. This makes learning wisdom and instruction even more of a priority for the child of God who wants to be truly wise.

Proverbs chapters 1-9 are a section all by themselves. It is interesting to note that Proverbs 1:7 sets the stage for all that follows in those nine chapters of Proverbs. Psalm one does a similar thing in that it sets the stage for all the chapters that follow in the book of Psalms. So, now that we have a basic look at our text verse, what can we learn from a practical standpoint? It is simply this: There are two approaches to life. The best approach is to pursue a knowledge of God, figure out what a genuine fear of the LORD really is, and then learn to live a good and godly life to the glory of the Father. The worst approach is to be a fool and go our own way, seeking our own desires, either ignorantly or willfully rejecting the truth. These are the only two options. To choose the fear of the LORD is to experience life at its best and find eternal life when we die, but to reject the fear of the LORD is to invite hurts, heartaches, and losses in abundance. Prov. 4:7 teaches that the beginning of wisdom is desiring to have wisdom and then doing something about it. In Prov. 1:7 Solomon gave you a choice. Will you choose to pursue wisdom by searching the Scriptures in order to discern the fear of the LORD and find wisdom, or will you merely live for what you can get out of this life by rejecting wisdom and instruction? The choice is yours. I hope you will choose wisely.

The commentary on Proverbs chapter nine gives young men another look at the same two choices we see in Prov. 1:7. It expands greatly on the subject, but where Prov. 1:7 introduces you to this choice, Proverbs nine embellishes the choices and concludes the first nine chapters of Proverbs. When we get to the discussion of chapter nine, you too will see the beauty of Solomon's poetic word picture found there.

So, Prov. 1:7, *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.”* not only shows the attitude you and I must acquire and maintain if we want to be successful at learning and living the book of Proverbs, but it presents the only two approaches to life a man can choose. Your best option is to choose to live for the LORD and obey His Word. This path through life leads to wisdom, and it produces joy in this life and in the life to come. You can also choose to live for self and all the world has to offer. This is not a good choice because hurts, heartaches, and disappointments in abundance await you there, and eternal damnation is the final result. Anyone who pursues wisdom and continues doing it will in time become a wise man. A man who rejects wisdom and/or the LORD will not become a fool. He already is one. The book of Ecclesiastes shows that even a man as wise as Solomon can be a fool. Ecclesiastes shows his frustration over how he spent a great deal of his energies trying to gain satisfaction through learning, possessing, experiencing, and excelling while leaving God out of the picture. Also, even though he was required to make a handwritten copy of the Old Testament law, he didn't believe that it meant what it said. You see, he knew that the Scriptures said that he should not marry foreign women because they would draw his heart away from God. Even though he knew this Scripture, he thought he was wise enough to handle anything, so he married foreign women. In the end, they convinced him to worship his wives' gods, and he lost everything he had worked so hard to gain. He realized too late that the principles of the Word of God are true and accurate and that the most important things in life are to love God and keep His commandments.

Gregory, assuming you have read and understood all that we have discussed in this chapter, you have a choice. Will you go to the work and discipline of pursuing wisdom, or will you simply be content to be a believer in Christ and let it go at that? I am pursuing wisdom, and I have already experienced some of the joys that result. Join me, and start your search for wisdom today. You won't necessarily find wisdom quickly, but if you hang in there with your study and take the time to meditate upon the Scriptures, I guarantee that you will find it in time. When you do, the rewards will be out of this world.

Proverbs 1:8-19

Reject any friend who will attempt to drag you into sin

Introduction

Gregory,

In chapter three of this commentary, we discussed Prov. 1:1-6 and discovered the four steps to learning and living the book of Proverbs. In chapter four, we discussed Prov. 1:7 where we learned the attitude that we must acquire and maintain if we are to be successful at learning and living the book of Proverbs. Now in chapter five, we will discuss Prov. 1:8-19, and we will learn “the stand” we must take against sinful men if we are to be successful in learning and living the book of Proverbs.

Friendships are very important, and the people you select as your closest friends will affect you for good or for evil. Prov. 27:17 tells us that good friends will affect us in a good way. It reads, “(As) *Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.*” Strong’s Concordance defines “*sharpens*” as *to be sharp, be alert, be keen*. In other words, a good man will make his friend a better person. Oh, but the opposite is also true. Prov. 13:20 reminds us that undesirable friends will affect us in a bad way. This verse reads, “*He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.*” I have seen numbers of young people changed for the worse by associating with the wrong crowd, and before long, they became just like their friends. First Corinthians 15:33 reminds us, “*Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.*” Unfortunately, most young men and women who have abandoned good friends to follow this downward path never find their way back to living a good and godly life.

It is important to understand these principles because we really do tend to become like our friends. If they are good and godly friends, then they will help us become better and more godly people, but if they regularly engage in sinful language and activities or are simply living for this world, in time we will most likely end up engaging in those same sinful activities. This does not mean that we should not be friendly with sinners, but it does mean that we should not make them close friends and endorse or participate in their sinful practices. Keep in mind that there is a big difference between merely being friendly with someone and making them close companions. An illustration of how others can affect us is found in Prov. 22:24-25. These verses warn us, “*Do not associate with a man given to anger; or go with a hot-tempered man, or you will learn his ways and find a snare for yourself.*” As you can see, it is always an advantage to choose your friends wisely. If you will do this, you can be successful at learning and living Proverbs. If you choose otherwise, you may be able to learn what Proverbs says, but you will never be able to live what it teaches. I pray that you, like I, will not only choose good and godly friends, but that you will also be a good and godly example to your friends.

As we proceed through this paragraph of Proverbs, I will build a text layout of the passage one piece at a time like we did for Prov. 1:1-6. By the time we finish the paragraph (Prov. 1:8-19) you will have a complete visual layout of the text.

1) Listen to what your parents advise and do what they say (verses 8-9).

A. Actually hear what your parents try to teach you. (verse 8)

⁸ Hear , my son, and do not forsake	your father’s instruction , your mother’s teaching ;
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⁹ indeed, they are	a graceful wreath to your head and ornaments about your neck.
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1. Hear what dad instructs you to do.

In verse eight, Solomon encouraged his son to *hear* what he had to say. He could have asked his son to listen, but instead he used the word *hear*. It has a different connotation. To listen is to be aware that someone is talking, but to *hear* insinuates that the listener understands what is being said and recognizes its importance. You can casually listen to someone talk, but you might not grasp what was said. Oh, but if you pay close attention when someone talks, you will *hear* with understanding and grasp the importance of what they say. Therefore, Solomon encouraged his son to hear and understand what he had to say and not merely listen in a casual fashion.

What was it that his son was expected to hear? It was his father's *instruction*. In our day, we tend to think of instruction as someone teaching another person or giving them information they need to know. This is true in the English language, but the Hebrew word for *instruction* in our text refers to much more than this. We have discussed this already, but it bears repeating. (By the way, repetition is a good teacher. The repetition of some of these definitions has really helped me learn the material). Strong's defines *instruction* as discipline, chastening, correction. The dictionary defines these three words. Discipline is training that develops self-control, character, or orderliness and efficiency; Chastening is to punish in order to correct or make better; and correction produces a change that corrects a mistake; change from wrong to right, or from abnormal to normal. So then, instruction's goal is to 1) train young men so that they will have more self-control and character, 2) punish young men so that they will become better people, or 3) correct young men so that they will abandon wrong practices and choose to do the right thing instead. It is obvious that all three aspects of instruction are designed to benefit a son even though it may be painful when they are applied. So then, *instruction* involves "teaching, correcting, or punishing someone for the purpose of correcting a fault or making him a better person." If a father can explain the logic of a son's error so that the son can recognize the error of his ways, then discipline has been successful. If the father explains his son's error and the son does not respond properly, then punishment may be in order. Effective punishment will cause the son to admit his error and change his ways. Keep in mind, though, that discipline is to be administered in love, and the child will be better off for it.

2. Don't forget the rules mom has taught you.

A mother approaches the discipline of her son differently than a father. She *teaches* her children how to live right in this world. Strong's Concordance defines *teaching* as law, direction, instruction. In its very essence, mom lays down the law, and the son had better obey or face the consequences. Solomon's advice to his son was, "do not forsake your mothers teaching." Throughout your growing up years, your mother has had much more to do with *teaching* you about life and living than me because she was with you more. Your mom has a lot of practical wisdom when it comes to life and how to live it for the LORD and to the fullest. She has a deep desire to teach you all you need to know in order to be a good and godly young man. You may not appreciate all that she has told you through the years, but you should always listen with interest and recognize the worth of what she has to say. Notice too that this verse does not say that you are to learn what she has to teach you. No, it says that you are not to throw it away in favor of doing your own thing. You know what is right. She has taught you what to do. Now it is up to you to actually live what she has taught you.

B. Value what your parents try to teach you. (verse 9)

⁸ Hear, my son, and do not forsake	your father's instruction, your mother's teaching;
⁹ indeed, they are	a graceful wreath to your head and ornaments about your neck.

Verse 9 says that *"they"* are good for you. Tell me though, who or what are *"they."* We tend to read over words like this and miss what they are conveying. In this case, *"they"* is referring to a father's *instruction* and a mother's *teaching*. Both will teach, nurture, and direct you through life so that you can learn to live in a good and godly manner before God and men. It is important to listen to your parents because they have wisdom to share with you that you might otherwise miss, and the consequences of rejecting their *sound wisdom* could be disastrous. I used *"sound wisdom"* on purpose, because what parents teach their children is practical, effective advice. This is the sort

of thing every young man should know, like being good, obeying the law, being kind to others, etc. It is indeed *sound wisdom*. Ephesians 6:1-3 states, “*Children, obey your parents in the LORD, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth.*” Respect for and obedience to parents are requirements for maturing into a good and godly man.

Verse 9 states that “*they*” reward a son in two ways. First, I understand that in Solomon’s day an athlete who competed in competition and won his event was rewarded with a *wreath* to wear on his head. Notice that it is worn on the head, not the face, or ears, or neck. It was a crown of sorts that said, “I am the best in my category of competition.” Everyone who saw it knew what it was, and it was a real honor to receive one. In verse nine of our text, we are told that we will receive “*a graceful wreath*” when we listen to and obey our parents. The King James translation renders *wreath* as *ornament*. Strong’s concordance defines *graceful* as *favor, grace, charm*. Putting these words together, we can conclude that *a graceful wreath* symbolizes the favor a young man will receive when he respects and obeys his parents teaching and instruction. So then, such an obedient and teachable spirit is what will enable a young man to become a good and godly adult, and this kind of son will stand out above all of his peers. Prov. 20:11 tells us that “*It is by his deeds that a lad distinguishes himself if his conduct is pure and right.*” That is exactly what we are talking about here.

Second, Strong’s defines *ornaments* as *a necklace or neck-pendant*. It is clear, then, that the verse is talking about some sort of necklace. A good example of this is when one of our modern-day athletes wins a gold medal in an Olympic event. It is placed around his neck like a necklace. Being awarded such a medal distinguishes him as the best in his event. In a similar fashion, a young man who hears and obeys his parents wears favor and honor as if it were a necklace for all to see. He doesn’t actually wear a physical necklace, but this young man’s good and godly life will stand out for all to see as prominently as if he were wearing a gold medal. It is easy to see, then, that the blessings that come to a young man who hears and obeys the *sound wisdom* his parents teach him are well worth pursuing.

2) When others entice you to sin, take a stand for what is right. (verses 10-14)

¹⁰ My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent.

¹¹ If they say,

"Come with us,

let us lie in wait for blood,
let us ambush the innocent without cause;
¹² let us swallow them alive like Sheol,
even whole, as those who go down to the pit;

¹³ we will find all kinds of precious wealth,
we will fill our houses with spoil;
¹⁴ throw in your lot with us,
we shall all have one purse,"

Gregory, If I could summarize verses 10-14 in one sentence, it would be this: Don’t cave in to peer pressure. The key phrase for verses 8-19 is in the solid red box. It simply states, **Do not consent** (or give your approval). Don’t tell them that what they are doing is okay or that you’ll join them when they engage in some sinful practice. Instead, be the godly man Christ wants you to be, and simply tell them that you don’t do those things since you have given your life to Jesus Christ. You have already demonstrated that you practice this on a regular basis. I praise you for that, and I hope you will continue doing so for the rest of your life.

Psalm 1 teaches this same warning about associating with sinners in their sinful activities. Verse 1 reads, *"How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers!"* When the verse says *"stand in the path of sinners"*, Strong's says that the word stand in the Hebrew would be better rendered to **"take my stand"** with sinners. In other words, a righteous man will be blessed if he does not take his stand with sinners or take part in their sinful activities.

As we look at our text, notice that our verse does not use the word "invite." It uses the word *entice*. Strong's Concordance defines this word as **to entice, deceive, or persuade**. The dictionary defines *entice* as **to attract by offering hope of reward or pleasure**. In order to understand the full import of what this passage is teaching, we must take the time to define the words used in Strong's definition. The dictionary says that "deceive" means **to make** (a person) **believe something is true when it is not** (grayed text added for clarity), and it says that "persuade" means **to cause to do something, esp. by reasoning, urging, or inducement**. Armed with these definitions, we can understand Solomon's warning. Those who engage in sinful activities are either convinced that what they are doing is OK, or they feel certain that they can avoid being caught by law enforcement. Obviously we know that they are deceived, but nonetheless, they think they are okay. When they try to get you to join them, they will paint a pretty picture of the things they do so that it will appear attractive to you like it does to them. It is not so much that they are trying to trick you into doing something they know is wrong as it is that they are trying to convince you to see it the way they do. They will try their best to attract you by offering hope of reward or pleasure. Be careful though, because although their persuasion may sound convincing, you must always remember that the end of sinful pleasures is pain and sorrow. Keep in mind that those who try to entice you to join them in their sinful activities genuinely feel that what they are doing is fun. Prov. 10:23 states this truth very clearly. It says, *"Doing wickedness is like sport to a fool, and so is wisdom to a man of understanding."* It is a game for them, and they are always trying to come up with bigger and better ways to indulge in their "fun." Stay away from them. Instead, be a man of understanding, and enjoy the *sport* of finding better and better ways to live godly and enjoy wisdom.

A) Beware of their plans (verses 11-12)

<p>¹¹ If they say,</p> <p>"Come with us,</p> <table border="1"><tr><td><p>let us lie in wait for blood, let us ambush the innocent without cause; ¹² let us swallow them alive like Sheol, even whole, as those who go down to the pit;</p></td></tr></table>	<p>let us lie in wait for blood, let us ambush the innocent without cause; ¹² let us swallow them alive like Sheol, even whole, as those who go down to the pit;</p>
<p>let us lie in wait for blood, let us ambush the innocent without cause; ¹² let us swallow them alive like Sheol, even whole, as those who go down to the pit;</p>	

It is obvious from our text that these wicked people have made elaborate plans to murder innocent people and take from them what they want. Christ did a marvelous job of describing those doing the enticing. He said in John 10:10, *"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."* Their plan is to take innocent people completely by surprise so that their victims can't fight back. They feel certain that their ambush will be successful, and they feel they must put those innocent people to death so that they cannot identify their killers. They are sure that they won't get caught or punished, so they are bold in their wickedness. This is a paraphrase of what they say to those they want to enlist: "Come on, join in with us. We have this whole thing planned out to the last detail. We'll kill the guy before he even knows what has happened so there is no way he can identify us. Come join us, and you'll see for yourself." It sounds reasonable and exciting to a man without sound morals, but don't be fooled. You know better.

B) Beware of their promises (verses 13-14)

<p>¹³ we will find all kinds of precious wealth, we will fill our houses with spoil; ¹⁴ throw in your lot with us, we shall all have one purse,"</p>
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These people not only make detailed plans, but they promise great reward. According to them, if you join them you will become rich beyond your wildest dreams. They even promise to give you an even share of the loot. The big problem with their scheme is that in the long run, these kinds of tactics usually produce detrimental results instead of good ones. More often than not, people like them are apprehended by the police. Then they either spend many years in prison or are executed for their crimes. Son, don't be deceived by them.

C) Learn from one who almost joined the wicked.

In Psalm 73 Asaph shared his testimony about how he envied the pleasures and wealth wicked people enjoyed. He seriously considered joining them, but fortunately he saw the truth before it was too late. Read the Psalm below and see how dwelling upon the prosperity of the wicked adversely affected this godly man.

Psalm 73

¹ Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart! ² But as for me, my feet came close to stumbling, my steps had almost slipped. ³ For I was envious of the arrogant as I saw the prosperity of the wicked. ⁴ For there are no pains in their death, and their body is fat. ⁵ They are not in trouble as other men, nor are they plagued like mankind. ⁶ Therefore pride is their necklace; the garment of violence covers them. ⁷ Their eye bulges from fatness; the imaginations of their heart run riot. ⁸ They mock and wickedly speak of oppression; they speak from on high. ⁹ They have set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue parades through the earth. ¹⁰ Therefore his people return to this place, and waters of abundance are drunk by them. ¹¹ They say, "How does God know? and is there knowledge with the Most High?" ¹² Behold, these are the wicked; and always at ease, they have increased in wealth. ¹³ Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure and washed my hands in innocence; ¹⁴ for I have been stricken all day long and chastened every morning. ¹⁵ If I had said, "I will speak thus," behold, I would have betrayed the generation of Your children. ¹⁶ When I pondered to understand this, it was troublesome in my sight ¹⁷ until I came into the sanctuary of God; then I perceived their end. ¹⁸ Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction. ¹⁹ How they are destroyed in a moment! They are utterly swept away by sudden terrors! ²⁰ Like a dream when one awakes, O LORD, when aroused, You will despise their form. ²¹ When my heart was embittered and I was pierced within, ²² then I was senseless and ignorant; I was like a beast before You. ²³ Nevertheless I am continually with You; You have taken hold of my right hand. ²⁴ With Your counsel You will guide me, and afterward receive me to glory. ²⁵ Whom have I in heaven but You? and besides You, I desire nothing on earth. ²⁶ My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. ²⁷ For, behold, those who are far from You will perish; You have destroyed all those who are unfaithful to You. ²⁸ But as for me, the nearness of God is my good; I have made the LORD GOD my refuge, that I may tell of all Your works. (Underlining added for clarity)

It is obvious from Psalm 73 that wicked men and sinners are arrogant and that their sin looks attractive to those who do not adhere to sound, biblical morals. Even an otherwise godly man like Asaph looked with envy at the pleasures and wealth these sinners enjoyed, and he was almost persuaded to join them. Who would not want to have enough money to do anything his heart desires? Who would not want to experience the pleasures wealthy men enjoy? Let's face it; many sinful activities are pleasurable. For example, from a purely physical standpoint, any man who says it isn't pleasurable to spend a night with a beautiful prostitute is either deceived or is not telling the truth. Yes, it would be fun, but the guilt that follows is so hard to bear, and the potential for contracting a serious disease is too great. Oh, but what the wicked do not comprehend is the fact that in the arms of my wife I can find everything I could enjoy in the arms of a prostitute and bear no guilt for it. We will discuss this in depth when we discuss the last paragraph of Proverbs chapter five.

The most important factor I see in Psalm 73 is Asaph's nearness of God (vs. 28). It is the most desirable experience in life. Yes, walking with God will include trials and testings, but growing through those experiences is far better than enjoying sin for a season only to pay a heavy price once the deed has been done. Below you will find a text layout to this point.

⁸ Hear, my son,
and **do not forsake** your father's **instruction**,
your mother's **teaching**;

⁹ indeed, **they** are a **graceful wreath** to your head and
ornaments about your neck.

¹⁰ My son, if sinners entice you, **do not consent.**

¹¹ If they say,
"Come with us,
let us lie in wait for blood,
let us ambush the innocent without cause;
¹² let us swallow them alive like Sheol,
even whole, as those who go down to the pit;
¹³ we will find all kinds of precious wealth,
we will fill our houses with spoil;
¹⁴ throw in your lot with us,
we shall all have one purse,"

3) Do not engage in wicked deeds with them. (verses 15-19)

¹⁵ My son, **DO NOT WALK IN THE WAY WITH THEM.**

KEEP YOUR FOOT FROM THEIR PATH,

A) The Warning to stay away

In verse ten Solomon said, *"Do not consent."* Simply refuse to tell these wicked people that their activities are okay or that you will join them in their sinful practices. In verses 15 he told his son that he must refuse to actually go with them and participate in the sinful deeds. Then in verses 16-19 he told his son why he should avoid these activities.

Here in verse fifteen Solomon specifically said, *"Do not walk in the way with them."* In other words, don't be there when they make their evil plans, and don't be there when they actually commit a felony. Simply stated, don't support them in any way. Just stay away from them. Instead, spend time with wise and godly people. It will pay big dividends in the long run.

The Hebrew word for *"walk"* is the same word used in Psalm one where David said, *"How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night."* When David wrote *"do not walk in the counsel of the ungodly,"* he was advising God's people not to follow the advice or counsel of people who are unrestrained, wicked, and live like there is no God. When he wrote *"nor stand in the path"* he was saying that we

should not **take our stand** with them. Here in Prov. 1:15 Solomon was instructing his son not to walk where these sinners walk or do the things wicked sinners do. In essence, Solomon was using poetic language to teach his son what David had taught Solomon when he was a young child.

In verse 15 Solomon also warned his son to *“Keep your foot from their path.”* The word *path* has a different meaning than *walk*. Whereas *walk in the way* denotes a manner of living, *their path* refers to the actual deeds these wicked people commit. As I said above, don’t be there when they commit their evil deeds. It is the safest way.”

B) The Reason to stay away

1. They are sold out to doing evil (verse 16)

¹⁶ For their feet run to evil, and they hasten to shed blood.

It is good to warn people to avoid something that will hurt them, but the warning is much more effective when you tell them how and why they will be hurt. Solomon did that very thing here. Wicked people are constantly chomping at the bit to pull off another job or kill some innocent man or woman. They seem to get a thrill out of taking another person’s life. It is important, then, to stay away from people like this because if they do their evil deed when you are with them, you will be considered guilty of the same crime. You will be apprehended and charged as an accessory to the fact. Even this small part in the crime will result in jail time for you. It is simply not wise to be party to their crimes. It will be costly in the end, and you will have ruined your testimony for Christ.

2. Their sin will cost them their lives (verses 17-19)

¹⁷ Indeed, it is useless to spread the net in the sight of any bird;

¹⁸ BUT they **lie in wait** for their own blood; they **ambush** their own lives.

¹⁹ So are the ways of everyone who **GAINS BY VIOLENCE**;
IT takes away the life of its possessors.

Sin always demands punishment, and the more severe the crime the more severe the punishment. This portion of Proverbs is talking about murder. That’s about as bad as a crime gets, and the appropriate punishment for murder is the death of the guilty one or ones. Verses 17-19 tell us that those who engage in such crimes think they are setting a trap for someone else, but in reality they are setting a trap for themselves. The principle of sow and reap works that way. Oh, they may not be caught in the actual ambush they set for some innocent man or woman, but in the end they will be caught and killed in the same kind of trap they set for others. As you read through Proverbs, it will soon become clear that a wicked man sets in motion circumstances that will ultimately bring about his premature death. Not all wicked men will experience an early death, but the majority of them will. Law enforcement can see how these kinds of crimes trap the guilty, but the one who does the crime seems to be convinced that he can get away with it and never be apprehended. That appears to be the mindset of the majority of criminals. Otherwise, they would not break the law and take such a serious chance of being apprehended and punished.

Verse 17 tell us how stupid it is to set trap while the bird you wish to catch is watching your every move. Birds aren’t stupid. They know it is a trap, and they will never go to it. Yet, these wicked men are too blind to see this truth. Verse 19 drives home the fact that they who live by the sword will die by the sword. Everyone who gains wealth or possessions by inflicting serious bodily harm or death upon innocent people ^{<violence>} will experience a

premature death. Prov. 26:27 reinforces this truth when it says, *“He who digs a pit will fall into it, and he who rolls a stone, it will come back on him.”* Here is the principle of sow and reap again. It works equally as well for those who do evil as it does for those who do good. Sin always costs more than the offender is willing to pay, but most of the time an offender does not see or understand the consequences of his sin until it is too late. That’s because as Prov. 11:18 teaches, *“The wicked earns deceptive wages, but he who sows righteousness gets a true reward.”* A wise man can see and anticipate the good things that will result from living a good and godly life, but a sinner is totally blinded to the devastation that awaits him after the sinful deed is done. Prov. 2:21-22 sums up the results of good and godly living versus a sinful lifestyle when it says, *“²¹ For the upright will live in the land and the blameless will remain in it; ²² but the wicked will be cut off from the land and the treacherous will be uprooted from it.”*

4) Application: Choose your companions wisely.

Gregory,

It is important to use the four steps to learning and living the book of Proverbs (Prov.1:1-6), but in order to use them successfully, we must acquire and maintain a genuine fear of the LORD (Prov. 1:7). Then, in order to successfully maintain a biblical fear of the LORD, we must reject peer pressure by friends or acquaintances who would entice us to join them in their sinful practices (Prov. 1:8-19). All three of these things are necessary if you want to become a wise man.

As we have seen, Prov. 1:8-19 conveys a simple but crucial message. It all comes down to peer pressure. Your task as a believer in Christ is to resist peer pressure by those who would tempt you to join them in any of their sinful activities. In their place, choose wise and godly companions. Prov. 13:20 warns us that *“He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.”* Those who join the wicked will certainly suffer harm, but those who walk with good and godly men will experience blessings in abundance.

I mentioned this before, but First Corinthians 15:33 states, *“Do not be deceived: Bad company corrupts good morals.”* Those who follow Christ should have and maintain sound, biblical morals. You simply cannot do that when you make sinful, wicked men or women your close companions. So, from now on, reject detrimental friends and choose good and godly friends in their place. When you do, you will have set in place the basics that will enable you to be successful at learning and living Proverbs. There are other verses in Proverbs that deal with detrimental friends. Consider the following passages.

Proverbs chapter 2 says that if you will search diligently and faithfully for wisdom, you will figure out the fear of the LORD and learn who God is, what He is, and how He works in the affairs of men. When you do this, knowledge and understanding will keep you from getting involved with wicked men (Prov. 2:12-15) or immoral women (Prov. 2:16-19). We will take a brief look at these verses, but we will discuss them in detail when we dissect Proverbs chapter two. Read verses 12-15 below.

A fear of the LORD will deliver you from wicked men

¹² *To deliver you from the way of evil, from the man who speaks perverse things; ¹³ from those who leave the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness; ¹⁴ who delight in doing evil and rejoice in the perversity of evil; ¹⁵ whose paths are crooked, and who are devious in their ways;*

A fear of the LORD will deliver you from immoral women

¹⁶ *to deliver you from the strange woman, from the adulteress who flatters with her words; ¹⁷ that leaves the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God; ¹⁸ for her house sinks down to death and her tracks lead to the dead; ¹⁹ none who go to her return again, nor do they reach the paths of life.*

In Proverbs chapter four, Solomon warned his son to stay away from evil men because they will experience a rough and painful future. On the contrary, the path through life is bright and smooth for those who live such a good life that no one can rightfully accuse them of wrongdoing ^{<blameless>}. Now read Prov. 4:14-19. These verses speak for themselves.

¹⁴ *Do not enter the path of the wicked and do not proceed in the way of evil men. ¹⁵ Avoid it, do not pass by it; turn away from it and pass on. ¹⁶ For they cannot sleep unless they do evil; and they*

are robbed of sleep unless they make someone stumble. ¹⁷ For they eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence. ¹⁸ But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, that shines brighter and brighter until the full day. ¹⁹ The way of the wicked is like darkness; they do not know over what they stumble.

Isaiah 3:11 sums up the reason why you should not join sinful men or women in their sinful activities. It simply says, *“Woe to the wicked! It will go badly with him, for what he deserves will be done to him”*. Son, what more can I say? It is critical for you to choose good and godly men and women as your close companions. They will build you up in the faith, and in the end, you will not only be blessed, but you will also be at peace with God and men. What more could any man want out of life?

In a general sense, as I stated above, our text has been talking about standing up for your convictions and not yielding to peer pressure. In context, our text said that we must say no to people who invite us to join them in violent, murderous deeds, but the principle of saying no holds true for every invitation to join people in sinful or questionable activities. Let’s take a few moments and consider some of these possible scenarios.

1) If someone invites you to try drugs, just say no. Trying it once may be just the thing that gets you hooked, and this would ruin your life and future.

2) If someone tries to entice you to join them in sexual intercourse before marriage, just say no. The Scriptures forbid such conduct, and once the deed is done, you will never be the same. There is real virtue in standing at the altar on your wedding day as a virgin having saved yourself for your wife. This strengthens a marriage more than most people realize.

3) If someone tries to get you to do something illegal or unethical, just say no. Those who break the law usually get caught. Then they are punished. Those who deal unethically with others may not be apprehended by law enforcement, but the LORD will take it out of their hide. Don’t be fooled. The LORD sees everything we do, and in His own time, He will make sure that justice is served.

4) If someone tries to get you to join them in an attempt to change our government by illegal means, just say no. Prov. 24:21-22 tell us, *“My son, fear the LORD and the king; do not associate with those who are given to change, for their calamity will rise suddenly, and who knows the ruin that comes from both of them?”* This is a sure way to end up in jail or worse. If the government doesn’t come after you, the LORD will.

5) If someone tries to get you to look at pornography with them, just say no. Once you see those sexy images it is hard, if not impossible, to get them out of your mind. Those of us who have seen them in the past know that they can appear in our mind seemingly out of nowhere even years later.

These have been but a few examples of the kind of detrimental peer pressure we need to resist. You and I must respond by saying, “Don’t count me in. I am a follower of Jesus Christ, and I cannot do those things and still please my LORD.” Gregory, you have been good about this, and I hope you will continue doing so in the future. Be a man and stand for Christ no matter what. It may seem a small thing to yield in some seemingly unimportant area, but every area of a believer’s life is important. By erring on the safe side, you will live in a manner that will please your heavenly Father, and you will be innocent when you stand before Christ on judgment day.

Thus far in our study we have learned the four steps to learning and living the book of Proverbs (Prov. 1:1-6); we have learned the attitude that we must acquire and maintain if we are to be successful at learning and living the book of Proverbs (Prov. 1:7); and we have learned the kind of friends we must avoid if we are to be successful at maintaining a genuine fear of the LORD. Gregory, choose your friends carefully because they can help you in your walk with the LORD, or they can tear you down and cost you a great deal. I pray you will choose good and godly friends and enjoy the blessings that come with them.

Before we leave Prov. 1:8-19, take the time to look at both a good man’s view of wicked men (Prov. 6:12-15) and the LORD’s view of wicked men Prov. 6:16-19. You will find the discussion starting on page 67 in chapter four of this commentary. Since you want to be a wise man, study these verses and avoid all of the things they say a wicked man practices. To engage in any of them will tarnish your reputation and your testimony for Christ.

Below is a text layout of the whole paragraph.

Proverbs 1:8-19

⁸ **Hear**, my son, your father's **instruction**,
and **do not forsake** your mother's **teaching**;

⁹ indeed, **they** are a **graceful wreath** to your head and
 ornaments about your neck.

¹⁰ My son, if sinners **entice** you, **do not consent.**

¹¹ If they say,
 "Come with us,

let us lie in wait for blood,
let us ambush the innocent without cause;
let us swallow them alive like Sheol,
even whole, as those who go down to the pit;

we will find all kinds of precious wealth,
we will fill our houses with spoil;
throw in your lot with us,
we shall all have one purse,"

¹⁵ My son, **DO NOT WALK IN THE WAY WITH THEM.**
 KEEP YOUR FOOT FROM THEIR PATH,

¹⁶ For their feet run to evil, and
 they hasten to shed blood.

¹⁷ Indeed, it is useless to spread the net
 in the sight of any bird;

¹⁸ **BUT** they **lie in wait** for their own blood;
 they **ambush** their own lives.

¹⁹ So are the ways of everyone who **GAINS BY VIOLENCE**;

IT takes away the life of its possessors.

Proverbs 1:20-33

What happens if you reject wisdom

Proverbs 1:20-33

When we discussed Prov. 1:7 in chapter four of this commentary, we learned that there are two approaches to life. We can either gain a biblical fear of the LORD and find wisdom, or we will be like a fool and live for this life while leaving God out of the picture. In verses 20-33 we will see the results of both choices. The following is a short outline of the passage.

Verses 20-23	Wisdom's call to accept and pursue her
Verses 24-31	The downward spiral for those who reject wisdom
Verses 32-33	The consequences of both choices

Part One — Wisdom's call to accept and pursue her (verses 20-23)

1. Where she calls

“²⁰ Wisdom shouts in the street, she lifts her voice in the square; ²¹ at the head of the noisy streets she cries out; at the entrance of the gates in the city she utters her sayings.”

Solomon started this chapter much like he did chapters eight and nine. Here wisdom (in poetical form) invites everyone to come to her and find all that they will ever need in order to experience a life of blessings and security. Notice that she (wisdom) positions herself in the busiest places where the largest number of people can be found so that no one can say they couldn't find her if they are even half-heartedly looking for her. Wisdom wants men and women to find her. This is the way God ordained the grand scheme of things. He really wants you and me to become wise men so that we can live a good and godly life to His glory.

2. Who she calls

“²² How long, O naive ones, will you love being simple-minded? And scoffers delight themselves in scoffing and fools hate knowledge?”

There are three types of people she invites to come to her. The first is the *naïve* man. As we said in chapter three of this commentary, a *naïve* man is not necessarily a bad man. It is just that he seldom evaluates the consequences of his decisions and actions. Wisdom tells us why he acts the way he does. It is because he *loves being simple-minded*. Strong's Concordance defines *simple-minded* as *simple, foolish, open-minded*. Basically, he is gullible and easily persuaded to do anything that sounds fun or pleasurable without taking into account what it will cost him or how he might be hurt as a result. This is definitely unwise. The second type of person wisdom calls is the *scoffer*. They *delight themselves in scoffing*. They will aggressively belittle God, the Bible, and anyone who tries to live godly, and they actually enjoy doing so. Obviously, scoffers are enemies of God, but they are too fixed in their defiance to recognize it. Besides, they don't care. The third type of person is the *fool*. As we saw in Part Four of the discussion of Prov. 1:7, the fool hates wisdom and instruction. In a more basic sense, he hates the knowledge and self-discipline upon which wisdom is built. He feels he already knows all that he will ever need in this life, and he hates for anyone to tell him that he is wrong or that he needs to believe in and obey the LORD. So then, these are the people wisdom invites to come to her.

3. What she offers

“²³ Turn to my reproof, behold, I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you.”

Notice that wisdom readily admits that her call is a *reproof*. So what is she really saying to these people? It is simply this:

“You people are making a mess of your life, and the consequences are going to be disastrous. Recognize the mess you’re making of your life and come to me. I can fix it for you, but you must come to me in order to fix the problem.”

Proverbs teaches that a naïve man “may” pay attention to wisdom, but it is highly unlikely that a scoffer or a fool ever will. They are too entrenched in their beliefs to be open-minded enough to seriously consider accepting God’s (wisdom’s) call to pursue spiritual things. It is unfortunate, but this is a fact of life. Nonetheless, Wisdom makes the offer and does so genuinely, fully intending to keep her promise if they will but turn to her.

What does wisdom offer those who will accept her? First, she says, “*I will pour out my spirit on you.*” Okay, what does this mean? Do you think this is referring to God pouring out His Holy Spirit upon you? I personally don’t think so. As we discussed in Part One of chapter four of this commentary, trusting Christ and being born again does not in and of itself make someone wise nor does it guarantee that he will espouse a genuine fear of the LORD. I have known a lot of people who profess Christ as savior, but they definitely do not have a genuine fear of the LORD. These people may say they do, but it is apparent by their actions and words that they do not. Although accepting Christ as savior does not guarantee these things, it is certain that no man can discern a genuine fear of the LORD and become truly wise until or unless he has first trusted Christ as Savior by faith alone. Until he is born again, a man simply cannot comprehend spiritual things. Once he has accepted Christ, the Holy Spirit takes residence in his heart and gives him eyes to see and understand the truths of Scripture. So then, if wisdom is not offering the Holy Spirit, what is she offering? It must be that she will give a man **the power to live in a blessed and secure manner**. As you search for wisdom according to Proverbs chapter two, you will gain knowledge, understanding, insight, and discretion, and the more you search, the more of these you will gain. These will give you the power to live and act in a wise and godly manner, but keep in mind that wisdom will be empowering you to do this. You could not do this without wisdom abiding in your heart and life. So, the first thing wisdom will give a man who accepts her call is “**the spirit of power**” to live a good and godly life.

The second thing wisdom promises is that “*I will make my words known to you.*” Here we see that she offers “**the spirit of understanding.**” When we dissect Proverbs chapter eight, we will see all that wisdom is and does, but for now it is enough to say that wisdom will give the one who acquires her the ability to comprehend the knowledge, understanding, insight, and discretion needed to live in a good and godly manner. This is real understanding. The opportunity to possess “the spirit of power” and “the spirit of understanding” are in and of themselves enough to make any reasonable man want to pursue wisdom. They are enough for me. Gregory, I hope you feel the same.

Proverbs 1:20-23

²⁰ WISDOM	shouts in the street, she lifts her voice in the square; ²¹ at the head of the noisy streets she cries out; at the entrance of the gates in the city, she utters her sayings;
²² How long O NAIVE ONES will you and SCOFFERS and FOOLS	LOVE SIMPLICITY? Delight themselves in scoffing, HATE KNOWLEDGE.
<div style="border: 2px solid red; padding: 5px;">²³Turn to MY reproof, behold I WILL pour out my spirit on you; I WILL make my words known to you.</div>	

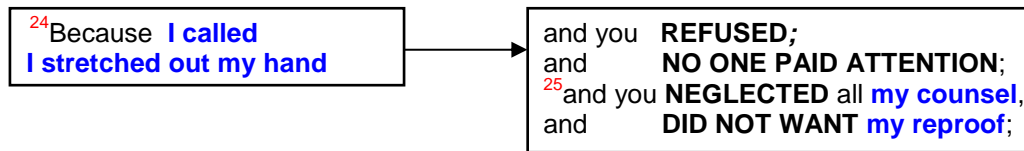
Part Two — The downward spiral for those who reject wisdom (verses 24-31)

²⁴ *Because I called and you refused, I stretched out my hand and no one paid attention;*
²⁵ *and you neglected all my counsel and did not want my reproof;* ²⁶ *I will also laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your dread comes,* ²⁷ *when your dread comes like a storm and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you.* ²⁸ *Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but they will not find me,* ²⁹ *because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD.* ³⁰ *They would not accept my counsel, they spurned all my reproof.* ³¹ *So they shall eat of the fruit of their own way and be satiated with their own devices.”*

1) Their rejection of wisdom. (verses 24-25)

²⁴ *Because I called and you refused, I stretched out my hand and no one paid attention;*
²⁵ *and you neglected all my counsel and did not want my reproof;*

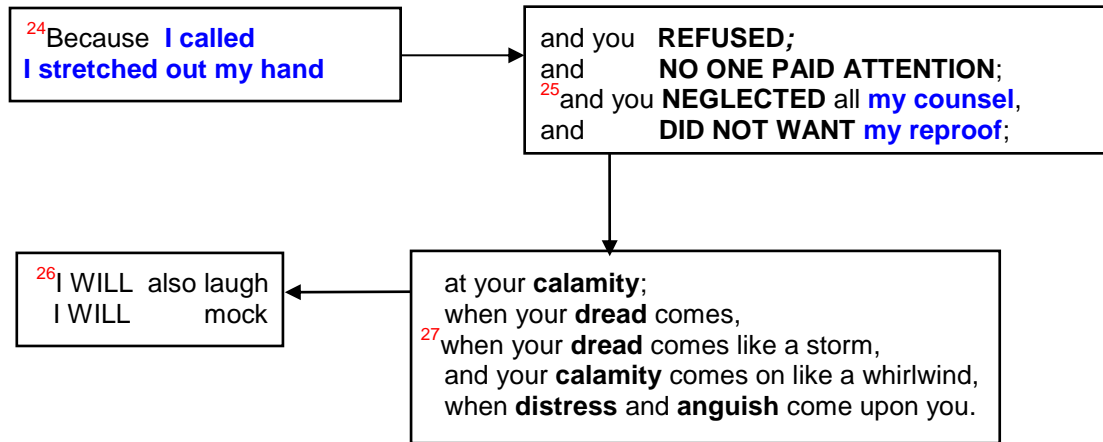
As we saw in verses 20-23, wisdom calls all men to herself. She has called, she is calling right now, and she will call until the end of time. The problem here is that many men and women have *refused* to answer her call. Wisdom even *stretched out her hand* in a visual gesture of welcome, but even then people don't even bother to *pay attention* to what she has to say. It simply isn't important enough for them to really listen to what she has to say. Others merely *neglected* her counsel because they didn't care to hear what she had to say. They don't want anyone telling them what they can or can't do. They are living for what this world has to offer, and they are happy in their ignorance. Some people are happy in their religious ignorance, and that blinds them to the truth. The key words in these two verses are *refused* and *neglected*. It is apparent by the wording of verse 32 that the fool and the scoffer are the ones who *rejected* wisdom while the naïve man is the one who *neglected* wisdom's call.



2) The disaster that follows. (verses 26-27)

²⁶ *I will also laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your dread comes,* ²⁷ *when your dread comes like a storm and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you.”*

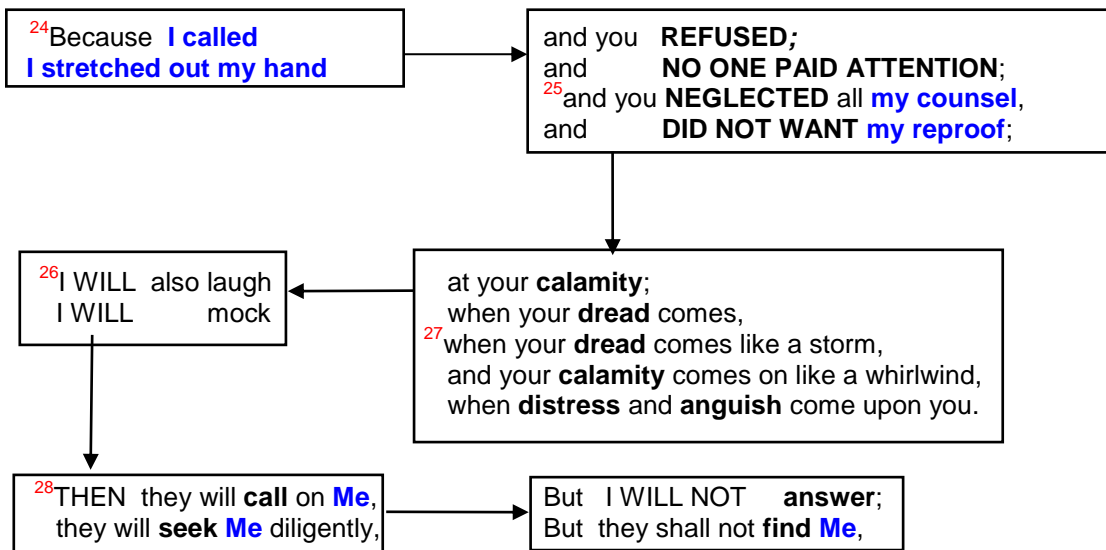
Okay, it is apparent that some have rejected her. Now what? The normal and natural result of rejecting wisdom is *calamity*. Strong's defines this word as *disaster*. The dictionary defines *calamity* as *any extreme misfortune bringing great loss or sorrow*, and it defines "disaster" as *any happening that causes great harm or damage; serious or sudden misfortune*. It is obvious, then, that life for the man who rejects wisdom will be a rough road. The longer he lives the more his life will simply fall apart. Notice in verse 27 that when the storms of life come upon this man, he will be overcome with *dread*. Strong's says that *dread* is *fear or terror*. The one who rejects wisdom will be overcome with this kind of fear because the storms of life will be so severe. Notice also that when circumstances get all twisted around, he will be in *distress* because the results of his rejection will tear everything apart like a tornado working its way through a city. The situation will become critical, and he will be in *anguish*—that is, he will be at his wits end fearing that he may even lose his life if things get any worse. When all of these things overwhelm the man who rejected wisdom, wisdom will simply sit back and guffaw, *laughing* at his stupidity and defiance. She won't simply laugh. She will actually *mock* the man for rejecting her. He won't appreciate her response, but nonetheless, he will get what he deserves. See the progression below.



3) The fox-hole prayer for help. (verse 28)

²⁸ Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but they will not find me,"

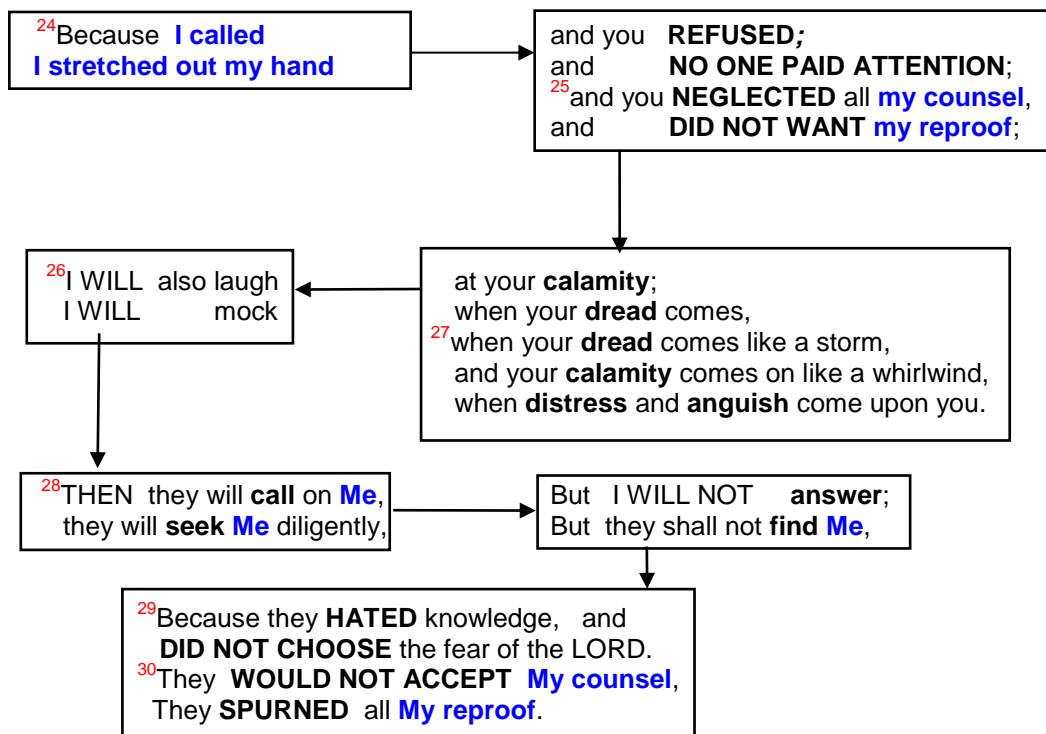
These people would not give wisdom the time of day before difficult times arrive. Ah, but once their lives have literally fallen apart, they will be in dire straits. Then they will say a foxhole prayer hoping wisdom will come to their aid and save them. They will be earnest in their request for help. This is evident by wisdom saying that *they will seek me diligently*. What does it mean to be *diligent*? Strong's defines it as *to seek early or earnestly*. In other words, they will pour everything they have into asking wisdom for help. The problem is that it is too little, too late. Wisdom won't answer them when they call, and she has good reason for responding this way. In the end, they will not find her. It is unfortunate, but they made their bed. Now they must lie in it. See more of the progression.



4) The reason wisdom will not come to their aid. (verses 29-30)

²⁹ because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD. ³⁰ They would not accept my counsel, they spurned all my reproof."

So, we find these people in dire straits, and when they call upon wisdom for help she will simply ignore them. Why would she do this? The answer is quite simple. When she invited them to accept her, they defiantly rejected her counsel. They were more adamant than that in their rejection. They literally *spurned* her. The dictionary defines *spurn* as *to push or drive away with contempt with or as with the foot*. In other words, they kicked her out of their lives because they *hated her* and all she stands for. They actually hated the *knowledge* upon which wisdom is built, and they wanted nothing to do with being subservient to God or being required to acquire and maintain a genuine fear of the LORD. The only thing they cared about was doing what they wanted, when they wanted, and where they wanted. It did not matter how firmly wisdom rebuked them (*reproof*). They were not going to listen. Therefore, since they hated wisdom and refused to accept her, she simply gave them some of their own medicine. They refused to answer her when she called, so in return, she will refuse to answer them when they call. It is as simple as that.



5) The tragic result. (verse 31)

³¹ So they shall eat of the fruit of their own way and be satiated with their own devices."

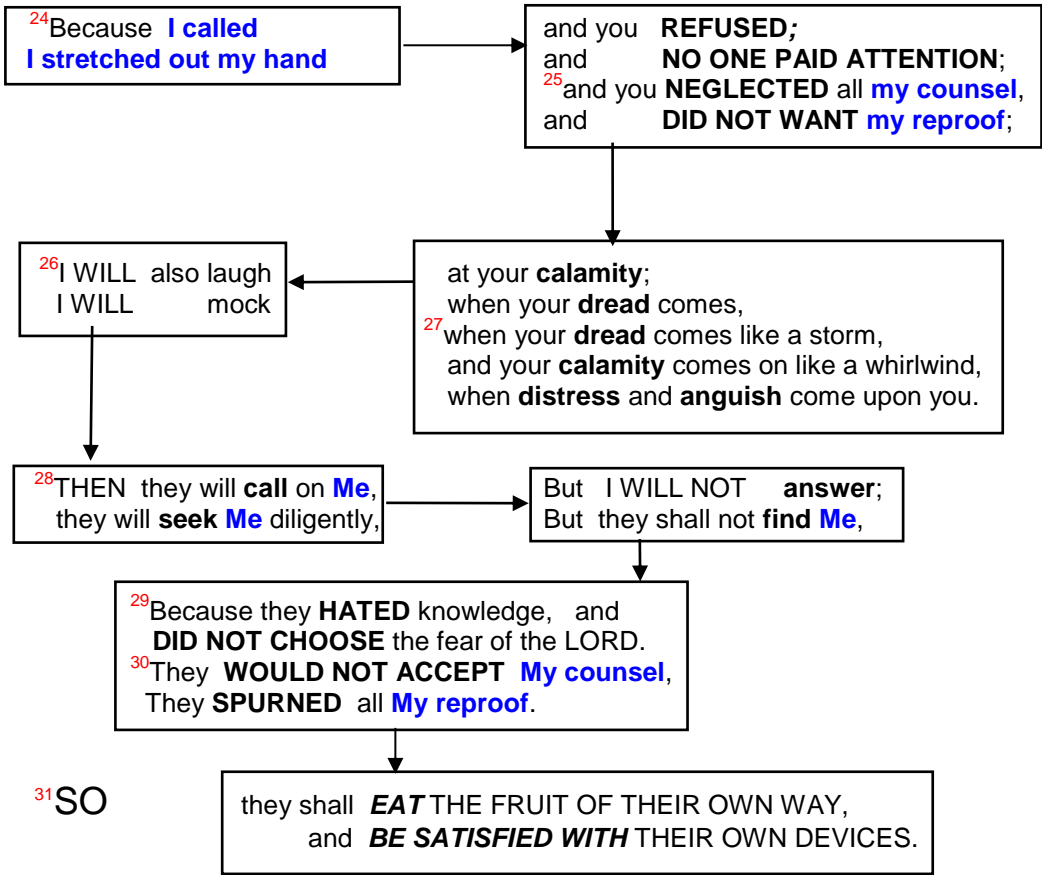
Every time a man sins or does something stupid or foolish, there are consequences, and they are almost always bad. Such is the case here. Since these people rejected wisdom and went their own way to commit all sorts of sin and evil, they will simply have to endure the consequences of their actions. This is what it means to *eat the fruit of their own way*. They have chosen to go their own way with no regard to what is good or right according to the Word of God, and they blew it. They did or said things that created serious trouble, and like it or not, they are now forced to endure the consequences that have resulted. This is what it means to *be satiated with their own devices*. Their lives will become a disaster, and they may even experience a premature death. All of this will happen because they rejected wisdom.

See a complete text layout of this paragraph on the following page.

²⁰**WISDOM** shouts in the street,
²¹**she** lifts her voice in the square;
 at the head of the noisy streets **she** cries out;
 at the entrance of the gates in the city,
she utters her sayings;

²²How long O **NAIVE ONES** will you **LOVE SIMPLICITY?**
 and **SCOFFERS** **Delight themselves in scoffing,**
 and **FOOLS** **HATE KNOWLEDGE.**

²³Turn to **MY** reproof, behold
 I WILL ***pour out my spirit upon you;***
 I WILL ***make my words known to you.***



Follow the arrows in the text layout above. Notice the sequence. Be sure to follow the arrows, or this will not make sense.

Wisdom calls,
They tell her to go take a hike,
As a result, calamity overtakes them,
Wisdom laughs at their troubles,
They pray to her for deliverance,
She won't give them an answer,
She doesn't answer because they hate her, and
So, they will have to endure the mess they have made of their life.

Part Three — The consequences of both choices (verses 32-33)

³² For the waywardness of the naive will kill them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them. ³³ But he who listens to me shall live securely and will be at ease from the dread of evil."

Our text presents two choices, and the consequences of these choices are vastly different. For those who reject wisdom, there is death and destruction, but for those who choose wisdom, there is security and peace of mind. Let me explain.

There are two main reasons why people reject wisdom. The first is something a naïve man will do. He simply goes through life taking things as they come. He doesn't plan what he is going to do. No, he just does what seems interesting or fun at the moment. He is gullible and easily persuaded to do things without giving any serious thought about the consequences of his actions. Verse 32 says that his *waywardness* is his downfall. What does it mean to be wayward? The KJV translates this word as *turning away*. In this case the KJV is the better rendering of this Hebrew word. The dictionary defines *wayward* or *turning away* as *insisting upon having one's own way contrary to others' advice, wishes, or orders; head-strong, willful, disobedient, delinquent, etc.* This describes a naïve man to a T. So, our text says that a naïve man will end up experiencing a premature death as a result of his insistence upon having his own way regardless of what he is advised.

The second reason men reject wisdom is *complacency*. This is the kind of thing a fool will do. As I said before, a fool thinks he knows all that he will ever need in this life, and he is close-minded to truth or correction. So, he goes on with life, content with what he knows. Unfortunately, he is completely unaware that his approach to life will ultimately lead to disaster or utter ruin.

Regardless of the reason for rejecting wisdom, the results are disastrous. The better choice is to choose wisdom and pursue her with all of your being. In verse 23 above, wisdom told us the two benefits that result from choosing her are **the spirit of power** and **the spirit of understanding**. In verse 33 we find two more benefits. First, anyone who chooses wisdom *will live securely*. Everyone wants security in life, but most will never experience it because real, lasting security can only be found by acquiring and using wisdom. Those who find and use her are blessed indeed. The other blessing that results from choosing wisdom is to *be at ease from the dread of evil*. Notice that it does not say that we will not experience the effects of the things evil people do, but we will have peace of mind knowing that the LORD is our protector. Nothing can happen to us without the LORD's permission. So then, those who choose wisdom will be given **the spirit of power** to live a wise and godly life; they will be given **the spirit of understanding**; they will experience **real security**; and they will have **genuine peace of mind**. Don't these sound like worthwhile reasons to choose and pursue wisdom? I'll tell you right now, these are what I want, so I am determined to pursue wisdom with all that is in me. Gregory, will you join me?

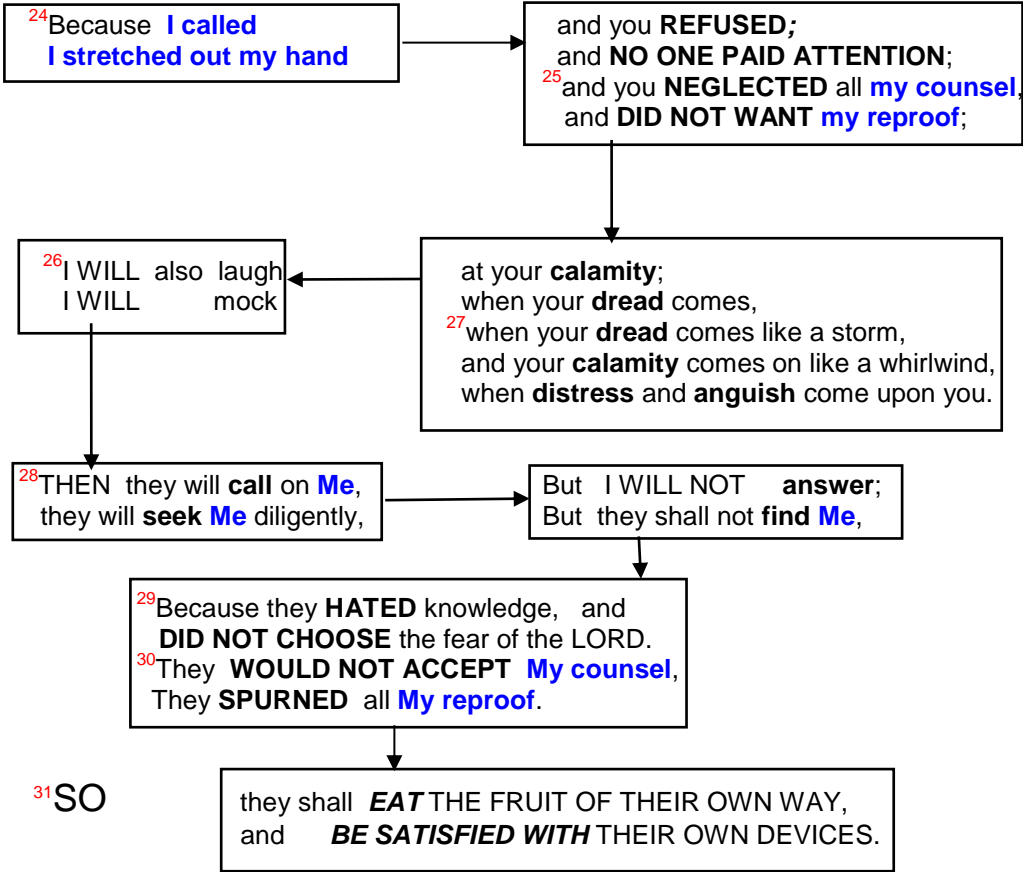
You will find a finished text layout of this paragraph on the following page.

Proverbs 1:20-33 (What happens when you reject wisdom.)

²⁰ **WISDOM** shouts in the street,
²¹ **she** lifts her voice in the square;
 at the head of the noisy streets **she** cries out;
 at the entrance of the gates in the city,
she utters her sayings;

²² How long O **NAIVE ONES** will you
 and **SCOFFERS** **LOVE SIMPLICITY?**
 and **FOOLS** **Delight themselves in scoffing,**
HATE KNOWLEDGE.

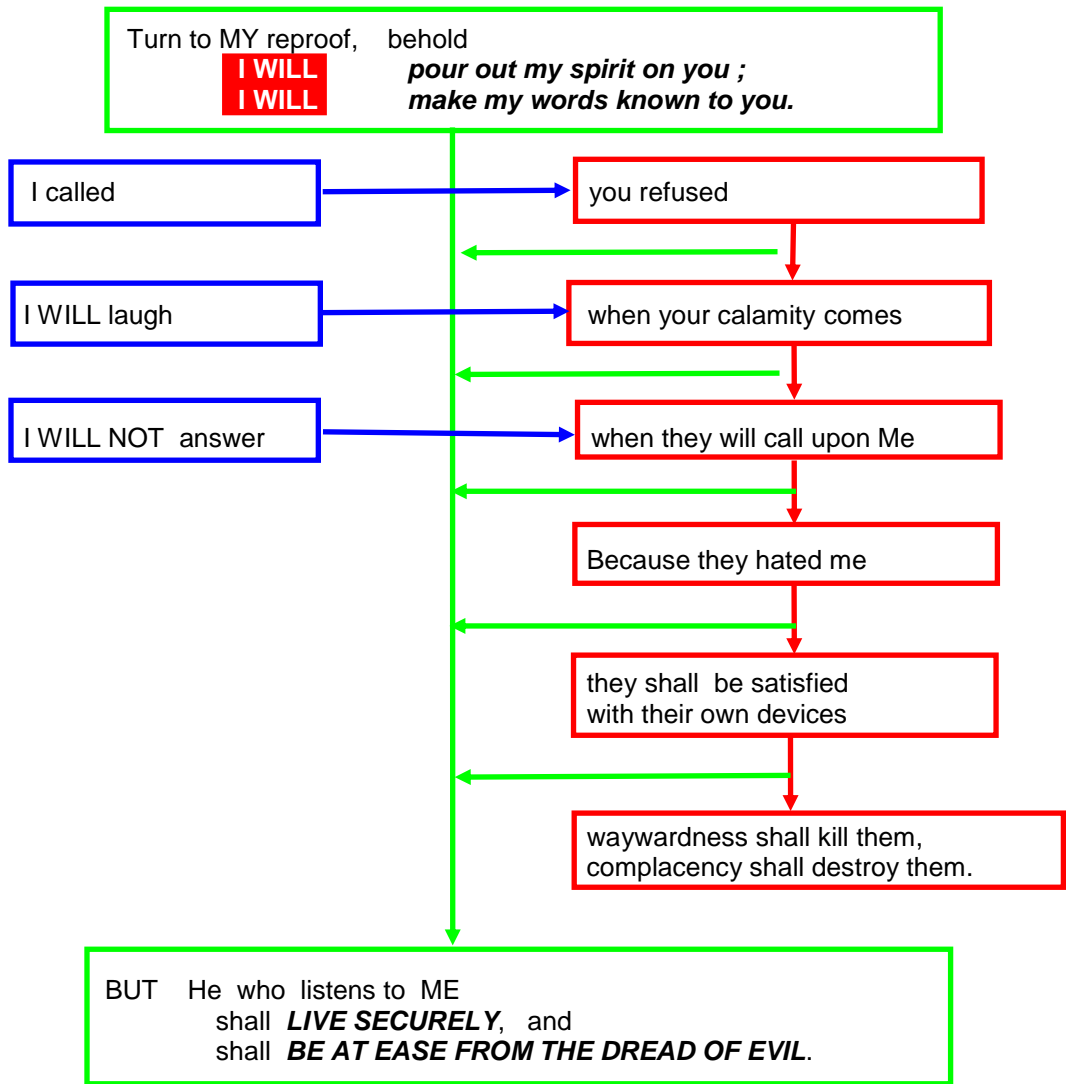
²³ Turn to **MY** reproof, behold
 I WILL ***pour out my spirit on you;***
 I WILL ***make my words known to you.***



³² For the **WAYWARDNESS** of the **NAIVE** shall **KILL THEM,**
 and the **COMPLACENCY** of **FOOLS** shall **DESTROY THEM.**

³³ **BUT** He who listens to **ME**
 shall **LIVE SECURELY,** and
 shall **BE AT EASE FROM THE DREAD OF EVIL.**

In order to make the sequence of this paragraph more easily understandable, I have developed a flow chart. It looks something like this.



The green boxes are the blessings that come to those who choose wisdom. The vertical green line shows that whoever chooses wisdom gets the first two blessings at the top of the flow chart, and they also get the last two blessings at the bottom of the chart. The blue boxes and arrows are wisdom's call and her responses. The red boxes and arrows are the sequence of events experienced by the man who rejects wisdom.

Notice how the one who chooses wisdom gets the blessings. Notice also that wisdom is the one who initiates the call. Unfortunately, her call is rejected by some. Once her call is rejected, calamity soon follows. When it does, wisdom will simply laugh in their faces. Now that they are in trouble, these people will ask wisdom for advice, but she won't answer them because they hated her and all she stands for. Since they generated their own troubles, the only recourse they will have is to grit their teeth and endure their punishment. In the end, either their waywardness or their complacency will have caused their demise. This is certainly a tragic end, but it can be avoided if people would only heed wisdom's call. Notice the green arrows. At any point in this sequence, a man may genuinely repent of his sin and choose Christ and wisdom. It is unlikely that many will, but the LORD would receive them if they would repent.

Let me give you a few examples of how someone could reject wisdom.

A child is taught that drugs are bad and that they can ruin his life. The child gets in with the wrong kind of friends, and they invite him to try drugs with them. Against what he has been taught, he tries the drugs. Before he knows it, he is hooked on the stuff, and his life starts taking a downward spiral. He prays for the wisdom to get off drugs, but the habit is so strong he is not able, in and of himself, to kick the habit. As a result, he must merely endure the adverse consequences of his poor decision.

Another example is the young man who is taught from childhood to save himself for his wife and not engage in illicit sexual relations. He sees other young men enjoy a night or two with a prostitute, and they encourage him to join in the fun. So he pays a hooker to sleep with him. Initially he is thrilled with the experience, but then he learns that he has contracted AIDS. He prays for the wisdom to beat the AIDS, but he soon learns that there is no cure. He must simply endure the adverse consequences of his poor decision and know that certain death will follow in time.

One more example is the young man who is taught to work hard, save his money, and invest for the future. Somewhere along the line, he learns that he can get one or more credit cards. He acquires the cards and starts buying stuff he cannot afford thinking he can pay for all of it later. Before long he is so heavily in debt that he cannot see his way out of the bind he has gotten himself into. He will pray for the wisdom to correct the problem, but his prayer is too late.

These are but a few examples. But in each case, choosing to do something that is contrary to sound wisdom will generate detrimental consequences. These three people in the examples could have avoided these problems if they had sought godly counsel and been willing to follow that advice. This is what accepting wisdom's call is all about.

Gregory, wisdom is calling you. Do you hear her call? Have you answered her call in the affirmative? I have. I hope you will answer in kind. The blessings are out of this world if you choose her, but disaster awaits those who neglect or reject her. The decision is yours. Now that you have been warned, I hope you will choose wisely and pursue wisdom.

Proverbs 2:1-22

How to acquire wisdom

Gregory,

As you will remember, Prov. 1:1-6 taught you the four steps to learning and living the book of Proverbs; Prov. 1:7 taught you the attitude you must acquire and maintain if you are to be successful at using the four steps; Prov. 1:8-19 taught you the kind of friends you must reject if you are to be successful at maintaining a genuine fear of the LORD; and Prov. 1:20-33 taught you what would result if you reject wisdom. Below is a visual representation of these truths.

Prov. 1:1-6	The four steps to learning and living Proverbs
Prov. 1:7	The fear of the LORD
Prov. 1:8-19	The kind of friends to reject
Prov. 1:20-33	What happens if you reject wisdom

Prov. 1:7 told us that we need a genuine fear of the LORD so that we can rightfully judge knowledge to be true and trustworthy. Proverbs chapter two goes on to tell us how to figure out what the fear of the LORD is and how it is acquired. Proverbs is full of parallel comparisons, and many times those parallels help us see more clearly what Solomon was attempting to teach. For example, Prov. 1:20-33, and Prov. 2:1-21 are inverse parallels. What do I mean by that? It is simply that the last paragraph in chapter one shows the negative aspect of a subject, and chapter two shows the positive aspect of the same subject. In this case Prov. 1:20-33 teaches what happens when a man rejects wisdom, and all of chapter two teaches what happens when a man chooses to pursue wisdom.

What you are about to read will most likely be different than anything you have read on Proverbs so far. We are going to look at three paragraphs and compare them from a positive—negative parallel standpoint. To make the parallel comparisons more clear, we will look first at the blessings that come to the man who desires to make wisdom his own (chapter 2). Afterward, we will compare this with both the need to reject wicked men as close friends (1:8-19) and the detriment that comes to the one who rejects the call of wisdom (1:20-33). It is my goal to teach you from these three passages what you should and should not do. What you are about to see will be very straightforward and easy to understand, but it will be fairly lengthy. Take the time to read all of it carefully, and try your best to absorb what is being taught. You must understand this material if you want to be successful at learning and living the book of Proverbs. You will understand more as we progress. The following chart gives a brief comparison of the three paragraphs and will set the stage for this discussion.

<i>Negative Parallel</i>		<i>Positive Parallel</i>
Prov. 1:20-33 The Result of Rejecting Wisdom	←→	Prov. 2:1-19 The Result of Pursuing Wisdom.
Prov. 1:8-19 Avoid Destructive Friends	←→	Prov. 2:20-22 Choose wise, godly Friends

Proverbs chapter two is Solomon’s recipe for figuring out the fear of the LORD that leads to wisdom. It also shows the blessings and security enjoyed by those who choose wisdom and pursue it with all of their being. All of

chapter two is one paragraph, so all of the teachings go together as a unit. To take one verse out of the chapter or divide the chapter into compartments that have nothing to do with each other would be to miss some of the context and application.

The chapter can be outlined with three simple points. These titles in themselves don't mean much, I know, but as we proceed through the chapter, they will form a neat outline that makes understanding the chapter very easy. As you read, try to see the big picture of the chapter. The outline is as follows:

- If you will... (verses 1-4)
- Then you will... (verses 5-19)
- So you will..... (verses 20-22)

As we proceed, I will show you part of a text layout of the chapter and then explain it. We will add one piece of the layout at a time until the completed layout of the chapter has been discussed. Once you have read through the whole discussion, you should have a good understanding of the text layout and what the chapter as a whole is teaching. If you don't, I have not done my job very well. You may need to read this chapter of the commentary several times in order to get the full import of what is being taught, but if you want it badly enough, you will go over it again and again until it makes good sense to you.

As you study Proverbs you must keep in mind that wisdom is the principal thing Solomon wanted his son to find, and it is the principal thing I want to help you find as well. It is not found easily nor is it found quickly, but if you will follow the steps Solomon laid out in chapter two, you can and will find real wisdom. Son, my heart and mind are filled to overflowing with the beauty of the logic of Proverbs chapter two. As we discussed before, Proverbs chapter one has four paragraphs. Chapter two is one paragraph and will teach us how to accomplish the things we learned in the first three paragraphs of chapter one.

Section 1 – If you will (verses 1-4)

Three times in verses 1-4 Solomon made the statement, “*if you will.*” He wrote this to his own son, and I am sure he was hoping his son would answer “Yes, I will.” We will look at each statement and explain the importance of what is being taught. I hope by the time we finish the discussion of this chapter that you too will answer “Yes, I will.”

Proverbs 2:1-4 ¹ My son, *if you will receive my words and treasure my commandments within you,* ² *make your ear attentive to wisdom, incline your heart to understanding;* ³ *for if you (will) cry for discernment, lift your voice for understanding;* ⁴ *if you (will) seek her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures;* (Gray text added for clarity).

A) A **Passive** search for wisdom (verses 1-2).

¹ My son, IF you will receive my words, and treasure my commandments within you, make your ear attentive to my wisdom, incline your heart to understanding;

Read verses 1 and 2 in the box above and try to figure out what the bolded words are teaching. Notice the words **receive**, **treasure**, **attentive**, and **incline**. These are all action words. Let's look at each of them in turn. In verse one the word **receive** implies that the one searching for wisdom has a teachable spirit. A fool thinks he already knows all that he will need in life, but a man seeking wisdom must be willing to accept discipline and rebuke knowing that the end result will be for his own good. The word **receive** conveys the idea of **listening with interest** when someone speaks wisdom and then **understanding the value** of what you hear. Therefore, the learning process does not begin when you merely detect wisdom being shared with you by spoken word. Even a fool can listen to wisdom, but he will reject it. No, the learning process begins when you listen with interest, recognize wisdom to be wisdom, and appreciate the truths it is teaching. Solomon wrote Proverbs to his son, but we would do well to learn what his son should have learned. Wisdom can present itself in many ways. It may come from a wise

person, friend, an acquaintance, a complete stranger, a teacher, a preacher, or a counselor. We need to be ready to receive wisdom whenever and wherever it presents itself.

As you saw in verse one, the word *treasure* conveys the idea of valuing wisdom enough to **store it in your heart and mind for future use**. By *receiving* and *treasuring* wisdom, you are making it your own. It becomes something you can live by, and this makes it extremely valuable. Basically, verse one is saying that you need to recognize the value of wisdom and make it your own whenever and wherever you hear or see it.

In verse two, the word *attentive* conveys the idea of being ready and willing to listen to wisdom when it presents itself to you. Notice that you are to make your *“ear”* attentive. In other words, you are to always be ready to hear the words of wisdom whenever they are spoken or however it may present itself. The *ear* is mentioned in these four verses, but keep in mind that we are studying the book of Proverbs. Therefore, we also need to be ready and eager to receive wisdom when we read it in print. The last action word is *incline*. It means that you are to do whatever it takes to get yourself ready and willing to recognize wisdom. Make it something you want to do. Make it so important to you that it becomes a matter of the heart and not merely of the mind. When your desire actually moves from the head to the heart, it becomes much more effective and useful.

I call verses one and two a **“passive search”** for wisdom because this kind of learning only takes place when someone else shares it. This kind of person will listen when someone presents wisdom to him, but that is the extent of his search. When the source of wisdom is gone, the learning process stops. I am certain that a lot of people in our churches these days are **“passive”** learners. They go to church expecting to be spoon-fed by a preacher or teacher, but they will not read or study the Bible on their own. They think it is enough to listen to the preacher or teacher for an hour a week. It is unfortunate that these people are so sadly mistaken. They are what I call **“academic believers.”** You see, they believe that God exists and that the Bible is true, but they do not have a close, personal relationship with the LORD. To them, He is out there somewhere, but that is about as far as it goes. They simply don't see the importance of perusing and attaining a Bible knowledge for and by themselves.

I don't like to think about how I wasted so many years of my life, but I must admit that for a long time I was one of those **“academic”** believers. I went to church, and I enjoyed it. I knew without a doubt that I was saved and on my way to heaven. I read my Bible some and learned a lot, but I wasn't doing it for the purpose of knowing the LORD or obeying what I read. I thought I was okay, but I discovered many years later that there is much more to walking with the LORD than going to church and listening to the teaching and preaching. After almost 2,500 hours of study and meditation on Proverbs, the LORD finally became real to me on a personal level. At last, I understood what Romans 8:28 meant when it said, *“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”* I discovered that the LORD doesn't do anything to us, for us, or with us that is primarily intended for our hurt. No! Everything that happens to us has been designed by the Father to bring glory to Christ and ultimately to the Father Himself. Since that is the case, nothing that happens to us is bad. We may not be privileged to understand at the time why a trial, sickness, injury, or financial loss has overtaken us, but we do have an opportunity to be a shining testimony to the grace of Christ in each of the circumstances the Father sends our way. Since this is true, it doesn't matter whether the circumstances we endure are hardships, difficulties, and losses, or whether they are good things in the form of blessings or gain. We can and should trust Him in each of the circumstances He brings our way, and in doing so, we can bring glory to the name of Christ. I have asked numbers of people this question, *“Would it be bad if I were to get into a car accident on the way home and lose a leg?”* The answer to that question depends upon my perspective. If I understand that the LORD is working out something for His glory through my trial, then I can have a sweet spirit about the whole thing and help God bring glory to Himself. But, if I become bitter or resentful, I will nullify all that the LORD wanted to accomplish through my godly testimony during the trial. Once I comprehended this truth, my relationship with the LORD came alive. Before this point in my life, I understood that I was saved, but there was no intimacy or vibrancy in my walk with the LORD. All of that has changed now. After immersing myself in the Bible, my walk with the LORD has become a sweet, personal, and blessed experience. It never would have happened, though, if I had remained an **“academic believer”** who only practiced a **“passive search.”**

When we discussed Proverbs 1:5a, *“A wise man will hear and increase in learning”* was a **passive search**. Here we start to see the parallel between Proverbs chapter one and chapter two. We will discuss the next two verses in chapter two, and then I will show you the parallel in chart form.

B) An **Active** search for wisdom (verse 3).

³ for IF you cry for discernment, lift up your voice for understanding;
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As verse three indicates, there is more to the learning process than a mere passive approach. We must adopt an **“active search”** for wisdom as well. The word *cry* in verse three does not refer to bawling your eyes out. On the contrary, it is talking about yelling out for someone to teach you how to obtain discernment. The word *discernment* carries with it the idea of **having the ability to figure out all of the possible solutions to a problem or opportunity**. It is the deduction aspect of the learning process. There are some things an unknowing person may consider wisdom that are in fact not wisdom at all. We want to learn wisdom, but we want to learn real wisdom, not mere useless or unproductive information. The key here, though, is asking for help and doing your own search in order to find the kind of information that leads to discernment. Don't merely wait for someone to share wisdom with you when you happen upon it. No, no! Get involved in an **active search** by reading and studying your Bible or reading good books about the LORD and how to live a good and godly life. It also includes asking for help from people who are wise and godly. This is an **“active search”** for wisdom. Son, you can have the same intimate walk with the LORD that I mentioned above if you will immerse yourself in the Scriptures and learn to meditate upon them throughout the day and night. Start spending time in the Word, and mull it over again and again like a cow chews its cud. Ask yourself questions about it in order to further understand what it is saying or what it means. Then, make application to your own life and live it. If you will do this, the teachings of the Scriptures will change your life, but it doesn't come easily. It is a lot of hard work. I'll guarantee one thing though. If you do as I have said, in time, your life will change, and you will find joy in walking with the LORD. Gregory, I really hope you will choose to do this.

Once you gain accurate knowledge and sound understanding, you will gain insight. This will give you the ability to see a problem or opportunity for what it really is and not what it appears to be on the surface. Insight, then, is the basis for discernment. This is exactly why you need to *lift up your voice for understanding*. Without *understanding* you can never gain good *discernment*. As you will remember from our discussion of wisdom in chapter four of this commentary, after you gain insight and discernment, the LORD will give you the gift of wisdom that will enable you to make the best choice that will produce the best results in every area of life and practice.

In the commentary on Prov. 1:1-6, we saw in verse 5b, *“A man of understanding will acquire wise counsel”*. This constituted **active learning**. Here we see a little more of the parallel between Proverbs chapter one and two. After we look at verse 4, we will build a comparison chart between chapter one and chapter two covering what we have learned so far.

C) A **Continual** search for wisdom (verse 4).

⁴ for IF you seek her as silver, and search for her as hidden treasures;
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In verses 1-2 we learned about a **passive search** for wisdom. In verse 3 we learned about an **active search** for wisdom. Now in verse 4 we will learn about a **continual search** for wisdom. By now you should understand both the passive and active search. Let me ask you, “Will you do what you have learned? How long will you continue doing so? Will you do these for life?” These are questions you must ask yourself and resolve to do them from now on. Follow with me as we look at verse four of our text.

As you have seen, a passive search coupled with an active search is much better than a passive search by itself. Oh, but there is more. Both of these searches must be ongoing. I have learned from experience that disciplining myself to keep searching the Scriptures is absolutely essential if I want to learn the deep things of Scripture. In poetic form, Solomon equated a search for gold and silver with a search for the precious treasures contained in the Scriptures. This is like the pirate who finds a treasure map and spends years searching for that treasure. He considers the treasure valuable enough to spend all of his energies trying to find it. This is how we should search the Bible for wisdom. After a while, it will become a lifestyle, and you will want to do it as long as you live. The more you learn, the more you will want to learn. Try it, and you will see for yourself.

A lot of people feel that the most important thing in life is to become rich. All of their energies are geared toward getting the best paying job, being in the right place at the right time, and sacrificing whatever it takes to become rich. These people are involved in a continual search for wealth. They will hang in there as long as it takes to achieve their goal. We who know Christ in salvation should be different. We should be involved in a continual search, but not for wealth. Our search should be for wisdom. Verse four reminds me of the old prospector who got his grub stake and told folks something like this: “I'm heading into them there hills to find the mother lode, and I ain't a-comin' back till I find it.” Now that is commitment. That old prospector was in it for the long haul. In a similar manner, we need to recognize that there is gold in the pages of Scripture, and we must search for it until we find it,

even if it means searching for a lifetime. There really is gold in the Bible, and it is in the form of truth and wisdom. We just need to find it. Gregory, are you determined enough to search for wisdom until you find it, or are you content to be a passive learner? I sincerely hope that you will immerse yourself in the Scriptures and keep it up for the rest of your life. I know that immersing myself in Scripture is what changed my life and gave me a personal, intimate relationship with the Father. I have been at it for a little more than 27 years and almost 15,000 hours now, and the deepest things I have learned from Proverbs have come to my attention in just the past few years. All of the study and meditation has certainly been worth the work and effort.

Will you actually engage in these searches?

Solomon knew that most people are not willing to invest the time or energy to engage in the searches he described. He probably knew that his own son was no exception. As you read the Scriptures, it is apparent that his son didn't follow his dad's advice. This is obvious by the way Rheoboam ripped the kingdom apart after Solomon's death. I'm sure that as his son grew older, Solomon saw that he had not become a wise man, but he could not make Rheoboam become a wise man.

Gregory, what about you? These four verses say three times, "If you will." The only way Solomon's teachings will work effectively for you is if you will actually do what he advised. The question becomes, "Will you do it? Will you make up your mind to dive into the Scriptures and do it for life?" The choice is yours, and no one can make it for you. Here is a perfect opportunity for you to start your search for wisdom and know that, in time, you will find it. I hope you will consider all of this as being important enough for you to invest your time and energies in a dedicated search for wisdom. If you do, you will make me the happiest man on earth. Gregory, go ahead and make me happy.

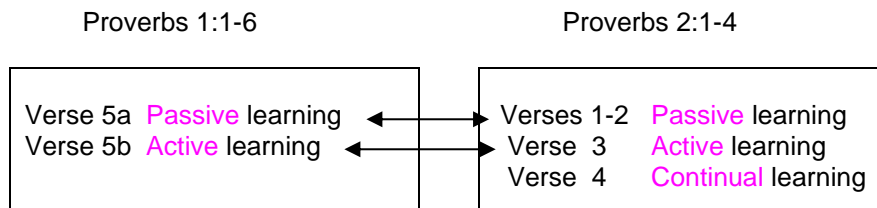
Before we move on, I feel I must tell you that during the first six months to a year of this study, I didn't really learn much of value. Normally I would have given up on a study of this magnitude, but I was determined to hang in there as long as it took to learn the book well. After a couple more years, the teachings of Proverbs started to come to light. After a few more years, much more of the deep truths of Proverbs were coming to light. Amazingly, I have learned the deepest things about Proverbs in years 20-27 of this study. I am testimony to the fact that what I am trying to teach you works, and it works well.

Below you will find a text layout of this portion of Proverbs chapter 2.

Proverbs 2:1-4

¹ My son, IF you will	receive my sayings, and treasure my commandments within you,
³ for IF you	² make your ear attentive to my wisdom, incline your heart to understanding;
⁴ for IF you	cry for discernment, lift up your voice for understanding; seek her as silver, and search for her as hidden treasures;

Having discussed these four verses, let's now see how they relate to Proverbs 1:1-6.



In Proverbs 1, we learned how a wise man and a man of understanding approach the learning process. They will engage in a passive and an active search for wisdom. It doesn't tell you how they do it. The text simply states that they do. In essence, chapter one tells us that we need to search for wisdom, and chapter two tells us how to do it. You will understand a lot more of this idea as we progress through chapter two.

Section 2 – Then you will (verses 5-19)

If you will engage in a **passive search**, an **active search**, and a **continual search** for wisdom, you will *discern* (figure out) two things.

1) You will learn about the LORD (verses 5-8)

A) You will figure out what it means to have a genuine, biblical fear of the LORD (verse 5a).

Proverbs 2:5-8

⁵THEN you will	DISCERN DISCOVER	the fear of the LORD, and the knowledge of God.
⁶ for the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth comes knowledge for the upright; ⁷ He stores up sound wisdom for the upright;		
⁸ He is a shield to those who walk in integrity, guarding the paths of justice, and He preserves the way of his godly ones.		

Gregory,

If you will engage in the three types of searches then, in time, you will figure out what it means to fear the LORD. Verse five has fascinated me for years because it teaches that you will discern the fear of the LORD first, and then you will learn who God is, what He is, and How He works in the affairs of men. Wait a minute! Don't you have to know something about God in order to come to salvation? Yes, but you only need to believe that Jesus Christ is God and accept the free gift of salvation through faith in Him alone apart from works. Let's examine this verse and try to understand what Solomon was really trying to say.

Solomon said that the first thing we will *discern* (figure out) is a genuine fear of the LORD. Since Proverbs 1:7a states that *the fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge*, then the fear of the LORD is the perspective from which we judge knowledge to be trustworthy—the kind that will result in godly wisdom. If knowledge is not trustworthy, then it is to be rejected. We have already discussed the fear of the LORD in the commentary on Proverbs 1:7, so let's do a very brief review here. In its essence, the fear of the LORD is a strong conviction that causes us to reverence the LORD, and this will drive us to do good so that we will please our heavenly Father. This conviction will also drive us to avoid or abandon every sinful practice so that our fellowship with the LORD is not broken, and we won't have to pay the penalty sin requires. As we said previously, the fear of the LORD is a dynamic belief. It is something that will change our life and drive us to live in a good and godly manner out of respect for the greatness of our God.

B) You will discover a true knowledge of God (verse 5b)

Do you remember the wisdom pyramid we discussed in chapter one? It showed the fear of the LORD as the foundation upon which wisdom is built. This is an important concept to remember because once we gain a genuine fear of the LORD, we will start to *discover* things from God's perspective. The more we search the Scriptures, the

more we will *discover* about our wonderful LORD. In one of his preaching messages, Pastor Tony Miller said this: "The study of natural science is sacred." When I first heard it, I thought he was sadly mistaken, but after thinking about it for a while, I understood what he meant. It is simply that if someone will approach the study of natural science unbiased, he will come to the conclusion that there must be a Creator God and that this Creator must be an extremely knowledgeable and powerful being. Of course, we know from John 1:3 that Jesus Christ is that Creator. Armed with this knowledge, a believer who fears the LORD will start looking at the world and life in general from God's perspective. This is when real knowledge about God comes to light.

An example of *discovering* this kind of knowledge happened to me a few years ago. I was trying to understand Ephesians chapters 1 and 2, but they were confusing. Many times the words him, his, himself, etc. were interspersed throughout the text, and figuring out who the text was referring to was somewhat confusing. In order to understand who these words referred to, I carefully went through the text coloring all references to the Father in blue and all references to Christ in magenta. There were a few words where two or three of us had to carefully decide who was being referenced, but seeing the text in color gave me a brand-new appreciation for all that the Father is doing in the background. Most of the preaching and teaching I have heard over the years dealt with Christ or the Holy Spirit, but precious little was preached or taught about God the Father. Once I saw all that the Father is doing for us and in the world, it gave me more reason to fear Him in a biblical sense. So, verse 5b is accurate when it says that after we gained a fear of the LORD, we will start *discovering* who God is, what He is, and how he works in the affairs of men. The more I learn about Him, the more I stand amazed at the wonderful, loving, merciful, and caring God we serve.

So, what will we learn about God? We will learn two things. First, we will learn that God is the source of all knowledge and wisdom, and then we will learn that God is the security guard and protector of those who acquire His knowledge and wisdom.

1) He is the source of all knowledge and wisdom. (verses 6-7a)

^{6f}for the LORD **gives** wisdom;
from His mouth come knowledge and understanding;
^{7a}He stores up sound wisdom **for the upright**;

a) Wisdom comes from God. (verse 6a)

Verse 6a states, "*the LORD gives wisdom.*" I submit to you that wisdom is a gift from God, and we can't get it by working for it. We can study to gain trustworthy knowledge that produces sound understanding that together produce discernment, but we cannot get wisdom that way. Prov. 3:13 tells us, "*How blessed is the man who finds wisdom and the man who gains understanding.*" (Underline added for clarity). I wondered for years why Solomon wrote this verse in that order. I would have written it "Blessed is the man who gains understanding and then gains wisdom." I now see that the LORD had Solomon write this verse as he did in order to convey a truth. When you work for a living, you expect to get a paycheck at the end of the week. You worked for it, so in truth you gain it. But when you happen upon something that you didn't previously know was there, you can rightfully say that you found it. As an example, I lost my wedding ring a few years ago, so mom and I went to a pawn shop and bought a replacement. I wore it for a couple of years, and one day seemingly out of nowhere, I found my old ring. I didn't work for it. It just appeared. So then, wisdom is indeed a gift that God gives. There is no getting around it. The LORD does give wisdom, and it doesn't come any other way.

b) Knowledge comes from God. (verse 6b)

Verse 6b states, "*from His mouth comes knowledge and understanding.*" It is clear from this verse that the kind of knowledge and understanding that results in wisdom comes directly from the mouth of the LORD. The Bible is our source of God's Word today, and it is the place where we get trustworthy knowledge and sound understanding. We need to read, study, and meditate upon the Scriptures as much as we can so that we can learn trustworthy knowledge that leads to sound understanding.

c) Wisdom is only for those who live godly. (verse 7a)

Verse 7a states, “*He stores up sound wisdom for the upright.*” Be sure to notice that the *sound wisdom* God shares is not for everyone. No! It is reserved *for the upright*. What does it mean to be upright? I believe that in its simplest form it is *doing what is right in the sight of the LORD*. We discussed this earlier in this commentary, and there I said that *upright* is how the LORD sees us, and *blameless* is how men see us. It is important to note that you cannot live *upright* if you don’t have a genuine fear of the LORD, and you don’t have a genuine fear of the LORD if you won’t avoid or abandon every sinful practice. This is the reason I chose to define *upright* as *doing what is right in the sight of the LORD*.

You must understand that God withholds *sound wisdom* from those who are not upright, but He freely gives it to *those who do what is right in His sight*. It is as simple as that. Good and godly living is a prerequisite for *sound wisdom*. As I said in chapter four of this commentary, *sound wisdom* is the kind of wisdom grandma used to teach us. It is practical, efficient, and produces good success. It is a gift from God bestowed upon those who are *upright*.

2) He is the protector of those who live godly. (verses 7b-8)

<p>^{7b}He is a shield to those who walk in integrity, ⁸guarding the paths of justice, and He preserves the way of his godly ones.</p>
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Most people realize that they need some kind of security in and around their home. Unfortunately, home security is not completely dependable? There always seems to be someone slick enough to breach our defenses. Oh, but that is not the case when the LORD is the One doing the protecting. Verse 7a states that the LORD is *a shield*. Okay, what does a shield do? It protects the holder by stopping or deflecting unwanted or dangerous things that could do damage to the holder. In an x-ray room a lead shield is used to keep unwanted x-rays from impacting the person operating the machine. It is not a perfect shield, but it does what is needed. The LORD, on the other hand, is a totally effective shield. Nothing gets through His shield without His permission. He may choose to allow something to adversely affect what He is protecting, but it only happens when He chooses. Even then it only occurs for His glory.

Notice that the verse does not say that He is a shield (protector) of everyone. He only protects those of His children *who walk in integrity*. To be sure that we understand the meaning of the word, let’s define *integrity*. If we were using the word *integrity* with reference to a building, we would have to say that it is the structural soundness of the physical building. For a structure to have *integrity*, it means that there are no weaknesses that would cause the structure to fail under load. For a man to have *integrity* means that *his moral fabric is so sound that there are no weaknesses that would cause him to fail by choosing to get involved in some sinful practice*. He can always be depended upon to do what is right instead of merely doing what is convenient or pleasurable at the moment. I like to explain God’s protection with a simple illustration. When we do good, God puts his protecting hand over us so that no evil or harm can get to us. Job, of old, was an example of this kind of protection. Satan confessed to God that he had tried to ruin Job, but God had put a hedge of protection around him so that Satan couldn’t get to him. If we choose to get involved in some sinful practice, God merely removes his hand of protection from over us and allows the normal and natural consequences of our sin take their toll. He isn’t necessarily the one doing the punishing, but we get punished just the same. So, as long as we have and maintain integrity, God will protect us just like He promised.

Verse 8a states that the LORD is *guarding the paths of justice...of His godly ones*. Prov. 29:26 tells us that, “*Many seek the ruler’s favor, but justice for man comes from the LORD.*” Strong’s says that the Hebrew word for *justice* includes all of the judicial processes from the decision to try a case all the way through the trial and including the execution of the sentence handed down. With reference to His godly children, the LORD sits as judge, jury, and executioner to see that men get what they rightfully deserve. It may not always appear to us that justice has been served, but I’m sure that when we get to heaven and look back, all of the pieces of the puzzle will fit together very nicely according to His master plan. God, the Judge, is constantly guarding his children to see that bad things are not allowed to come into their lives. He may at times allow special circumstances of His choosing to come into our lives, but these will be the exceptions for the purpose of either building our faith or bringing glory to His name.

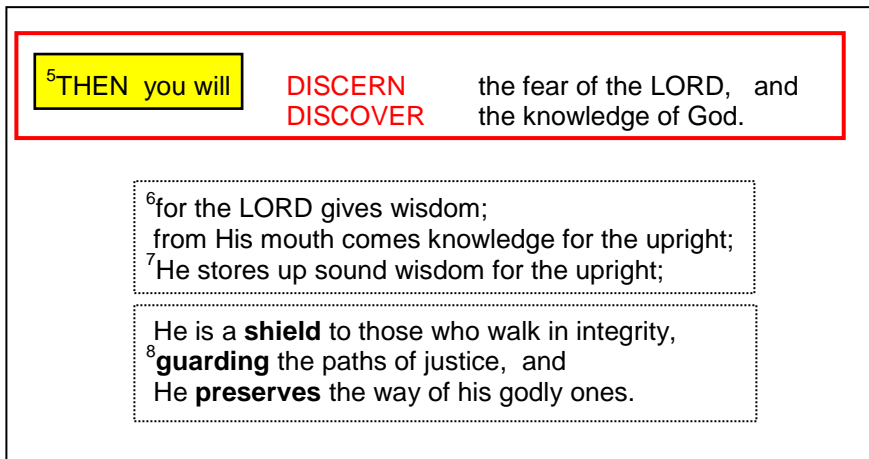
Verse 8b tells us that *He preserves the way of his godly ones*. In the previous phrase of our text, we saw that the LORD *guards* our way, now we see that He *preserves* our way. What is *the way* in verse 8a? It is the same

Hebrew word we find in Psalm 1 where David wrote, *“¹ How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path (the way) of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! ² But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. ³ He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers.”* Verse one of this Psalm says that a blessed man will not stand in the path (the way) of sinners. The word *stand* in verse one actually means *“to take his stand.”* Therefore, the verse should read, *“Blessed is the man who does not take his stand with sinners and follow the path they take.”* So, in verse 8b above, God is always there as a sentry to see that His godly children are allowed to continue walking that good path until He decides to take them home to heaven.

Summary of Proverbs 2:5-8

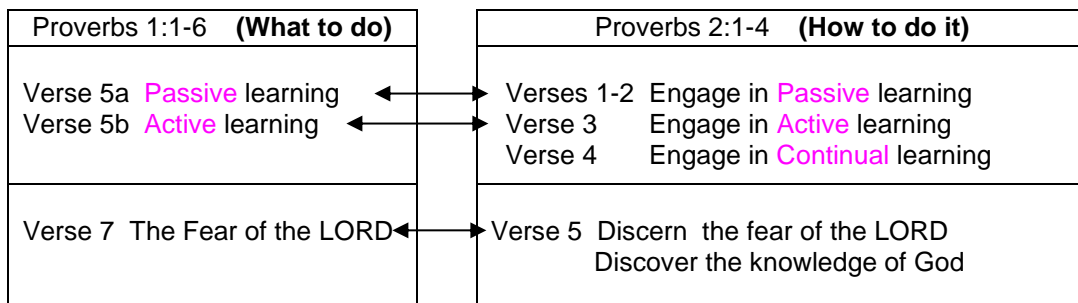
As we saw above, the first thing that will happen as a result of our continued search for wisdom is that we will figure out what it means to have a genuine fear of the LORD (verse 5a). Once we grasp a genuine fear of the LORD, we will start discovering who God is, what He is, and how He works in the affairs of men. Verses 6-7a tell us where that knowledge will come from, and verses 7b-8 tell us how our God will protect us. This, in a nutshell, explains the layout of these verses.

Proverbs 2:5-8



As a brief review, you can see that **IF** you search for wisdom, **THEN** you will figure out the fear of the LORD and discover wonderful things about who the LORD is, what He is, and how He works in the affairs of men. You will also learn that all trustworthy knowledge and wisdom come from the LORD. Once you gain these things, the LORD will be your security and preserve your life. Aren't these things wonderful? Ah, but there is more.

Now let's compare this passage with what chapter one teaches. We already saw the relationship between Prov. 1:5 and Prov 2:1-4. Now let's add Prov. 1:7 and Prov. 2:5 to the chart.



In chapter one, we learned that a wise man will use a passive search and a man of understanding will use an active search. In chapter two, we are told how to engage in both of these searches, and we are admonished to

keep searching as long as we live. In chapter one, we were told that the fear of the LORD is the foundation for acquiring knowledge that leads to wisdom, and in chapter two, we are shown that if we continually practice a passive and an active search for wisdom, we will indeed discern the fear of the LORD. This fear of the LORD will be the catalyst the LORD will use to teach us what we need to know about Him and His deeds. I don't know about you, but I am amazed at the beauty of the logic contained even in these two chapters. Solomon was indeed wise to write the book of Proverbs in this fashion.

2) You will figure out how to live a good and godly life (verses 9-11)

Proverbs 2:9-11

⁹ THEN you will	DISCERN	righteousness and justice, equity, and every good course.
¹⁰ For	WISDOM KNOWLEDGE	will enter your heart, and will be pleasant to your soul;
	¹¹ DISCRETION UNDERSTANDING	will guard you, will watch over you.

After you gain a fear of the LORD and learn who the LORD is, what He is, and how He works in the affairs of men, then you will *discern* (figure out) the right way to live. Notice in verse 9 that there are four areas of conduct that are important. We will look at each of them briefly.

A) Righteousness

As best I have been able to determine, being *righteousness* is *living in a good, right, and lawful manner*. So, in essence, you will discern (figure out) the right way to live and move in this old world. Obeying the laws of the land and the dictates of God will produce a life that is smooth and satisfying. It isn't always easy, but it is always the right thing to do. Doing good to and for others is another aspect of being righteous. Everyone appreciates someone who is compassionate and generous. How could anyone not appreciate a man like that?

B) Justice (KJV is Judgment)

Earlier we discussed how God is a just judge and how He loves justice. Now it is our turn to execute justice and give everyone what they rightfully deserve. If everyone had this kind of attitude, we would not have people trying to take unfair advantage of others.

C) Equity

Are you biased? I am! I am biased toward creation while others are biased toward evolution. All of us are biased in some way or another, but that doesn't mean we have license to show partiality to one person or group to the exclusion of others. God wants us to treat everyone the same instead of, for example, treating the rich man better than the poor man, etc. If a man comes into church poorly dressed, we should treat him the same as if he were nicely dressed. Their social or financial status should not dictate how we interact with others. It isn't easy, but it is the right thing to do. Everyone is of equal value in God's eyes, and he wants us to have the same attitude toward others.

D) Every good course

This phrase covers everything else we do. Strong's says that the Hebrew word for "*course*" means *entrenchment or track*. Once we learn about God, we will learn the right path to follow through life. Because of our genuine fear of the LORD, we will become entrenched in following the right path through life. It will become a new

lifestyle that will be driven by convictions rather than the emotions of a particular moment. Our integrity will drive us to do right even if everyone else is doing wrong. Proper biblical convictions are absolutely essential if you want to live a good and godly life.

I don't feel we need to spend much more time here, but I do want you to understand that after discerning the fear of the LORD and discovering the knowledge of God, you can anticipate discerning the right way to live. What is the right way to live? In essence, it is being good in every way (*righteousness*), treating others fairly (*justice*), being impartial toward others (*equity*), and being and doing good in every other way (*every good course*). The next question becomes, "How will we be able to live this way? I'm glad you asked. Verse ten explains how we get there, and verse eleven explains how we stay there.

How we get there

Verse 10 states, "*For WISDOM will enter your heart, and KNOWLEDGE will be pleasant to your soul;*"

Wisdom is not merely a great intellect. It is not something that resides in the mind to be drawn out and used at will. No! Wisdom, the kind that God gave Solomon, is something that resides in the heart and permeates every fiber of a man's being. Becoming wise involves a change in thought processes, a change in lifestyle, a change in values, and a change in priorities. Wisdom uses trustworthy knowledge, sound understanding, good insight, and discretion, but these things alone are not wisdom. Wisdom is using these things to make the best decision about what you should do, say, or be and then actually performing those good things. I'm sure you remember the story of how two women came before Solomon and both claimed to be the mother of one child. He had a hard task ahead of him because he had to decide which of the two women was the real mother. He knew that mothers love their children, and he understood that a mother will make great sacrifices for her own. Armed with this knowledge and understanding, he decided to put the women to a test that would reveal what was really in their hearts. He ordered a soldier to bring a sword and cut the baby in half and give half to each mother. Solomon knew that the real mother would rather give up her child than allow the child to die. What I want you to understand here is not simply that Solomon had knowledge of a mother's love or that he understood how she would act under pressure. Knowing how to test these women was not in itself wisdom. Those things are valuable, but wisdom is making a decision based upon knowledge and understanding and then "carrying out" that good decision. Would the people of Solomon's court have viewed his response as wisdom if he had merely known what a mother was like, known how she would respond, and done nothing to cause the real mother to show her true colors? No, certainly not. His knowledge and understanding would have otherwise been a mere mental exercise, and that would have resolved nothing. It was making the best decision and carrying out that decision that showed wisdom. Gregory, once you figure out a genuine fear of the LORD and discover real knowledge about God, this kind of wisdom will start to reside deep within your heart. It will enable you to make good and productive decisions about how you should live and act. This kind of wisdom is what will give you the ability to live right. Once you get to this point in your walk with the LORD, you will be thankful each time you gain new understanding about the right way to live, act, or believe. An unbeliever cannot live the things that Proverbs teaches because wisdom is primarily a spiritual exercise. Unsaved people simply cannot understand spiritual things let alone live them.

When we discussed wisdom in chapter four of this commentary, we said that knowledge is a component of wisdom. Verse 10b says that once you gain wisdom, "*KNOWLEDGE will be pleasant to your soul.*" Yes, you will actually enjoy gaining new knowledge. Prov. 10:23 tells us, "*Doing wickedness is like sport to a fool, and so is wisdom to a man of understanding.*" Since wisdom is this much fun, gaining knowledge that leads to or enhances wisdom is equally as much fun.

How we stay there

Verse 11 states, "*Discretion will guard you, understanding will watch over you,*"

It is interesting to note that the Spanish Translation of the Bible says in verses 10-11 that *wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul; THEN discretion will guard you, understanding will watch over you.* My friend Paul Bixby pointed this out to me some years ago. So then, your discretion and understanding will protect you after you have acquired wisdom and knowledge. This is an interesting thought. Ponder it for a while.

During your search for wisdom, you will mature in your walk with the LORD. This is not a maybe. It is a fact. The longer you engage in this search, the more you will want to live a good and godly life. This is not something you can do for a while and then set it aside. No, you need to spend your whole life searching for wisdom and living what you learn. This is important because there are many things in life that can distract us and destroy all that we have gained in our search. We saw in our discussion of Prov. 1:8-19 that we are to avoid or abandon friends or acquaintances who would try to entice us to join them in their sinful practices. This is a critical aspect of our search for wisdom. The text we are discussing in chapter two tells us how we can accomplish this task.

Look at verse eleven. Notice that it uses the words *guard* and *watch over you*. Imagine for a moment that I have hired a man to guard you. What would you expect him to do? Obviously you would want him to protect you from harm or loss. When bad guys try to sneak in and rob or hurt you, he would be there to intercept them so that they could not hurt you or take what you own. *Discretion* is much like a security guard. In its very essence it is [the ability to accurately decide between good and bad](#). It is not so much knowing what to do with the knowledge as it is recognizing the difference between the two.

Discretion is invaluable, but discretion needs *understanding* to function. You and I need to understand the consequences if we choose to get involved with people who engage in sinful practices. A naïve person doesn't have the sense to ask what will result if he chooses to do something bad. A fool doesn't care what will happen because he always feels his opinion is right. On the other hand, those of us who know both the Word of God and the heart of God realize that sin always has detrimental consequences. Therefore, sound understanding is the thing that will enable discretion to accurately evaluate a situation, and understanding will steer us away from things that will drag us down into sin. The ability to determine good from bad and understand the consequences of both are crucial because verses 12-19 of this chapter depend upon the ability to do this.

Who to avoid in order to stay there (Prov. 2:12-19)

¹⁰ *For wisdom will enter your heart and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul;*
¹¹ *discretion will guard you, understanding will watch over you, ¹² to deliver you from..... ¹⁶ to deliver you from...*

Verses 10-11 above showed us how to live right. Verses 12-19 now show us who to avoid in order to be successful at living a good and godly life unto the LORD. As we proceed, we will see how our discretion and understanding will deliver us from two types of people. By the way, it is important to understand that all of Prov. 2:9-19 comprise one sentence. Therefore, all of the verses go together as a complete thought. Notice that discretion will guard you and understanding will watch over you, why—in order to deliver you from something. Let's see from whom it will deliver you.

To deliver you from evil men. (verses 12-15)

¹² *to deliver you from the way of evil, from the man who speaks perverse things; ¹³ from those who leave the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness; ¹⁴ who delight in doing evil and rejoice in the perversity of evil; ¹⁵ whose paths are crooked, and who are devious in their ways;*

The world is full of wicked men. They are sinful, evil, and perverted. These people need to hear about Jesus Christ so that they can be saved, but they are not the kind of men you or I need as close friends if we want to be successful at being righteous, just, impartial, and good in every other way (Prov. 2:9). Solomon wrote that when we figure out the fear of the LORD and discover who God is, what He is, and how He works in the affairs of men, then we will discern (figure out) how right living will rescue (*deliver*) us from wicked, sinful men. It is not as though we are simply to avoid making friends with this kind of man. Verses 12 specifically states *to deliver you from*. It is obvious that we could easily get involved with this kind of man, but we need to be saved from them. Since we belong to Christ, we need to distance ourselves from them and the adverse effects of their sinful practices.

What kind of men do these verses describe?

- 1) They practice doing evil things. *(the way of evil)*
- 2) Their language is crude, rude, and immoral. *(speaks perverse things)*
- 3) They have abandoned right living in order to engage in sinful practices. *(the way of darkness)*
- 4) They get a thrill out of doing evil or perverse things. *(delight, rejoice)*
- 5) They disregard and violate the law *(paths are crooked)*, and
- 6) They are underhanded in their ways. *(devious)*

In short, these evil men are everything a true follower of Christ should not be. Those who practice these things enjoy doing them but only for a little while. In time, they will suffer untold numbers of hurts, heartaches, and losses as a result of their sinful practices. Son, it is okay to be friendly with them so that you can witness to them, but don't run with them. In fact, avoid them.

To deliver you from immoral women (verses 16-19)

*¹⁶ to deliver you from the strange woman, from the adulteress who flatters with her words;
¹⁷ that leaves the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God; ¹⁸ for her house sinks down to death and her tracks lead to the dead; ¹⁹ none who go to her return again, nor do they reach the paths of life.*

We saw in verses 12-15 how discerning a genuine fear of the LORD and discerning right living will rescue us from evil men. Now in verses 16-19, we will see how this discernment will rescue us from getting involved with a sexually promiscuous woman or an adulteress. What do we need to know about these kinds of women in order to successfully avoid them?

- 1) She flatters men with her words. It is amazing how effective this tool can be for a man who lets his guard down.
- 2) She is unfaithful to her husband and abandons her promise to God to be faithful to Him.
- 3) Crawling into bed with her initiates a downward spiral that ends in death or great loss.
- 4) Once you engage in sexual relations with her, you will never be the same, and any man who makes a practice of this will not go to heaven.

As we proceed through this commentary, you will see three passages that will give you all the information you will need to avoid involvement with an adulterous woman. Chapter 10 of this commentary will discuss sexual issues in Proverbs. There we will see how Proverbs 7 in its entirety describes how an adulterous wife can persuade a man to join her in bed (and the disastrous results if he joins her); the last paragraph of Proverbs 6 will show the hurts that will likely result from a jealous husband; and all of Proverbs 5 will show how a man can adultery-proof his marriage. Once you understand these principles, you will be better able to avoid such women and dedicate yourself to your wife alone.

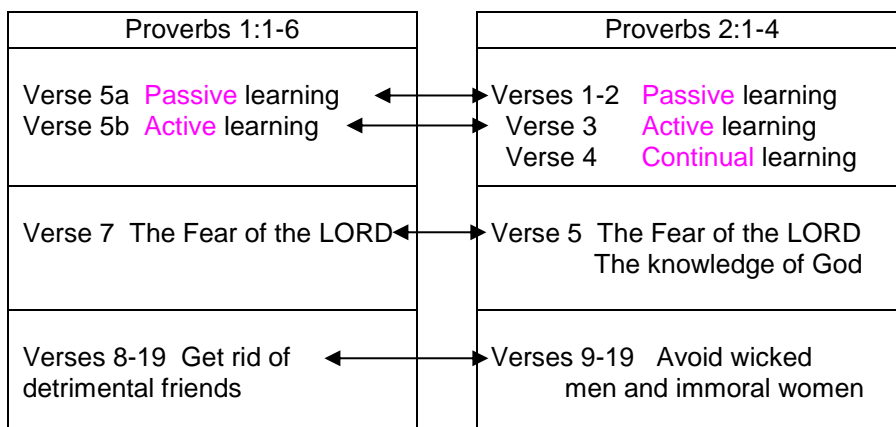
Now we have discussed Proverbs 2:9-19. You will find a text layout of the passage on the following page.

Proverbs 2:9-19

⁹ THEN you will	DISCERN	righteousness and justice, equity, and every good course.
¹⁰ For WISDOM		will enter your heart, and
KNOWLEDGE		will be pleasant to your soul;
¹¹ DISCRETION		will guard you,
UNDERSTANDING		will watch over you.
¹² To deliver you		
from the way of evil , from the man who speaks perverse things; ¹³ from those who leave the path of righteousness, to walk in the way of darkness; ¹⁴ who delight in doing evil, and rejoice in the perversity of evil; ¹⁵ whose paths are crooked, and who are devious in their ways;		
¹⁶ To deliver you		
from the strange woman , from the adulteress who flatters with her words; ¹⁷ that leaves the companion of her youth, and forgets the covenant of her God; ¹⁸ for her house sinks down to death, and her tracks lead to the dead; ¹⁹ none that go to her return again, nor do they reach the paths of life.		

As a quick review, you can see from the text layout that once you gain a fear of the LORD and discover truths about God, you will learn how to live a good and godly life before Him. You will gain wisdom and trustworthy knowledge, and once you have them, your discretion and understanding will deliver you from involvement with sinful men and sexually loose women. If you are delivered from evil men and immoral women, who else is there to avoid? That just about covers all the bases.

Now let's add this part of proverbs 2 to the chart comparing chapter 1 to chapter 2. You will find it on the following page.



OK, what have we learned so far? First we need to practice a passive and an active search for wisdom, and we need to continue doing so for life.

Chapter 1 told us that wise men and men of understanding do these searches.	Chapter 2 told us how to accomplish these searches.
Chapter 1 told us that the fear of the LORD is the foundation upon which knowledge is built.	Chapter 2 told us how to gain a genuine fear of the LORD and gain trustworthy knowledge.
Chapter 1 told us to reject those who would entice us to participate in their sinful practices.	Chapter 2 showed us what gives us the power to accomplish all of this.

We have one more section to discuss, and then we will compare the whole of chapter 1 to the whole of chapter 2.

Section 3 – So you will (verses 20-22)

All of chapter two to this point was designed to get you to verses 20-22. Here Solomon stated his conclusion on the matter. Do you remember the simple outline for the chapter? It is simply → IF you will, THEN you will, and SO you will.

²⁰ So you will walk in the way of good men and keep to the paths of the righteous. ²¹ For the upright will live in the land and the blameless will remain in it; ²² but the wicked will be cut off from the land and the treacherous will be uprooted from it.

We have seen that a continual search for wisdom will result in finding a genuine fear of the LORD. It will also teach us a knowledge of God and how to live a good and godly life. We also saw how knowledge and discretion will protect us from getting involved with evil men and immoral women. Now in verse 20, we will see how our wisdom, knowledge, and discretion will cause us to live in a good and godly manner and choose good and godly men and women as our closest companions. Prov. 13:20 says, *“He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.”* By spending time with wise, godly men, we too will become wise and live in a good and godly manner. This is what it means to *“keep to the paths of the righteous.”*

Verse 21 shows that choosing this manner of living produces real security. Those who are *upright* and *blameless* are the recipients of this security. If you will remember, we said earlier that *upright* is how God sees us, and *blameless* is how men see us. So, *upright* is *doing what is right in the sight of the LORD*, and *blameless* is *living such a good life that no one can rightfully accuse us of wrongdoing*. Since our text verses are Hebrew poetry, we can conclude that *the way of good men* in verse 20 is equivalent to *upright* in verse 21, and *the paths of the righteous* in verse 20 is equivalent to *blameless* in verse 21. So then, the upright will walk in the way of good men and live in the land. This is vibrant life and prosperity. The blameless will keep to the paths of the righteous and remain in the land. This is security that will enable a man to live to be an old man.

All of these are blessings to be sure, but wicked men are not so fortunate. As a general rule, they will experience a premature death. There are exceptions to be sure, but an early death is more often the case. As you can see in our text above, the upright man will *live in the land*, but the wicked man will *be cut off from the land*. Prov. 10:30 reinforces this truth when it says, *“The righteous will never be shaken, but the wicked will not dwell in the land.”* Then too, the blameless man *will remain in the land*, but the treacherous man *will be uprooted from it*. Solomon said this another way in Prov. 10:25 where we read, *“When the whirlwind passes, the wicked is no more, but the righteous has an everlasting foundation.”* The dictionary defines treacherous as *to betray the trust, faith, or allegiance of another*. Good and godly men and women would never purposely do such a thing, but wicked men don’t care. They will do whatever they feel is necessary to get what they want, even if it means taking unfair advantage of others. Those who do such things will be apprehended by the law enforcement and rot in prison somewhere. Not everyone will be caught, but most will.

It should be obvious that living in an upright or blameless manner is far better than suffering the losses wicked men will experience as a result of their sinful practices. Upright and blameless men can live a good and godly life because their wisdom guides them well. They are men with knowledge, understanding, insight, and discretion, all of which are components of wisdom. Son, you will find it interesting to learn that I put off studying Proverbs chapter two for several years. When I finally dug into it, I found that I had already experienced what it teaches without even

realizing it. It is wonderful the way truth accomplishes its goals even if we don't realize it at the time. God's principles are always true and dependable.

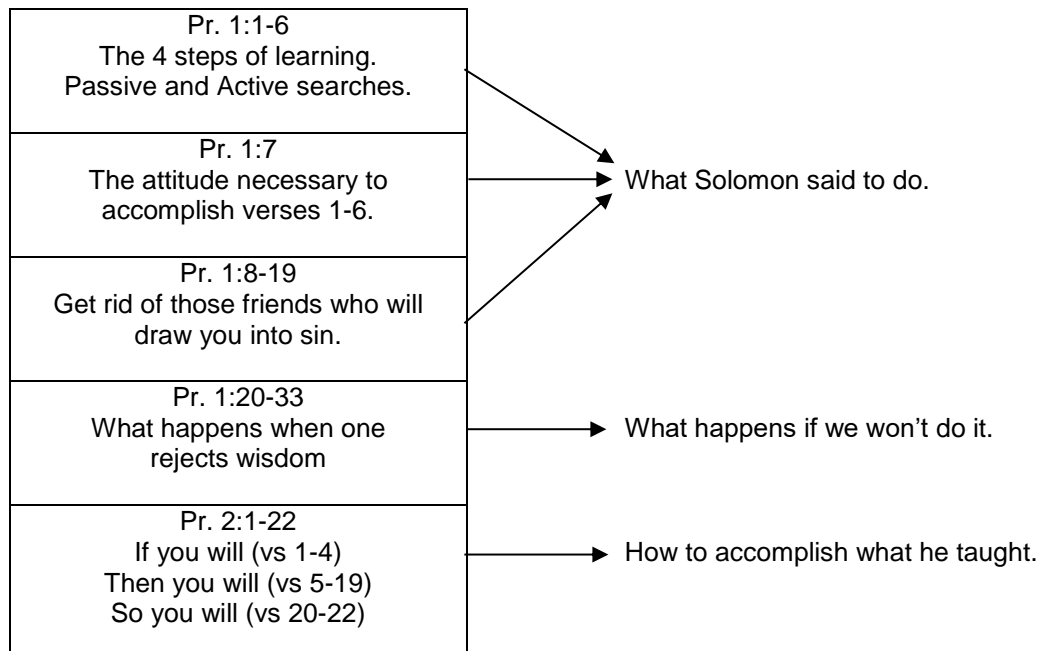
It is interesting to note what part God has and what part men have in man's future. When men do what is right in the sight of God (*upright*), He is pleased to bless them. When a man lives such a good life that no one can rightfully accuse him of wrongdoing (*blameless*), people are pleased to have him live among them. Conversely, when a man does all sorts of evil things (*wicked*), the LORD will terminate him from the community. When a man betrays or deceives others (*treacherous*), the people of his community will run him out of town. Consider the chart below.

God sees what men are	Man sees what men do
<i>The upright will live in the land</i>	<i>The blameless will remain in it</i>
<i>The wicked will be cut off from the land</i>	<i>The treacherous will be uprooted from it</i>

Now let's construct the rest of the comparison chart between chapters one and two.

Proverbs 1:1-6	Proverbs 2:1-4
Verse 5a Passive learning Verse 5b Active learning	Verses 1-2 Passive learning Verse 3 Active learning Verse 4 Continual learning
Verse 7 The Fear of the LORD	Verse 5 The Fear of the LORD The knowledge of God
Verses 8-19 Get rid of detrimental friends	Verses 9-19 Learn to live right, and avoid detrimental friends
Verses 20-33 What happens if you reject wisdom	Verses 20-22 What happens when you accept wisdom

Here is a different representation of chapters 1 and 2. The logic here is beautiful.



Proverbs 2:1-22

¹My son, **IF you will** **receive** my sayings, and **treasure** my commandments within you,
²make your ear **attentive** to my wisdom,
³for **IF you** **incline** your heart to understanding;
⁴for **IF you** **cry** for discernment, **lift up your voice** for understanding;
seek her as silver, and **search for her** as hidden treasures;

⁵THEN you will **DISCERN** the fear of the LORD, and **DISCOVER** the knowledge of God.

⁶for the LORD gives wisdom;
 from His mouth comes knowledge for the upright;
⁷He stores up sound wisdom for the upright;
 He is a **shield** to those who walk in integrity,
⁸**guarding** the paths of justice, and
 He **preserves** the way of his godly ones.

⁹THEN you will **DISCERN** righteousness and justice,
 equity, and every good course.

¹⁰For **WISDOM** will enter your heart, and
KNOWLEDGE will be pleasant to your soul;
¹¹**DISCRETION** will guard you,
UNDERSTANDING will watch over you.

¹²To deliver you

from the **way of evil**,
 from the man who speaks perverse things;
¹³from those who leave the path of righteousness,
 to walk in the way of darkness;
¹⁴who delight in doing evil,
 and rejoice in the perversity of evil;
¹⁵whose paths are crooked, and
 who are devious in their ways;

¹⁶To deliver you

from the **strange woman**,
 from the adulteress who flatters with her words;
¹⁷that leaves the covenant of her God,
 and forgets the covenant of her God;
¹⁸for her house sinks down to death, and
 her tracks lead to the dead;
¹⁹none that go to her return again,
 nor do they reach the paths of life.

²⁰SO you will **WALK** in the way of good men, and
KEEP to the paths of the righteous.
²¹For the upright will **LIVE** in the land, and
 the blameless will **REMAIN** in it;

²²**BUT** the **WICKED** will be **CUT OFF** from the land, and
 the **TREACHEROUS** will be **UPROOTED** from it.

Application:

It is important to understand what the Scriptures say, but knowledge by itself is not of much benefit unless we apply it to our lives. Living what we learn is how we can become better and more godly servants of Christ. So, what have we really learned in our study of Proverbs chapter two, and what should it do for us?

First, we learned that a continual search for wisdom, primarily from the pages of Scripture, will lead us to figure out (*discern*) a genuine fear of the LORD. This new-found attitude toward the LORD will change our lives so that we are willing and determined to avoid or abandon every sinful practice in order to please our heavenly Father. Having adopted this approach to life, we will start discovering all sorts of neat stuff about our God, Jesus Christ by name. The more we learn, the more we will come to appreciate all that He is, all that He has done in the past, and all that He will do in the future. The more we learn about Him, the stronger our faith will become.

Second, based upon what we learn about our great God, Jesus Christ, we will figure out (discern)

- 1) how to live a good, just, and legal lifestyle before the LORD and before men ^{<righteousness>},
- 2) how to give people what they rightfully deserve ^{<justice>},
- 3) how to treat every person with the same respect and dignity ^{<equity>}, and
- 4) how to follow the right path through life in general ^{<every good course>}.

Basically, we will learn to live in a Christ-like manner. This new knowledge and understanding will give us the discretion to recognize sinful men and women and choose not to get involved with them or their sin.

Third, after we learn all of this, we will choose to live a good and godly life and make good and godly men and women our closest companions. This is the bottom line of the whole chapter. If we do not get rid of those friends who would drag us down into sin and choose good and godly companions in their place, we most likely will never succeed at becoming wise and godly men.

So, what should we do? Simply this: Study and meditate upon the Bible and make it a practice of life. Don't merely learn the Scriptures so that you will know more than the next guy. Instead, study so that you can live what you learn, and discover the benefits and blessings of living the Scriptures. Hang in there for the long haul because wisdom doesn't come easy nor does it come quickly. It takes hard work and a lot of time. Listen to the advice of good and godly men, study and meditate upon the Scriptures, and listen to and apply the sound teaching and preaching of men of God. These things are a lifestyle, not a passing fad. You and I need to do this for life. There is no other way to be successful for the LORD. I have already seen some of the blessings of doing these things, and I hope and pray you will join me in a dedicated, consistent search for wisdom. The big question becomes, will you actually do it? Will you leave your comfort zone and dig into the Scriptures to do your own search for wisdom? Yes it's a lot of work, but it is always worth it in the end. Don't become discouraged if you don't learn a lot in a hurry. The reward comes after you have had ample time to meditate upon the Scriptures and fully understand its teaching. It may take a month or a year of looking at the same Scripture, but once you see its truth, you will rejoice that you had the patience to wait it out. This is when the deepest and most meaningful lessons are learned from Scripture. Unfortunately, most people will not hang in there long enough to learn these lessons because if they can't learn something in a week or two, they are ready to move on to something they can learn more quickly. It is unfortunate that by abandoning their search too quickly they will miss some of the deepest and most inspiring truths in Scripture. I have seen people do just that, and it is so unfortunate for them. I have learned some of the most blessed truths from Proverbs by hanging in there for years. I was almost 14 years into this study before I understood a few of the paragraphs in Proverbs chapter 30, but when I finally saw what they were teaching, it was a wonder to behold. You can find these types of blessings too if you will hang in there long enough for the LORD to show you.

So, will you do what Proverbs chapter two teaches? This, in essence, is the question Solomon was asking in the first four verses of Proverbs chapter two. Only you can answer this question. Take the challenge and dive into a study of the Scriptures looking for wisdom from God. I guarantee that you will not be disappointed in the end. Then, when you are older and look back at life, you will say along with me that all of the work was worth it. Praise the LORD.

Proverbs 3:1-35

How to live wisdom

Gregory,

By way of review, in Prov. 1:1-6, you discovered the four steps to learning and living the book of Proverbs; in Prov. 1:7, you learned that you must acquire and maintain a genuine fear of the LORD in order to accomplish the four steps; in Prov. 1:8-19, you learned that in order to maintain a biblical fear of the LORD, you must reject peer pressure by those who would entice you to engage in sinful activities; in Prov. 1:20-33, you learned what will happen if you reject wisdom; and finally, in Prov. chapter 2, you learned the right way to pursue and acquire wisdom.

In our discussion of Prov. 1:7, we established the fact that the fear of the LORD is the foundation upon which wisdom is built. It is the filter through which we judge knowledge and understanding to be true and trustworthy. You will remember that a genuine, biblical fear of the LORD has two sides. First, it is having such a strong conviction about God's greatness that I will do good so that I don't disappoint my heavenly Father. As you will see, Solomon thought this aspect of the fear of the LORD was so important that he dedicated the first half of chapter three to the practical application of doing good. Second, it is having such a serious reverence for God's power and ability to punish sin that I will avoid or abandon every sinful practice. That way I will not let sin rob me of intimate fellowship with the Father. Once again, Solomon thought this aspect of the fear of the LORD was so important that he dedicated the second half of chapter three to the practical application of avoiding sinful practices. Try to notice these things as we proceed through both chapter.

As you will see, Proverbs chapter three is how to put wisdom into practice. It is where the rubber meets the road. Solomon wrote this chapter hoping his son, Rehoboam, would learn wisdom and put it into practice. Unfortunately, First Kings 12 shows us that his son did not choose wisdom. Even so, this does not invalidate Solomon's teaching because the truth is still the truth no matter how many people reject or neglect it.

Proverbs chapter three contains three paragraphs. We will discuss paragraph one (vv. 1-12) first. Next we will discuss the first half of paragraph two (vv. 13-18). We will then join the two sections together and see how the whole of the first half of Proverbs 3 teaches **The Blessings that Come from Doing Good**. After that we will discuss paragraph three (vv. 25-35). Then we will discuss the second half of paragraph two (vv. 19-24) and join those two sections together. There you will see how all of the second half of Proverbs 3 teaches **The Security that Comes from Not Doing Evil**. Proverbs three has some of the deepest and most sophisticated logic in all of Proverbs, and I have found it absolutely fascinating. I'll let you decide whether Proverbs 3 or Proverbs 30 has the deeper logic after you have read the commentary on both. Take a moment to print the two tables for chapter three. You'll find them in the appendix at the end of this commentary. They are labeled the same as the bold print in this paragraph. Have them before you so that you can refer to them as we proceed through our discussion.

I would like to point out that Matt. 22:35-40 pretty much summarizes the essence of what Proverbs 3 teaches. This passage reads, *"Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, 'Master, which is the great commandment in the law?' Jesus said unto him, 'Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.'" (KJV)*. What I want you to see from this text and from Proverbs three is that there are two important attitudes that we should acquire. The first is to love the LORD with all our heart, and the second is to love our neighbor as ourselves. As you will see, Proverbs 3 teaches this same principal but from a different perspective. Near the end this portion of my commentary you will see how paragraphs 1 and 3 illustrate these two commandments. It really is exciting to see this truth.

The chart below is a representation of the structure for the first half of the chapter. You should see this structure on the sheet you printed. We will examine the first twelve verses, and then we will examine the first half of the second paragraph in the chapter (vv. 13-18). As we progress through verses 13-18 we will see the beauty of how that section of Scripture ties together so beautifully with verses 1-12. There we will see the specific blessings that

result from obeying verses 1-12. You'll see when we get there. We will now start the study on **The blessings that come from doing good.**

		vv.13-15
<u>vv. 1-2</u>	<u>vv. 7-8</u>	v. 16a
<u>vv. 3-4</u>	<u>vv. 9-10</u>	v. 16b
<u>vv. 5-6</u>	<u>vv. 11-12</u>	vv. 17-18

I. Learning to do good (paragraph 1, Prov. 3:1-12)

¹⁻² My son, do not forget my teaching, but let **your heart** keep my commandments; for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you. ³⁻⁴ Do not let kindness and truth leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of **your heart**. So you will find favor and good repute in the sight of God and man. ⁵⁻⁶ Trust in the LORD with all **your heart** and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.”
⁷⁻⁸ Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear **the LORD** and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your body and refreshment to your bones. ⁹⁻¹⁰ Honor **the LORD** from your wealth and from the first of all your produce; so your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will overflow with new wine. ¹¹⁻¹² My son, do not reject the discipline of **the LORD** or loathe His reproof, for whom the LORD loves He reproveth, even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights.”

As you will see, paragraph one is comprised of six groups of two verses each, and they form a very logical comparison in table form. We will examine two verses at a time and then insert them into a table.

Part 1—Training my heart to serve the LORD (verses 1-6)

A. Learning to do good — make it a heart attitude (vs. 1-2)

¹⁻² *My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments; for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you.*

1. The instruction

It is quite safe to assume that Solomon's son had been trained in Jewish history, traditions, and beliefs. It was something he was required to learn for his bar mitzvah when he turned thirteen years old. He was a king's son, so undoubtedly he was trained by learned teachers. Solomon was a teacher at heart, and I am sure that he took some time out of his busy schedule to teach his son the commandments handed down by Moses, and he also taught him how to find and use wisdom. This must be the case because verse one does not say, "learn my teaching." No, it reads "do not forget my teaching." Basically Solomon was saying, "You know what I have taught you. Now, make up your mind to remember it. Consider it so important that you will never forget it."

Solomon knew that his son must understand this truth before he could make obedience a matter of the heart. Mental ascent about a truth is not enough to result in a conviction that will last a lifetime. A mental attitude needs to become so much a part of a person's manner of living that it literally becomes a heart attitude—that is, it becomes who he is inside. This is why verse 1b says, "let your heart keep my commandments." Gregory, how do you accomplish this? It is by immersing yourself in Scripture and living what you learn. The more you do this, the more the teachings of the Scriptures will become an integral part of what you do and who you are. In time, the things you do and say will become an expression of the scriptural truths you have hidden in our heart. Prov. 27:19 reinforces this truth when it says, "As in water face reflects face, so the heart of man reflects man." Simply stated, what you are on the inside will show on the outside. Your actions and attitudes will show it. Therefore, it is crucial to fill your mind and heart with truth and with the kind of trustworthy knowledge and sound understanding that will lead to wisdom. This kind of approach to life will result in a good and godly manner of living. This, in a nutshell, is verse one.

In our day, we don't have a Solomon to sit down and teach us. We have God's Word. We must read and master the Scriptures so that we will think and act in a good and godly manner. David had it right when he wrote Psalm 119:97-104. It states,

⁹⁷ *O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.*
⁹⁸ *Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever mine.*
⁹⁹ *I have more insight than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation.*
¹⁰⁰ *I understand more than the aged, because I have observed Your precepts.*
¹⁰¹ *I have restrained my feet from every evil way, that I may keep Your word.*
¹⁰² *I have not turned aside from Your ordinances, for You Yourself have taught me.*
¹⁰³ *How sweet are Your words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!*
¹⁰⁴ *From Your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way.*

Notice how David gained trustworthy knowledge, sound understanding, and good insight by meditating upon God's teachings. This practice made him wiser than his enemies. Notice also that learning about God and His ways made a difference in his life. It caused him to avoid every evil practice and do good instead. This, son, is the fear of the LORD in practice.

2. The benefits.

There are three distinctly different benefits that result from living what you learn from Scripture, and they all work together for your good. The first benefit is "length of days." I have often said that I wish there were more hours in a day. There just doesn't seem to be enough time to accomplish all that I would like to do. According to this verse, immersing yourself in Scripture and practicing what you learn will, in time, enable you to accomplish all that needs to be done in a day. Notice that I said what "needs" to be done, not necessarily all you "want" to do. Learning and living the Scriptures will give you the understanding to tell the difference.

The second benefit is “*years of life.*” Learning and living the Scriptures will produce a long and fruitful life. This will happen because you will experience minimal stress and plenty of joy. By avoiding or abandoning sinful practices, you will not have to experience the hurts, heartaches, and punishment sinners must endure as a result of their sin. Whereas they will most likely experience a premature death, you can anticipate a long and fruitful life.

The third benefit is “*peace.*” It is wonderful to be at peace with yourself, with your God, and with those around you. Wisdom that empowers you to live a good and godly life will do this for you. The more you learn about the LORD and how to live in a manner that pleases him (*upright*), the more peace you will experience. Living an upright life will also enable you to live a blameless life. As I said before, to be blameless is **to live such a good life that no one can rightfully accuse you of wrongdoing.** Living like this will result in peace on a personal level, peace in your relationship with the LORD, and peace in your relationship with others.

3. Application

The essence of verses 1 and 2 is that you and I need to learn the Scriptures, live what we learn, and keep doing it for life. This can be accomplished by spending lots of time studying and meditating upon the Word of God and practicing what we learn. This process needs to be a life-long endeavor so that obedience can become a matter of the heart. We cannot live these verses by simply going to church, hoping the preacher or teacher will give us enough information to enable us to live a good and godly life. No, you and I must engage in a passive, active, and continual search for wisdom. Gregory, if you will do this, I am confident that in time you will find wisdom. When you do, it will change your life for good and for God’s glory. Learning to do good is where growth starts for a believer. Make the most of this opportunity, and you’ll be glad you did. I have labeled these two verses “**Learning to do good**” because they will be compared in parallel form with verses 7-8 later in this discussion.

Now we will add the first two verses to a table that illustrates the relationship between these six groups of verses.

Proverbs 3:1-12

Attitude	Preparing my heart to serve the LORD		Attitude
Learning to do good.	¹ My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments; ² For length of days and years of life, and peace they will add to you.		

B. Giving of myself — make it a heart attitude (vs. 3-4)

³⁻⁴ *Do not let kindness and truth leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of **your heart.** So you will find favor and good repute in the sight of God and man.*

1. The instruction

Verse three clearly states that we need to be *kind* and *truthful*. Notice that it says, “*Do not let* (these two attitudes) *leave you.*” Verse three is not indicating that you should learn to be kind and truthful. Rather, it is teaching that you should continue being kind and truthful like you have been taught in the past. As was the case with verses 1-2, the instruction says that you should be careful not to lose sight of or forget what you are already doing. Kindness is one of the distinguishing characteristics of the virtuous woman in Prov. 31:26. We read there that “*the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.*” Notice that she is not only kind, but she desires to teach those around her to be kind as well. Prov. 19:22 reminds us that, “*What is desirable in a man is his kindness, and it is better to be a poor man than a liar.*” You and I need to be kind, but we also need to tell the truth on every occasion. No one appreciates a liar, and once you learn that a man has lied to you, there is no way to be sure he will not lie to you again. You simply cannot trust him. Verse three above couples kindness and truth together. Part of being truthful is

not being deceitful or devious. Prov. 14:22 states, *“Will they not go astray who devise evil? But kindness and truth will be to those who devise good.”* It is obvious that *kindness and truth* are a large part of living a good and godly life.

OK, we need to be kind and truthful all the time, but how can we do this consistently? The second part of verse three says to *bind them around your neck*. In other words, when we treat others with kindness and truth, they will see it as something beautiful the same way they would admire a beautiful necklace worn by a lovely lady. So, we need to be kind and truthful on the outside toward others. We also need to be kind and truthful on the inside—that is, in the heart. The more we practice being kind and truthful, the more it will become a part of who we are. By memorizing verses from the Bible on this subject, we can constantly be reminded to act and react this way. In time, being kind and truthful will be an expression of what is in our heart, and we will do it without having to think about it. It will simply be an expression of who and what we are. This is what it means to *“write them on the tablet of your heart.”* I have labeled this attitude in the chart as Giving of myself. I labeled it thus because there are times when I simply don’t want to be kind because someone has treated me badly. It is human nature to act that way, but being kind and truthful from the heart is something we need to do for the LORD’s glory and approval. It doesn’t matter how men treat us. We still need to respond properly.

2. The benefits

You might be asking, “Yeah. but what will I get out of it?” I’m glad you asked. It is certain that there will be times when those you treat with kindness will not appreciate you, and some will not appreciate the fact that you tell the truth no matter what the cost. You must remember, though, that we are not doing these things merely to please men. Although many people will appreciate your sweet attitude, our main goal should be to please the LORD. When He is pleased with us, we know that we have done well. This is part of what it means to walk uprightly.

Verse four says that when we consistently practice being kind and truthful we will receive *favor* and *good repute*. These two things seem to overlap, but *favor* appears to be a result of showing *kindness* to others, and *good repute*, or a good reputation, seems to be a result of always *telling the truth*. Prov. 20:11 tells us, *“It is by his deeds that a lad distinguishes himself if his conduct is pure and right.”* I realize this verse is referring to a child, but the principle is the same for an adult. If we are kind and truthful, our reputation will be good and beneficial. Prov. 12:2 reinforces this truth when it says, *“A good man will obtain favor from the LORD, but He will condemn a man who devises evil.”* Notice in verse four of our text that both those around us and the LORD Himself will look upon us with favor and appreciate our good reputation. Wicked men or women won’t treat us with favor or appreciate our good reputation because they are diametrically opposed to our kind and truthful approach to life. They won’t appreciate it because they cannot comprehend why we would be kind and truthful in the first place. The fact that the LORD and good men appreciate our good and godly conduct is worth everything. Therefore, this kind of wisdom is well worth pursuing.

3. Application

OK, how are we to live these two verses. It really comes down to the fear of the LORD. One who genuinely fears the LORD in a biblical sense will desire to do good so that he can please his heavenly Father. Being kind and truthful is a major part of loving your neighbor as yourself, and it is also a major part of living upright before the LORD and blameless before men. The more you learn from your study of the Bible, the more you will find the strength and guidance you will need to be kind to everyone and truthful in all of your dealings. Gregory, live this way even when you don’t feel like doing it. The longer you do it, the more it will become part of you, and in time, it will translate into a heart attitude that will display itself in every situation that arises.

Now let’s add the second set of verses to the table. Notice that both of these verse groups address the need to make our conduct a **heart attitude** and not just a matter of the intellect. See the following page.

Attitude	Preparing my heart to serve the LORD		Attitude
Learning to do good.	¹ My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments; ² For length of days and years of life , and peace they will add to you.		
Giving of myself.	³ Do not let kindness and truth leave you; Bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart . ⁴ So you will find favor and good repute in the sight of God and man.		

C. Trusting God to direct me — make it a heart attitude (vs. 5-6)

⁵⁻⁶ *Trust in the LORD with all **your heart** and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.*

1. The instruction

What is *trust*? Strong’s defines this Hebrew word as **to have confidence, to be bold, to be secure**. Therefore, to trust is to let go and let someone else take care of a problem or secure an opportunity. You don’t need to worry about it or try to help the other party because you are sure that they will do what they have promised or are required to do. Several verses from Proverbs make it quite clear that trusting the LORD to lead you is the best choice. We discussed these verses in Part Two in chapter four of this commentary, but they bear repeating here. Prov. 20:24 tells us, *“Man’s steps are ordained by the LORD, how then can man understand his way?”* The LORD has our path all planned out from eternity past. When we trust His leadership, He is free to accomplish all that He desires in and through us without our getting in the way. We can plan to do something, but the LORD may have other ideas. Here are four verses that substantiate this truth. Notice how each one depicts the idea that I may want to do something, **BUT** God has other plans. Prov. 16:9, *“The mind of man plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps.”* Prov. 19:21, *“Many plans are in a man’s heart, but the counsel of the LORD will stand.”* Prov. 16:33, *“The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.”* And Prov. 21:31, *“The horse is prepared for the day of battle, but victory belongs to the LORD.”* Since the LORD is in charge, it only makes sense to trust the Him in everything.

It is natural for a man to want to be self-reliant, and it is contrary to human nature to trust the LORD for everything. In our text, Solomon warned his son saying, *“do not lean on your own understanding.”* We human beings tend to depend upon our knowledge and understanding of a particular situation, but the problem with this kind of approach is that our understanding is limited. This is part of why we need to study and meditate upon Scripture. Solomon explained this principle in Prov. 22:17-21 where he wrote,

¹⁷ *Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise, and apply your mind to my knowledge;* ¹⁸ *for it will be pleasant if you keep them within you, that they may be ready on your lips.* ¹⁹ *So that your trust may be in the LORD, I have taught you today, even you.* ²⁰ *Have I not written to you excellent things of counsels and knowledge,* ²¹ *to make you know the certainty of the words of truth that you may correctly answer him who sent you?* (Underlining added for clarity).

As you can see, trustworthy knowledge and sound understanding gained from the Word of God are what will grow our confidence in God and lead to real trust in the LORD and His leadership. The essence of our trust is based upon Romans 8:28 where we read, *“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”* He has good in mind even if a particular

situation produces hurts or losses on our part. He intends to bring good even out of those situations. I shared with you earlier in this commentary about how I had perfect peace even at the moment I was convinced that I was watching your mother die. This was because I trusted His leadership. So then, trusting in the LORD, even though we don't understand everything at the moment, is the best choice. Seeking His will in the matter and turning it over to His leadership is fulfilling Solomon's advice when he wrote, *"In all your ways acknowledge Him."*

2. The benefits

The main benefit from trusting the LORD to guide and direct you is that *He will make your paths straight*. This sounds good, but what does it really mean. There are three verses in Proverbs that help clarify what it means to have straight paths. First, trusting the LORD brings **success**. Prov. 16:3 says, *"Commit your works to the LORD and your plans will be established."* Do you want to be successful? Then give the LORD the reigns of your life and allow Him to lead you as He sees fit. Give Him first place in your choices, your business, and in any other endeavor. If you will, He will bring about stability and good success for His own name's sake. Second, trusting the LORD brings **prosperity**. Prov. 28:25 tells us, *"An arrogant man stirs up strife, but he who trusts in the LORD will prosper."* Trusting in the LORD and letting go of the reigns will bring good success. His glory is at stake, and He will see that He receives the glory. Third, trusting the LORD will generate **real and lasting security**. Prov. 3:26 states, *"For the LORD will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being caught."* If you want real security, then turn to the LORD. Prov. 29:26 says, *"Many seek the ruler's favor, but justice for man comes from the LORD."* These are all good reasons why we should be willing to trust God to direct us because He is waiting to bless those who do. Gregory, this is what I want. What about you?

3. Application

All of this sounds good, but how do you learn to trust the LORD like you should? First, you must be regularly involved in a study of the Word of God with the intent of living what you learn. Understand that the LORD doesn't do anything to us, for us, or with us that is primarily intended for our hurt. We may be hurt in the process, but the LORD only allows a hurt or loss in order to bring glory to His name. When we have a sweet testimony for the LORD in the middle of the hurt or loss, we help the LORD bring glory to His name and accomplish all that He intended when He allowed the adverse circumstances. If, on the other hand, we become bitter or resentful, we nullify all that the LORD intended to bring about, and we show the world that our God is only worth following when life is easy and things are going well. In reality, when we trust the LORD and praise Him in the midst of trials, we show the world that our God is great and worth following. Situations like this have brought many sinners to a saving knowledge of Christ. You can be one of those who helps people come to Christ if you will make up your mind to trust the LORD in everything. When I watched your mom die in Israel, I didn't feel a need to pray and ask the LORD to change His mind because I understood that He wasn't doing anything primarily intended for our hurt. Therefore, He wasn't doing anything wrong even though it appeared He was taking your mom to heaven. Thank the LORD she revived, but it was a sweet experience to pass the test when required to trust the LORD. Decide today that you will trust Him in everything. It will be the best decision you can ever make short of receiving Christ as your personal savior. Always keep Isaiah 26:3 in mind. It says, *"The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace, because he trusts in You."* Son, you are probably more familiar with the KJV version of this verse. It reads, *"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee."*

Now let's add these two verses to the table on the following page.

Attitude	Preparing my heart to serve the LORD		Attitude
Learning to do good.	¹ My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments; ² For length of days and years of life , and peace they will add to you.		
Giving of myself.	³ Do not let kindness and truth leave you; Bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart . ⁴ So you will find favor and good repute in the sight of God and man.		
Trusting God to direct me.	⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart , and do not lean on your own understanding. ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight .		

Part 2 — Demonstrating my heart attitude before the LORD (verses 7-12)

In verses 1-6, we saw the things that we need to do in order to prepare our heart to serve the LORD. Now in verses 7-12, we will see how we need to demonstrate that prepared and surrendered heart by giving to the LORD in the following three ways.

D. Learning to avoid evil — as an offering to the LORD (vs. 7-8)

⁷⁻⁸ Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your body and refreshment to your bones.

1. The instruction

In verses 1-2, we saw how we need to learn to do good. Now we need to learn to avoid sin and evil. We were born with a sin nature, and when we trusted Christ as savior, we were born again and given a new nature that gives us the power to avoid or abandon sinful practices. We can accomplish this if we choose to live a good and godly life to the glory of God. Unfortunately, some believers enjoy their sin so much that they won't give it up. The second half of verse seven states, "*fear the LORD and turn away from evil.*" As we saw in chapter four of this commentary, a genuine fear of the LORD will drive a believer to avoid or abandon ever sinful practice. This is what should happen, but when a believer holds on to his sin because he thinks he knows better, this is being *wise in your own eyes*. Solomon said, "Don't do it." Give up your sin so that life will go well for you. If you refuse to do so, life will not go well for you. It is as simple as that. We need to see how far we can stay from sin, not how close we can get to it without being burned by it.

Two verses in Proverbs help us see this truth. Prov. 26:12 tells us, "*Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.*" As I said earlier in this commentary, since there is no hope of a fool becoming wise, there is even less hope of a proud man becoming humble. Also, Prov. 28:11 reads, "*The rich man is wise in his own eyes, but the poor who has understanding sees through him.*" It is easy for a proud man to think more highly of himself than he should. It is human nature, but as Paul warned in Romans 12:3, "*For through the*

grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.” We need to realize that we don’t know it all. Therefore, it is to our advantage to avoid or abandon every sinful practice so that we can please our heavenly Father and reap the rewards of living a good and godly life.

2. The benefits

The first blessing that results from avoiding sinful practices is *healing to your body*. The guilt that comes after committing sin is stressful and takes its toll on the body. Many people have become physically sick as a result sin and guilt, but abandoning the sin will free you from the associated guilt. This will remove the stress and cause you to be at ease. When this happens your body will heal itself. The second blessing is *refreshment to your bones*. In essence, this phrase is saying that when you give up your sin, you will receive extra vim and vigor. You’ll not only have a healthy body, but you will have extra energy to do all of the things you were too tired to do while you were engaged in the sinful practice. These two blessings alone make abandoning sinful practices well worthwhile.

3. Application

As you study and meditate upon the Scriptures, you will discern (figure out) what it means to have a genuine fear of the LORD. If you are serious about following the LORD, you will realize that the LORD sees and understands everything you do, say, and think. Knowing this is good reason to avoid or abandon sinful practices. Each time you are tempted to sin, the Scriptures will come to mind and give you the encouragement you will need to avoid that sin. The more you reject sinful practices, the easier it is to reject it the next time you are tempted by that same sin. Keep in mind, though, that just because you are successful in avoiding one sinful practice does not guarantee that you will avoid the next one. You need to be constantly on guard and evaluate your actions and thoughts. Determine right now that you will proceed only with those thoughts and actions that are good and godly. This is what the LORD told Cain in Genesis 4:7 where we read, *“If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it.”* Like Cain, it is our responsibility to avoid or abandon sin. It is a day-by-day discipline. Remember, obedience to the Word of God is always the right thing to do. Now let’s add these two verses to the table.

Proverbs 3:1-12

Attitude	Preparing my heart to serve the LORD	Demonstrating my heart to the LORD	Attitude
Learning to do good.	¹ My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments; ² For length of days and years of life , and peace they will add to you.	⁷ Do not be wise ^{<02450>} in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and turn away from evil . ⁸ It will be healing to your body, and refreshment to your bones.	Learning to avoid evil.
Giving of myself.	³ Do not let kindness and truth leave you; Bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart . ⁴ So you will find favor and good repute in the sight of God and man.		
Trusting God to direct me.	⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart , and do not lean on your own understanding. ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight .		

E. Giving of my possessions — as an offering to the LORD (vs. 9-10)

⁹⁻¹⁰ Honor *the LORD* from your wealth and from the first of all your produce; so your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will overflow with new wine.

1. The instruction

In verse 3-4, we saw how we should be giving of ourselves by being kind and truthful. Now in verses 9-10, we are to be giving of our possessions to honor the LORD. I have heard it said that when a man's salvation reaches his wallet, you can tell that he is really converted. Too many believers are stingy with the LORD and don't even tithe on their income. I have been told that less than 20% of church members give 80% of the money a church receives in the offering. This is a sad situation, and those who are not giving to the LORD are missing out on rich blessings. They are also missing good opportunities to worship the LORD through their giving.

According to verse 9, we are to give to the LORD from two sources. First, we are to give from our *wealth*. This appears to be what we already possess. If you have not tithed on your savings or investments now is the time to do it. You only need to tithe on your possessions one time, but you need to tithe on new income from your investments as they become available. The second source of the tithe is *the first of all your produce*. In essence, this is your income—that is, your paycheck or the growth on your investments. You and I need to honor the LORD by giving to him from these two sources. I have heard it preached and have seen in practice that if we don't give the LORD what is rightfully His, He will get it another way. It may be a car that breaks down, a doctor bill, or a water heater that quits. These are but a few examples, but I'm sure you get the idea.

2. The benefits

The principle of sow and reap states that what we do we will reap in kind. Prov. 11:25 tells us, *"The generous man will be prosperous, and he who waters will himself be watered."* This verse is basically saying that when we give, we will get in return. That is exactly what verse 10 of our text is saying. It says that when you give of your possessions to honor the LORD, your cup will *be filled with plenty* and will *overflow*. That doesn't mean that we should give in order to get more from the LORD, but when we do give, the LORD will give back in some form or another. Giving to the poor and needy is one way to honor the LORD. Prov. 14:31 says, *"He who oppresses the poor taunts his Maker, but he who is gracious to the needy honors Him."* Prov. 19:17 tells how the LORD responds when we give to the poor. It says, *"One who is gracious to a poor man lends to the LORD, and He will repay him for his good deed."* Be assured that the LORD will not be indebted to anyone. He always gives back what is due. It may not always be in the form of money, but He gives, nonetheless. Prov. 14:21 tells us that, *"He who despises his neighbor sins, but happy is he who is gracious to the poor."* So then, honoring the LORD by giving to the poor generates happiness on the part of the one giving. One more thing, the LORD may give to the gracious man by taking what a lawbreaker possesses and giving it to a gracious man. Prov. 28:8 says, *"He who increases his wealth by interest and usury gathers it for him who is gracious to the poor."* Giving to the poor is not the only way to honor the LORD with your giving. We should also honor the LORD by giving to the church and to missions. Our tithe should go to the church, but offerings above the tithe can freely go to other worthy endeavors. Each of these honor the LORD.

3. Application

It is obvious from Scripture that you and I should give a tithe to the church. This is 10% of all of our income. Some say that we are in the day of grace, and we are not bound by the Old Testament law. In that case, we ought to give the LORD at least 10% of our income as an act of worship. That being said, we should give to the poor and needy above our tithe. When there is a need, seek to meet that need, but be sure to verify that someone really needs your help. Sometimes people get themselves into a financial mess because they won't work or they have such bad spending habits that they have spent themselves into financial disaster. If you help them financially, you may only be postponing the inevitable downfall where they will hit the bottom and have to face the fact that they need to change their ways. They may need to go to work, or they may need to spend less and stay within their means. You won't help them by supporting sloppy spending habits or a lazy manner of living. By all means give when a genuine need is there, but be sure that the need is genuine. As you are able, be sure to give to missions and works that promote the gospel of Christ. Remember, you can't out give the LORD.

Now let's add these two verses to the table.

Proverbs 3:1-12

Attitude	Preparing my heart to serve the LORD	Demonstrating my heart to the LORD	Attitude
Learning to do good.	¹ My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments; ² For length of days and years of life , and peace they will add to you.	⁷ Do not be wise ^{<02450>} in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and turn away from evil . ⁸ It will be healing to your body, and refreshment to your bones.	Learning to avoid evil.
Giving of myself.	³ Do not let kindness and truth leave you; Bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart . ⁴ So you will find favor and good repute in the sight of God and man.	⁹ Honor the LORD from your wealth, and from the first of all your produce; ¹⁰ So your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine.	Giving of my possessions.
Trusting God to direct me.	⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart , and do not lean on your own understanding. ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight .		

F. Trusting God to correct me — as an offering to the LORD (vs. 11-12)

¹¹⁻¹² *My son, do not reject the discipline of **the LORD** or loathe His reproof, for whom **the LORD** loves He reproves, even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights.*

1. The instruction

In verses 5-6 we saw how we are to trust the LORD to direct us. Now in verses 11-12 we will see the need to trust the LORD to correct us for our own good and for His glory. All of us have blind spots. We may think we are doing okay when in reality we fall far short of what the LORD expects of us. At times, the LORD will cause circumstances to come our way that are designed to teach us how to act or react in a more Christ-like manner. This is why verse 11 says, *“do not reject the discipline of the LORD.”* When He chastens us, He is doing it for our good and for His glory, not to punish us. It is to our benefit to learn the lesson so that He doesn't have to resort to more extreme measures to teach us.

What happens when we don't learn the lesson when He tries to discipline us? Well, then He must resort to *reproof*. This is a much harsher form of discipline even though it, too, is designed to teach us to be more Christ-like. Whereas discipline is more the idea of making us better servants of Christ, rebuke (or *reproof*) is more the idea of correcting a wrong attitude or action.

2. The benefits

You and I need to keep in mind that whenever the LORD disciplines or rebukes us it may be painful or costly, but is for our good and ultimately for His glory. Christ Himself told us that the Father will prune us so that we can bring forth more fruit. Pruning is a good thing then. Consider John 15:1-8 where Christ said,

¹ "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. ² Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, **He prunes it** so that it may bear more fruit. ³ You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. ⁴ Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. ⁵ I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. ⁷ If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples."

To prune a tree, branches that do not produce fruit are cut off so that the remaining branches will produce more and better fruit. When the LORD prunes us, He takes away those things that are not producing godliness so that we will become more Christ-like. Since the LORD intends good when He deals with us in this way, we need to work with Him and not against Him. Knowing that everything the LORD does is good and that it is not intended for our hurt, we need to accept circumstances as coming directly from the LORD to make us more Christ-like. It makes good sense, then, to work with the LORD instead of hindering Him by becoming angry, bitter, or resentful when difficulties come our way. This is the most productive and beneficial way to respond.

3. Application

Life is not a bed of roses, and hard times will come. It is a fact of life. Realize that the LORD is not trying to hurt you when He brings or allows difficulties to come your way to teach you how to live more Christ-like. He is actually doing it because He loves you and wants to make you better and more profitable. Then too, it may be that He wants you to respond in a contented and trusting way before another believer in order to encourage him, or a lost man may see it and come to Christ in salvation. In either case, the LORD is seeking something good in disciplining you. The apple tree in our back yard is a wonderful example of this truth. Last season a hailstorm came through while the blossoms were still on the tree, and it knocked off close to half of them. I was disappointed after the storm, but this allowed the remaining apples to receive more nutrition. When it was time to pick the apples, I was pleased that the apples were bigger and more juicy than any of the apples the previous year. It helped me understand the fact that when the LORD prunes us through discipline or reproof, He is doing it so that the fruit we produce will be bigger and better than before. Recognize this truth and determine that you will work with the LORD in the things He sends your way to prune you. He loves you. He really does.

Now let's add these two verses to the table. You will find it on the following page.

Proverbs 3:1-12

Attitude	Preparing my heart to serve the LORD	Demonstrating my heart to the LORD	Attitude
Learning to do good.	¹ My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments; ² For length of days and years of life , and peace they will add to you.	⁷ Do not be wise ^{<02450>} in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and turn away from evil . ⁸ It will be healing to your body, and refreshment to your bones.	Learning to avoid evil.
Giving of myself.	³ Do not let kindness and truth leave you; Bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart . ⁴ So you will find favor and good repute in the sight of God and man.	⁹ Honor the LORD from your wealth, and from the first of all your produce; ¹⁰ So your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine.	Giving of my possessions.
Trusting God to direct me.	⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart , and do not lean on your own understanding. ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight .	¹¹ My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD , Or loathe His reproof, ¹² For whom the LORD loves He reproves , even as a father, the son in whom he delights .	Trusting God to correct me.

Conclusion of verses 1-12.

In essence, verses 1-12 are things we should do for our good and for the LORD’s glory. Obeying them displays wisdom. In the third paragraph of Proverbs three, we will see the things that we must avoid for our own good and for the LORD’s glory. Obeying those teachings also displays wisdom. Notice once again how the logic of verses 1-12 fits so neatly together. To further illustrate these verses, I would like to compare them to 1 John 2:15-17. These verses read, ¹⁵ *“Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”* ¹⁶ *“For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.”* ¹⁷ *“The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.”* (Underlining added for clarity). We will label each parallel set of verses in Prov. 3:1-12 one row at a time. Follow along, and you will see.

1. The lust of the flesh – followers of Christ should not be guilty of this

It is obvious from verses 1 and 2 that we are to study the Scriptures and learn how to obey what it teaches. This will enable us to live in a good and godly manner. In these verses, Solomon specifically wrote that we are to work at remembering what we learn and never forget it. I have labeled these verses “**Learning to do good.**” In parallel fashion, verses 7 and 8 instruct us to have or acquire a genuine, biblical fear of the LORD and demonstrate it by avoiding or abandoning every form of sin and evil. I have labeled these two verses “**Learning to avoid evil.**”

The problem with both of these requirements is that our old nature (the flesh) wants to enjoy pleasures and avoid the self-discipline it takes to live a good and godly life. It is easy to do what comes naturally, but doing so will result in hurts, heartaches, and losses in abundance. Obeying the Scriptures in order to please our heavenly Father results in a productive and long life, and turning away from evil results in a healthy body, extra vim and vigor, and real security. These are certainly good reasons to follow Solomon’s advice in these four verses. Since the flesh is so strong, I have labeled these verses with the words “**Lust of the flesh.**” We are to discipline ourselves to be godly and resist the lusts of the flesh. We do this by remembering the teachings of Scripture, obeying them, and avoiding all sinful practices. See the text box in the chart on the following page.

Proverbs 3:1-12

Attitude	Preparing my heart to serve the LORD	<i>Demonstrating my heart to the LORD</i>	Attitude
Learning to do good.	¹ My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments; ² For length of days and years of life , and peace they will add to you.	⁷ Do not be wise ^{<02450>} in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and turn away from evil . ⁸ It will be healing to your body, and refreshment to your bones.	Learning to avoid evil. <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: 5px auto;">Lust of the flesh</div>

2. The lust of the eyes – followers of Christ should not be guilty of this

Because of our sinful nature, we naturally want to enjoy pleasures and avoid self-discipline. It is what an unsaved man does. He will look out for himself and not be concerned with the needs or desires of others. This should not be said for a born-again child of God. Christ Himself said that the second greatest commandment is to love our neighbor as ourselves. Verses 3 and 4 specifically address this issue. I have labeled these verses “Giving of myself” because it is not our nature to be kind and truthful. Oh, but you and I are children of God, and He gave us a new nature when we were born again. This new nature should drive us to look out for our neighbor’s welfare instead of being greedy and desiring to have what our neighbor possesses. We can and should do this by being kind and truthful in every interaction with both our neighbor and with our God, and it needs to become a matter of the heart. Living in this manner is indeed denying ourselves and giving of ourselves to others. When we do this, we will be looked upon with favor both by good men and the LORD as they see our good and godly reputation.

It is good and necessary to give of ourselves to others, but it is also good and necessary to honor the LORD by giving of our finances and possessions. I have entitled verses 9 and 10 “Giving of my possessions.” When we give to the LORD He will give back more abundantly than we gave to Him. As I said previously, we shouldn’t give to Him just so that we will receive more in return, but He does give back until our cup runs over. These are certainly good reasons to follow Solomon’s advice in these four verses. Since it is our nature to look out for our own welfare first, we must work at being kind and truthful. Since it is our nature to look out for our own welfare first, we must not be greedy and keep for ourselves the money that rightfully belongs to the LORD. I have labeled these verses with the words “Lust of the eyes.” We are to discipline ourselves to be giving believers and not be so concerned about getting what our neighbor possesses or experiences. We do this by giving of ourselves and our possessions. Now, see the text box on the following page.

Proverbs 3:1-12

Attitude	Preparing my heart to serve the LORD	Demonstrating my heart to the LORD	Attitude
Learning to do good.	¹ My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments; ² For length of days and years of life, and peace they will add to you	⁷ Do not be wise <02450> in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and turn away from evil. ⁸ It will be healing to your body, and refreshment to your bones.	Learning to avoid evil. <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: 5px auto;">Lust of the flesh</div>
Giving of myself.	³ Do not let kindness and truth leave you; Bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart . ⁴ So you will find favor and good repute in the sight of God and man.	⁹ Honor the LORD from your wealth, and from the first of all your produce; ¹⁰ So your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine.	Giving of my possessions. <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: 5px auto;">Lust of the eyes</div>

3. The pride of life – followers of Christ should not be guilty of this

Gregory, it would be easy to become proud and feel that I am more knowledgeable and/or more deserving than my neighbor. The result of this kind of thinking is to make all of life's decisions based solely upon what I think at the moment and leave God out of the decision-making process. A born-again child of God must not do this. In order to experience joy and peace in my life, I must pass the reins of my life over to the LORD and allow Him to freely direct my path while administering direction and correction as needed. Surrendering to the will of the LORD is solely a matter of trust. You might be asking, "Can I be sure God will lead me in the best way and to the best end?" A surrendered child of God will answer a resounding "yes."

Solomon wrote in verses 5 and 6 that I should realize that our understanding of a given situation is not complete. Therefore, giving the LORD control of our life and trusting Him to lead us in the best way and to the best end is a wise decision. I have labeled these verses "Trusting God to direct me." Ah, but this is only half of what we need in order to live a good and godly life. We also need to know when we are doing something wrong or heading down the wrong road where hurts and heartaches await us. That is why we need to accept the discipline the LORD applies for our own good and for His glory. To reject that discipline is foolish. I have labeled verses 11 and 12 as "Trusting God to correct me." Since it is against our nature to willingly accept discipline or correction, I have labeled these verses with the words the "pride of life." We need to realize that a proud man or woman will reject discipline and correction, and this will lead to hurts and heartaches down the road. We need to turn the reins of our life over to the LORD and allow Him to lead and discipline us as He sees fit. We do this by being humble enough to know that we are not better or more deserving than anyone else and admit that we need the LORD's help.

See the text box on the following page.

Proverbs 3:1-12

Attitude	Preparing my heart to serve the LORD	Demonstrating my heart to the LORD	Attitude
Learning to do good.	¹ My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments; ² For length of days and years of life , and peace they will add to you.	⁷ Do not be wise ^{<02450>} in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and turn away from evil . ⁸ It will be healing to your body, and refreshment to your bones.	Learning to avoid evil. Lust of the flesh
Giving of myself.	³ Do not let kindness and truth leave you; Bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart . ⁴ So you will find favor and good repute in the sight of God and man.	⁹ Honor the LORD from your wealth, and from the first of all your produce; ¹⁰ So your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine.	Giving of my possessions. Lust of the eyes
Trusting God to direct me.	⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart , and do not lean on your own understanding. ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight .	¹¹ My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD , Or loathe His reproof, ¹² For whom the LORD loves He reproveth , even as a father, the son in whom he delights .	Trusting God to correct me. The pride of life

Gregory, notice in verses 1-6 that the words “**your heart**” are mentioned. So, what is the significance of this? We need to learn to obey the Word of God and do good on a regular basis until it becomes a heart attitude (verses 1-2). We need to learn to give of ourselves by always being kind and truthful with our neighbor until it becomes a heart attitude (verses 3-4). And we need to give the reins of our life to the LORD and allow Him to lead us as He sees fit. We need to do this until it becomes a heart attitude (verses 5-6). All of these things together will prepare our heart to serve the LORD. It will become who we are.

Once we have prepared our heart, we need to demonstrate a surrendered heart to the LORD. Notice in verses 7-12 the words “**the LORD**” are mentioned in each group of verses. We demonstrate to the LORD that we recognize His Lordship over us, and we do it by avoiding or abandoning every form of sin and evil (verses 7-8). We demonstrate to the LORD that we recognize His Lordship over us by giving of our possessions (verses 9-10). Finally, we demonstrate to the LORD that we recognize His Lordship over us by willingly submitting to His discipline and correction (verses 11-12).

Before we move on to paragraph two of Proverbs chapter three, I would like to share some interesting things about these twelve verses. Notice the wording.

- | | | | |
|---------|----------------------|-----------|--------------------------------------|
| vv. 1-2 | Don't forget | vv. 7-8 | Do abandon sin |
| vv. 3-4 | Don't abandon | vv. 9-10 | Do give of your possessions |
| vv. 5-6 | Don't presume | vv. 11-12 | Do submit to God's correction |

I am constantly amazed at the beauty and logic of this paragraph of Proverbs chapter three, but there is more. We will now examine the second paragraph of Proverbs chapter three and then combine the first half of it with what you have already seen in paragraph one of the text. It is a beauty to behold. When we get there, I am sure you will agree.

II. Wisdom's benefits (Prov. 3:13-18)

The blessings she generates

¹³ How blessed is the man who finds wisdom and the man who gains understanding. ¹⁴ For her profit is better than the profit of silver and her gain better than fine gold. ¹⁵ She is more precious than jewels; and nothing you desire compares with her. ¹⁶ Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. ¹⁷ Her ways are pleasant ways and all her paths are peace. ¹⁸ She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, and happy are all who hold her fast.

1. The need for wisdom (v. 13)

¹³ How blessed is the man who finds wisdom and the man who gains understanding.

Gregory, do you want to be blessed? I know you do. In fact, I remember when you were a young child. We were riding in the car, and you asked me, "Daddy, what is a blessing?" I recall vividly that I didn't give you a very good answer. At the time I didn't know how to explain it. Strong's defines the word *blessed* in verse 13 simply as *happy*. A blessing is something that makes you happy, causes you to be pleased, or brings joy. In short, you are *blessed* when the LORD answers your prayer, when you receive an unexpected gift or encouragement, when a verse from Scripture speaks directly to you, or when someone goes out of their way to do something especially nice for you. These are but a few of the ways you may be blessed, but in each case you are made happy (*blessed*) as a result of being on the receiving end of the blessing. So then, since I am sure you want to be the man who is blessed (happy), you need to search for and acquire wisdom and understanding. You were shown Solomon's method of acquiring these when you read the commentary on Proverbs chapter two, so simply do what you learned there.

What generates the blessings? It comes from finding wisdom and gaining understanding. We discussed this earlier, but it is interesting to note that we can *gain* biblical and practical understanding, but we must *find* wisdom. You will remember the Wisdom Pyramid where we said that the fear of the LORD is the foundation or the reference against which we gauge knowledge to be trustworthy. As we gain this trustworthy knowledge, we will also gain sound understanding. These two generate valuable insight which enables us to use good discretion to determine the possible solutions to a problem or opportunity. Once we achieve this level, the LORD will step in and give us the wisdom to select the best of the solutions which will produce the best results in every area of life and practice. This is what it means to *find* wisdom.

2. The value of wisdom (vv. 14-15)

¹⁴ For her profit is better than the profit of silver and her gain better than fine gold. ¹⁵ She is more precious than jewels; and nothing you desire compares with her.

What do you get when you acquire wisdom and use it on a regular basis? Verse 14 says that you will *profit* from its use. OK, what does it mean to *profit* by wisdom? Strong's defines this word as *to profit or gain from merchandise*. If you run a business, you expect to make enough money from the sale of your products or service to have a net gain after all of the operating expenses have been deducted. Wisdom does much the same. Having and using wisdom will bring about gains that make life better, more pleasant, and more successful. Most of the profit will not be financial, but wisdom will produce blessings much more valuable than money or possessions. That's why Solomon wrote that the profit (or gain) from wisdom *is better than the profit of silver and her gain better than fine gold*. You might be asking, "What makes the profit of wisdom better than precious metals? Because, as verse 15 states, *"She is more precious than jewels."* To enjoy peace and contentment, to have purpose and meaning in life, and to be content with what you have are all things that are more precious than the fortune Bill Gates has acquired. A wise man may not enjoy the pleasures wealth can afford, but in the same manner, a rich man cannot enjoy the pleasures of peace, contentment, joy, and an intimate relationship with the LORD that a wise man enjoys on a regular basis. This is why Solomon summed up these two verses with the statement, *"nothing you desire compares with her."* This statement is true because there is nothing this world has to offer that compares favorably with having and using wisdom.

3. The blessings of wisdom (vv. 16-18)

¹⁶ *Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor.* ¹⁷ *Her ways are pleasant ways and all her paths are peace.* ¹⁸ *She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, and happy are all who hold her fast.*

Now we get to the good part. This is where we see three things in particular that wisdom will give us if we have and use her on a regular basis.

1. Having and using wisdom will cause you to live a *long life* (v. 16a). As you read and study Proverbs, it will soon become apparent that as a general rule the wicked man will experience a premature death as a result of his sinful lifestyle while a blameless or upright man will live a long and fruitful life as a result of his good and godly lifestyle. This is indeed a valuable benefit of having and using wisdom on a regular basis.

2. Having and using wisdom will result in *riches and honor* (v. 16b). Wisdom will teach a man how to work hard, smart, and diligently. It will also teach him to save for the future. If this is practiced over a lifetime, it will produce income sufficient to get along well in life and have enough left over to give to those in need. A wise man will spend carefully, invest wisely, and monitor his investments regularly. In Prov. 27:23-27 Solomon told us,

²³ *Know well the condition of your flocks, and pay attention to your herds;* ²⁴ *for riches are not forever, nor does a crown endure to all generations.* ²⁵ *When the grass disappears, the new growth is seen, and the herbs of the mountains are gathered in,* ²⁶ *the lambs will be for your clothing, and the goats will bring the price of a field,* ²⁷ *and there will be goats' milk enough for your food, for the food of your household, and sustenance for your maidens.*

This is good advice for investors, and all of us should invest for the future. One thing to keep in mind is that we need to diversify our investments. Eccl. 11:1-2 tell us, *“Cast your bread on the surface of the waters, for you will find it after many days. Divide your portion to seven, or even to eight, for you do not know what misfortune may occur on the earth.”* In context, these verses are probably talking about life in general, but the principle is valid regarding investments also. The old saying, “It is not good to put all of your eggs in one basket” is still true. This is why financial advisors tend to recommend mutual funds for investments instead of single stocks. There is some security there. As Prov. 27:23-27 above teach, invest wisely, and there will be enough available when needs arise or when you retire.

Having and using wisdom will also generate *honor* for the one using it. People will see your godly conduct and wise choices, and they will respect you greatly. Wicked men will not honor you, but good men will.

3. Wisdom will also cause you to live in a good and godly manner. As a result, verse 17 says that life will be *pleasant* because of your holy manner of living. You will actually enjoy life, not merely endure it. In addition, you will experience inward *peace* in all of the places you go and in all of the things you do. This alone makes pursuing wisdom really valuable. Men and women of the world are seeking peace, but real, lasting peace can only be found when wisdom finds its way into your heart. We've already taken an in-depth look at wisdom, so I won't repeat it here except to say that Proverbs' wisdom is a spiritual exercise. Therefore, until or unless a man or woman is born again, they have no hope of finding this kind of wisdom. They may attain to worldly wisdom, but that is nothing compared to godly wisdom.

Verse 18a says that having and using wisdom will be like *a tree of life*. If Adam and Eve had eaten of the tree of life in the garden of Eden, they would have lived forever. In similar fashion, wisdom will result in eternal life for those who *take hold of her*. Proverbs' wisdom can only be found by those who have and maintain a genuine fear of the LORD, and the only ones who can have a genuine fear of the LORD are those who have been born again by faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary. So those who have Proverbs' wisdom also have eternal life because they have received Jesus Christ as savior. Having and using wisdom will also result in a happy face and a joyful heart (v. 18b). Prov. 15:13a tells us that *“A joyful heart makes a cheerful face”*. It is no wonder that those who cling to wisdom and *hold her fast* (simply will not let her go) are *happy* people. Those who have and use wisdom can be joyful even if

they are not happy at the moment. This is true even when circumstances are rough and painful. This is certainly a treasure worth pursuing.

It is obvious that the first half of the second paragraph of Proverbs chapter three shows the blessings that come from having and using wisdom. This is important to understand because we will now merge verses 13-18 with the first paragraph of the chapter, and you will see the beauty of the logic of the first half of the chapter. Find the table you printed labeled “**The blessings that come from doing good.**” We will reference it as we proceed through this discussion. You’ll like what you see. I am amazed each time I see it. Examine the chart below and reference it to the table you printed at the start of this discussion. We will build this chart one row at a time.

I have purposely placed verses 13-15 on the right side of the page. It is in the upper right corner of the table you printed. The essence of these verses: Wisdom is really valuable. Pursue her.

¹³ *How blessed is the man who finds wisdom and the man who gains understanding.* ¹⁴ *For her profit is better than the profit of silver and her gain better than fine gold.* ¹⁵ *She is more precious than jewels; and nothing you desire compares with her.*

Next you will see how verse 16a relates to both verses 1-2 and verses 7-8. It is plain to see that the blessing in verse 16a is long life. Notice how remembering and obeying the teachings of the Bible generate length of days, years of life, and peace. Notice also how living a genuine, biblical fear of the Lord by avoiding or abandoning sinful practices provides a healthy and refreshed body, both of which aid in living a long life. Isn’t this beautiful?

¹³ *How blessed is the man who finds wisdom and the man who gains understanding.* ¹⁴ *For her profit is better than the profit of silver and her gain better than fine gold.* ¹⁵ *She is more precious than jewels; and nothing you desire compares with her.*

¹⁻² *My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments; for length of days and years of life, and peace they will add to you.*

⁷⁻⁸ *Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your body, and refreshment to your bones.*

^{16a} *Long life*

Now you will see how verse 16b relates to verses 3-4 and verses 9-10. It is plain to see that the blessings in verse 16b are riches and honor. Notice how giving of my time and energies generates favor and a good reputation (honor). Notice also how giving of my possessions produces financial abundance (riches). I say again, isn’t it beautiful how these verses go together? Those together equal riches and honor. See a visual on the following page.

¹³ How blessed is the man who finds wisdom and the man who gains understanding. ¹⁴ For her profit is better than the profit of silver and her gain better than fine gold. ¹⁵ She is more precious than jewels; and nothing you desire compares with her.

¹⁻² My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments; for length of days and years of life, and peace they will add to you.

⁷⁻⁸ Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your body, and refreshment to your bones.

^{16a} Long life

³⁻⁴ Do not let kindness and truth leave you; Bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favor and good repute in the sight of God and man.

⁹⁻¹⁰ Honor the LORD from your wealth, and from the first of all your produce; so your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine.

^{16b} riches and honor.

Lastly, we see how verses 17-18 relate to verses 5-6 and verses 11-12. Notice how trusting God to direct me generates a smooth path through life. Notice also how trusting God to correct me brings about God's love and favor (tree of life). Both of these together equal a happy life and a smooth path through life. See a visual on the following page.

		<p>¹³ How blessed is the man who finds wisdom and the man who gains understanding. ¹⁴ For her profit is better than the profit of silver and her gain better than fine gold. ¹⁵ She is more precious than jewels; and nothing you desire compares with her.</p>
<p>¹⁻² My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments; for length of days and years of life, and peace they will add to you.</p>	<p>⁷⁻⁸ Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your body, and refreshment to your bones.</p>	<p>¹⁶ Long life</p>
<p>³⁻⁴ Do not let kindness and truth leave you; Bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favor and good repute in the sight of God and man.</p>	<p>⁹⁻¹⁰ Honor the LORD from your wealth, and from the first of all your produce; so your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine.</p>	<p>^{16b} riches and honor.</p>
<p>⁵⁻⁶ Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.</p>	<p>¹¹⁻¹² My son, do not reject the discipline of the Lord, or loathe his reproof, for whom the Lord loves he reproves, even as a father, the son in whom he delights.</p>	<p>¹⁷⁻¹⁸ Her ways are pleasant ways and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, and happy are all who hold her fast.</p>

Proverbs chapter two taught us how to acquire wisdom, and chapter three showed us how to put wisdom into practice — how to live it. Having seen all that Solomon wrote in the first half of Proverbs chapter three, it is clear that this half of the chapter teaches the **Blessings that come from doing good**. This is beautiful. I hope you find it beautiful too. Now we will look at **The security that comes from not doing evil**. We will examine the second half of paragraph two in Proverbs chapter three, and then we will couple it with the last paragraph in the chapter. There we will see how living wisdom by avoiding or abandoning sin results in real security.

III. Learning to avoid sin and evil (Prov. 3:27-35)

Before we proceed, find the sheet, **The security that comes from not doing evil**. Print a copy and have it in front of you as you read this portion of the commentary.

In the first paragraph of Proverbs three, we saw how we need to obey and do good. In essence, it is a lesson on how to live a good and godly life. Living like this is wisdom on display. In the third paragraph, we will learn the things we must avoid if we are to be successful at living a good and godly life. Obeying in this area will also show wisdom.

In Matthew 22:34-40 the Pharisees were trying to trick Christ into saying something they could use to accuse him of wrongdoing. This passage reads,

³⁴ But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together. ³⁵ One of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, ³⁶ "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" ³⁷ And He said to him, "'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.' ³⁸ This is the great and foremost commandment. ³⁹ The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."

The first commandment is to love the LORD with everything that is in us. As I said earlier, when we conclude the discussion of Proverbs three, the first half of the chapter will tell us how to love the LORD with our whole heart. The second half of the chapter will tell us how to love our neighbor as ourselves. Prov. 3:27-35 consists of things we should not do and why we should not do them. If you and I love our neighbor as ourselves, we will be available to help them when they have a need, and we will not cause trouble for them. This is the essence of the paragraph we are about to discuss. Keep these thoughts in mind as we progress through the discussion.

A. Things we should not do (vv. 27-31)

Condition 1—Don't be uncaring (Prov. 3:27-28)

a) A lack of compassion for the needs of others—when they can't see it (v. 27)

Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it.

Gregory,

There are going to be times when someone we know or someone whose path we cross needs our help. If you and I really love our neighbor, we must try to help them if we can. It may be inconvenient, but genuine love for others will drive the obedient child of God to at least try to help. This verse appears to be talking about helping someone rather than merely giving them money. As you will see, verse 28 appears to be talking about giving money rather than merely helping the one in need. As I read our text, I am reminded of the Old Testament patriarch Job when it comes to helping those in need. In Job 31:16-23, Job was giving his defense to his friends explaining why he was not the wicked sinner they accused him of being. This passage reads,

¹⁶ "If I have (I have not) kept the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail,
¹⁷ or have (I have not) eaten my morsel alone, and the orphan has not shared it
¹⁸ (But from my youth he grew up with me as with a father,
and from infancy I guided her),
¹⁹ if I have (I have not) seen anyone perish for lack of clothing, or that the needy had no covering,
²⁰ if his loins have not thanked me, and if he has not been warmed with the fleece of my sheep,
²¹ if I have (I have not) lifted up my hand against the orphan, because I saw I had support in the gate,
²² let my shoulder fall from the socket, and my arm be broken off at the elbow."
(Dark letters added for clarity.)

Did you notice how he was such a giving man? He gave of himself, and he gave of his wealth. He was certainly the richest man of his day, but in spite of his wealth and position, he had an unshakeable faith in His God and lived what he believed. He was certainly the kind of man Prov. 10:22 is referring to when it says, "It is the blessing of the LORD that makes rich, and He adds no sorrow to it." As you read the passage above, you will notice that he did not fail to help those in need when he knew about it. In fact, he went out of his way to help people in need because he loved his neighbor as himself. His generosity and compassion were just two of the reasons why God bragged on Job to Satan. It is obvious that this is the kind of people you and I need to be.

It may be that you see someone's need but don't have the means to effectively help. In that case, passing them by is acceptable. Oh, but it is totally unacceptable when you have the means to help someone in need (when it is in your power to do it) and still pass them by. Our text tells us, "Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due." It is obvious from the verse that the need is known, and a decision must be made concerning what to do about it. The key here is the phrase **do not withhold**. The one in need will most likely think that you didn't even see him. I realize

that no one will know that you just don't care, but the LORD will know and will call you into account someday at the judgment. We who love and serve the LORD should never be guilty of doing this. How would you want to be treated if you had a need you couldn't meet, and you must depend upon someone else to come along side and help meet that need? So then, if you love your neighbor as yourself, your neighbor is **due** your help because it is the right thing to do. The story Christ told about the good Samaritan illustrates this point well. Luke 10:25-37 tells us,

²⁵ And a lawyer stood up and put Him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" ²⁶ And He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?" ²⁷ And he answered, "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND; AND YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." ²⁸ And He (Christ) said to him, "You have answered correctly; DO THIS AND YOU WILL LIVE." ²⁹ But wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus,

"And who is my neighbor?" ³⁰ Jesus replied and said, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went away leaving him half dead. ³¹ And by chance a priest was going down on that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. ³² Likewise a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, ³⁴ and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return I will repay you.' ³⁶ Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' hands?"

³⁷ And he said, "The one who showed mercy toward him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do the same."

In this passage Christ was teaching that someone who loves his neighbor will immediately jump in and help when there is a genuine need. Keep in mind, though, that when you see a need, it is your duty to investigate the situation and find out if the need is genuine? Sometimes people hide a need because they are embarrassed or are too proud to let someone else help them. Our text is talking about those times when you know that there is a genuine need. Our verse states that we are to help "those to whom it (help) is due." (Grayed text added for clarity). What does it mean to be **due**? Well, payment is due when someone has worked for it, but I don't think that is what this verse is teaching. I feel that the phrase could be paraphrased as **help is due those who have a need worthy of help**. If you find that the one in need did not generate the need and help from you will rectify the situation, by all means help him. If you find that he has generated the need and it is apparent that he has no intention of changing his ways, then helping him will do nothing more than prolong his downfall. When the bottom falls out, he will most likely learn that he must change his ways if he ever hopes to find a solution to his need.

Keep in mind that help is only expected **when it is in your power to do it**. That's right. If you have the ability and the opportunity to help, you should. It is the right thing to do. If you don't have the ability or the knowledge to help, then it is perfectly acceptable to pass up the opportunity. This is living Prov. 3:3-4 which says, "Do not let kindness and truth leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favor and good repute in the sight of God and man." Showing kindness to those in need is the godly way to respond and reaps rewards from the LORD. The Proverbs 31 woman was quick to help those in need. Verse 20a tells us that "She extends her hand to the poor." There she offered help if people were willing to accept her help. This is just the kind of woman she was on a regular basis, and this is the kind of person we should be on a regular basis.

b) A lack compassion for the needs of others—when they can see it (v. 28)

Do not say to your neighbor, "Go, and come back, and tomorrow I will give it," When you have it with you.

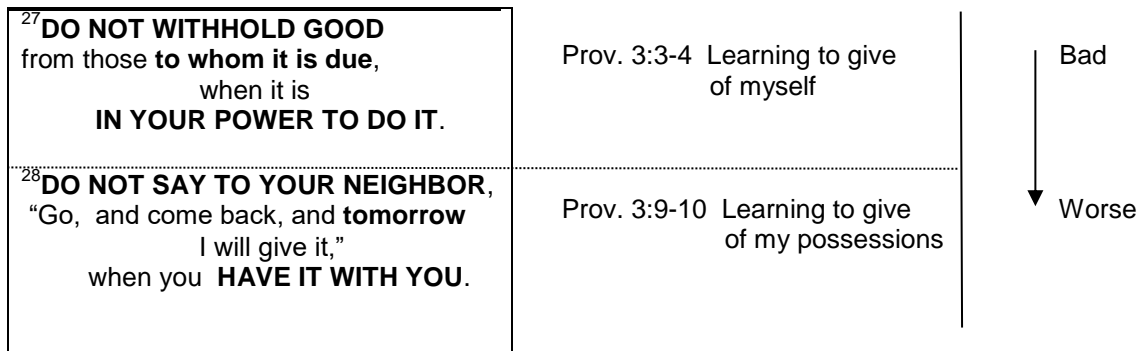
Once again, we are to show compassion upon those in need. In the previous verse, we saw that we are to give help in the form of our time and energies. In this verse, we are to give financial help once there is an awareness of the need. This is obvious by the fact that the one in need has come to you asking for help. The thing to remember here is that we are not to be so selfish or uncaring as to tell the one in need to come back later. Saying this is

usually an indication that you do not intend to help at all. The picture in verse 27 is that you have happened upon someone in need, and you must decide whether you will help. In verse 28 the picture is of one who has come to you asking for help, and you must decide if or how you will help. In verse 27 the person in need may not have been aware that you knew of the need, but in verse 28 he is fully aware that you know his need. I am reminded of a situation like verse 28 that happened to your mom and me. We felt called of the LORD to move from California to South Carolina to work at a home for troubled boys. We didn't have enough money to make the move, so I asked a wealthy man at church if we could borrow \$300 to make the trip. He said he would send it after we were on our way, so we started the trip across country. We fully expected the funds to catch up with us, but he never sent the money. In fact, I am convinced that even though he had money to spare, he never intended to send it. Fortunately, the LORD made our money stretch, and we arrived at the children's home 2,000 miles away with empty fuel tanks in both cars and \$25 to our name. That was alright though. In fact it was a valuable lesson in faith, and we learned a lot from the experience. So, our verse is saying, don't do like the man who promised to help us. It is not something a good and godly man will do. No, a godly man will make a promise and keep his word.

Verse 27 shows a man acting in secret. Here in verse 28, his actions are open for all to see. If you actually have funds or items your neighbor needs, there could be a couple of reason why you would tell a man to "Go, and come back, and tomorrow I will give it." You may be genuinely busy and cannot stop at the moment to give him what he needs. Rarely is this the case. It is more likely that you simply want to get rid of the guy, so you will lie to him saying that you will give him what he needs on another day knowing full well that you don't intend to do it. I don't like to have to admit it, but I was guilty of this same sin one time. A man was outside of a bank one day, and he approached me for help. He said he needed diapers and formula for the baby and asked for money. I told him I would meet him at the market a few blocks away, and as soon as he took off running, I went the other way. I didn't know whether to trust him so I left, and I have felt guilt ever sense. I confessed it to the LORD, but I cannot forget it. That guy depended on me, and I let him down. This kind of conduct is deceptive and dishonest. The LORD finds it disgusting. Instead, we are to give to the LORD through the one in need.

As I said in the previous point, when we desire to help someone, we need to be discerning regarding who we help. I say again that it is always wise to research the situation to see if the person generated the need by poor work habits, poor spending habits, or plain laziness. Sometimes you can help a man more by letting him fail miserably in order to learn how to change his ways so that he doesn't continue generating difficulties for himself. Helping him only postpones this learning process.

Notice in the illustration below how verse 27 is a bad thing to do, but verse 28 is a worse thing to do. As you will see, verse 27 is a rather mild wrong, verse 28 is a more severe wrong, and verses 29-31 are successively more evil. We should not be guilty of any of them. Verse 27 is an illustration of 3:3-4 earlier in the chapter, and verse 28 is an illustration of 3:9-10. This is an interesting comparison of these two verses. Take a few minutes and think about it. See it visually below.



Condition 2—Don't be contentious (Prov. 3:29-30)

a) Don't create trouble for your neighbor—when he can't see it (v. 29)

Do not devise harm against your neighbor, while he lives securely beside you.

There are bound to be times, even if they are rare, when you may want to get even with your neighbor in return for some real or perceived hurt that you feel he has caused you. Obviously this is not a godly response. Godly men and women know that it is wrong to go behind a neighbor's back and cause trouble for him when he has done nothing to you and thinks everything between you is fine. Solomon simply said don't do it. Instead, we should obey Prov. 3:3-4 which tells us that we should always be kind and truthful with others. Solomon restated this truth in Prov. 24:28 where he wrote, "Do not be a witness against your neighbor without cause, and do not deceive with your lips." It is as simple as that. Don't do it.

What do we know about a man who would secretly cause trouble for his neighbor? First, he is a liar. Prov. 10:18a sums it up well when it says, "He who conceals hatred has lying lips." Prov. 26:24-28 tells us that "He who hates disguises it with his lips, but he lays up deceit in his heart. When he speaks graciously, do not believe him, for there are seven abominations in his heart. Though his hatred covers itself with guile, his wickedness will be revealed before the assembly." Both Prov. 10:6b and 11b remind us that "the mouth of the wicked conceals violence." This kind of man can easily ruin his neighbor. Prov. 11:9a states that "With his mouth the godless man destroys his neighbor." Many times this is worse than destroying a neighbor's property in an attempt to get even for some real or imagined hurt. It is sometimes difficult to know if your neighbor hates you because Prov. 26:28a tells us, "A lying tongue hates those it crushes." Hopefully the man being hurt will recognize his neighbor's intent by the way his neighbor talks and acts around him.

Be assured that a man who will secretly devise ways to hurt his neighbor will suffer loss as a result. Prov. 14:21 tells us that "He who despises his neighbor sins, but happy is he who is gracious to the poor." He will not prosper by sinning. Prov. 28:13 says, "He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion." A man may think he is getting away with something by causing trouble for his neighbor, but he will learn in the end that such a foolish act will be very costly. Life would be so much better if the hateful man would recognize his actions and attitude as sin and then repent. Oh, but as a general rule a hateful man is too blinded by hatred to see the truth. His actions are equally as destructive whether he hurts his neighbor out of spite or in jest. Prov. 26:18-19 makes this clear when it says, "Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows and death, so is the man who deceives his neighbor, and says, 'Was I not joking?'" Oh, but you and I can see the error in deceiving our neighbor. Solomon simply says, "Don't do it." Instead, be kind and truthful. We will never go wrong by living up to this standard. Keep in mind that the principle of sow and reap is just as valid here as in any other case. Prov. 26:27 sums it up well when it states, "He who digs a pit will fall into it, and he who rolls a stone, it will come back on him." If we do good, we will receive good in return, but if we do evil we will receive evil in return with all of its detrimental consequences.

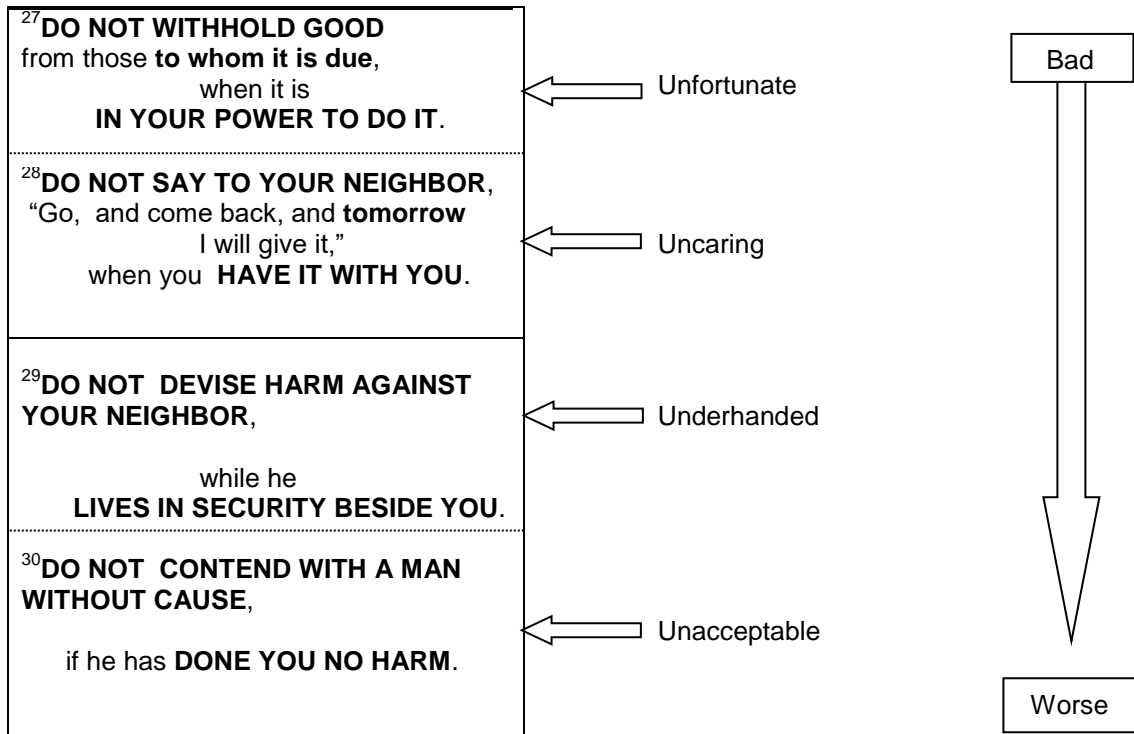
Before we leave this verse, be sure to keep in mind that a man who would devise evil against his neighbor behind his back is being deceitful. In the next verse, the act is being done in the open for all to see.

b) Don't fight with your neighbor—when he can see it (v. 30)

Do not contend with a man without cause, if he has done you no harm.

Being divisive behind another person's back is bad enough, but it is even worse to be contentious and combative with your neighbor in the open for all to see. Our verse doesn't say not to argue or fight with a neighbor if he initiates the disagreement where you have no way out. It does say not to argue or fight with a neighbor when he has done nothing to justify venting your anger in such a fashion. Prov. 11:12 says that "He who despises his neighbor lacks sense, but a man of understanding keeps silent." An angry, resentful, bitter man is the one who will fight and argue with others for no apparent reason. A good and godly man would never do this. He would merely keep his thoughts to himself and try to find a more constructive way to find a satisfactory solution. The emphasis of this verse is on the fact that the other guy has done nothing wrong to generate the disagreement. The trouble has simply been fabricated in the mind of the contentious man. You and I need to be the man who lives by Philippians 4:8 which says, "Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things." If we dwell on good things, then evil things will not find a place in our thinking.

It is obvious that both verses 29 and 30 deal with a contentious spirit. Verse 29 is a more severe sin than verse 28, and verse 30 is a more severe sin than verse 29. Can you see the progression?



Condition 3—Don't desire to be like the wicked man (Prov. 3:31)

Do not envy a man of violence and do not choose any of his ways.

Now we come to the worst of these situations. It is to desire to be like the wicked man. We who have been born again are dead to sin and we ought to live like it. I admit that believers can be so weighed down with trials and hardships that we might start thinking that it would be better to be like the wicked man since he doesn't appear to have to endure all of the trials we experience at times. Keep in mind here that we are talking about envying a violent man, not simply some casual sinner. The dictionary defines **violence** as **physical force used so as to injure, damage, or destroy; extreme roughness of action**. We are talking about some mean, destructive people, not simply someone who will steal a candy bar. Read Psalm 73 below and see how even the godly man Asaph was lulled into desiring to be like the wicked man—for a while that is.

¹ Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart! ² But as for me, my feet came close to stumbling, my steps had almost slipped. ³ For I was envious of the arrogant as I saw the prosperity of the wicked. ⁴ For there are no pains in their death, and their body is fat. ⁵ They are not in trouble as other men, nor are they plagued like mankind. ⁶ Therefore pride is their necklace; the garment of violence covers them. ⁷ Their eye bulges from fatness; the imaginations of their heart run riot. ⁸ They mock and wickedly speak of oppression; they speak from on high. ⁹ They have set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue parades through the earth. ¹⁰ Therefore his people return to this place, and waters of abundance are drunk by them. ¹¹ They say, "How does God know? and is there knowledge with the Most High?" ¹² Behold, these are the wicked; and always at ease, they have increased in wealth.

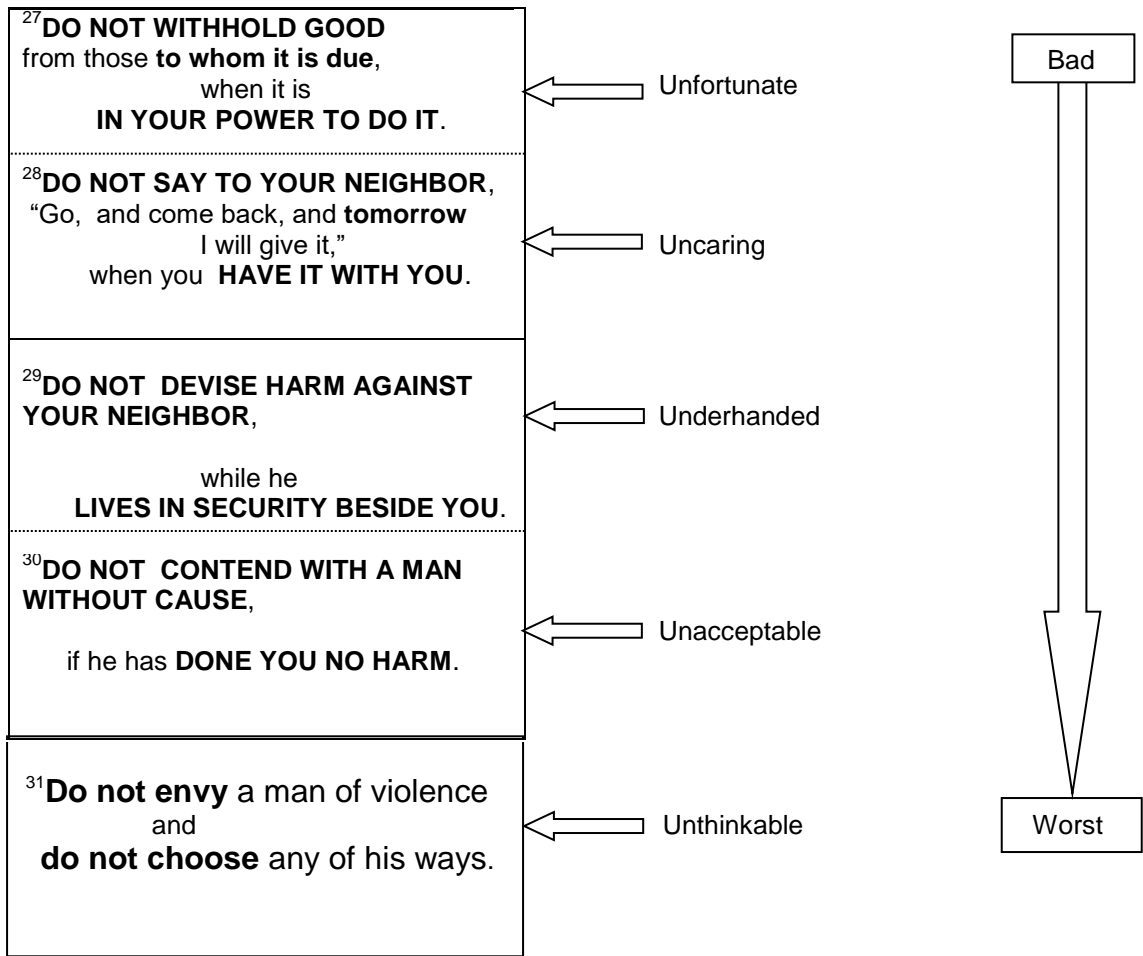
¹³ Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure and washed my hands in innocence; ¹⁴ for I have been stricken all day long and chastened every morning. ¹⁵ If I had said, "I will speak thus," behold, I would have betrayed the generation of Your children. ¹⁶ When I pondered to understand this, it was troublesome in my sight ¹⁷ until I came into the sanctuary of God; then I perceived their end.

¹⁸ Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction. ¹⁹ How they are destroyed in a moment! They are utterly swept away by sudden terrors! ²⁰ Like a dream when one awakes, O LORD, when aroused, You will despise their form. ²¹ When my heart was embittered and I was pierced within, ²² then I was senseless and ignorant; I was like a beast before You. ²³ Nevertheless I am continually with You; You have taken hold of my right hand. ²⁴ With Your counsel You will guide me, and afterward receive me to glory. ²⁵ Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth. ²⁶ My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. ²⁷ For, behold, those who are far from You will perish; You have destroyed all those who are unfaithful to You. ²⁸ But as for me, the nearness of God is my good; I have made the LORD GOD my refuge, that I may tell of all Your works. (Underlining added for clarity).

Now, if a godly man like Asaph could come to a point in his life where he envied the wicked and desired to be like them, then given the right circumstances and state of mind, we too could come to a point where we might envy wicked people and all the pleasures they enjoy. Solomon warned us not to do it. In fact, he wrote, “do not choose any of his ways.” His ways are contrary to the good and godly life the LORD desires of us, and as you saw in Psalm 73, the end of a sinful life is disaster and ruin.

Notice in verse 31 of our text above that to want to be like wicked men is a conscious choice. It is something that we must decide, not simply something that happens over time. Solomon restated the command of this verse in two other verses. Prov. 22:17-18 says, “Do not let your heart envy sinners, but live in the fear of the LORD always. Surely there is a future, and your hope will not be cut off.” Then too, Prov. 24:1-2 tells us, “Do not be envious of evil men, nor desire to be with them; for their minds devise violence, and their lips talk of trouble.” The lifestyle wicked men enjoy may seem attractive, but like Asaph, we must always remember the heavy price they will pay for their sin, not to mention that as a general rule they will most likely experience a premature death. Then too, we don’t need to worry about the things they do. Prov. 24:19-20 states, “Do not fret because of evildoers or be envious of the wicked; for there will be no future for the evil man; the lamp of the wicked will be put out.”

Son, determine that you will avoid all five detrimental attitudes and actions described in this paragraph of text. Instead, pursue godliness, and be assured that even though you will experience trails and hardships, the rewards that await you are peace and joy both now and when you stand in the presence of your precious LORD and savior Jesus Christ. As they say, the rewards of living a good and godly life are out of this world. See the chart on the following page.



B. Why we should not do these things (Prov. 3:32-35)

1) How the LORD treats uncaring men and upright men (vs. 32)

For the devious are an abomination to the LORD; but He is intimate with the upright.

Read verse 32 again, and I want to show you some interesting logic. As you will see, verse 32 relates to verses 27 and 28. Look carefully at the chart below, and I believe you will see the logic right away. I will now try to explain it to you. Look on the following page.

The offense

God's response
to the disobedient

God's response
to the obedient

²⁷ **DO NOT WITHHOLD GOOD**
from those **to whom it is due**,
when it is
IN YOUR POWER TO DO IT.

²⁸ **DO NOT SAY TO YOUR NEIGHBOR,**
"Go, and come back, and **tomorrow**
I will give it,"
when you **HAVE IT WITH YOU.**

³² For **the devious** are.
an abomination to the
LORD;

but He is intimate with
the upright.

Surely we should not fail to help those in need when we know of the need and **have the power** to do it, and we should not put off helping those who ask for help when we **have the means** to meet that need. In verse 32, we see the LORD's attitude toward those who obey verses 27 and 28 and those who don't. Verse 32a states, "*For the devious are an abomination to the LORD.*" Strong's Concordance defines *devious* as to **go wrong, go crooked; perverse**. What is wrong, crooked, or perverse about the things in these two verses? It is simply this: as we saw earlier in Matthew 22:34-40, we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. Therefore, the wrong, crooked, or perverse action in verse 27 is to walk right past a person due our help and not have any compassion upon them. The wrong, crooked, or perverse action in verse 28 is to be so calloused and selfish as to make the needy person wait for help or not give any help at all. Verse 32 tells us that the LORD hates both of these actions because they are devious. On the other hand, He loves the actions and attitudes of an upright man. As we saw above, an *upright* man is one who **does what is right in the sight of the LORD**. Notice how the LORD is not only pleased with an upright man, but He is *intimate* with him because, like Job, the upright man will do whatever he can to help those in need. Yes, the LORD is close and personal with the upright man, and He pours out lots of love and blessings upon him. These things alone are great reasons for living a good and godly life and giving to those in need.

2) How the LORD treats contentious men and good men (vs. 33)

The curse of the LORD is on the house of the wicked, but He blesses the dwelling of the righteous.

As we saw above, we are not to cause trouble for others behind their back, and we are not to argue or fight with them in the open for no justifiable reason. In verse 33, we see the LORD's attitude toward those who obey and those who disobey. See the chart below.

The offense

God's response
to the disobedient

God's response
to the obedient

²⁹ **DO NOT DEVISE HARM AGAINST**
YOUR NEIGHBOR,
while he
LIVES IN SECURITY BESIDE YOU.

³⁰ **DO NOT CONTEND WITH A MAN**
WITHOUT CAUSE,
if he has **DONE YOU NO HARM.**

³³ The curse of the LORD is
on **the house** of the wicked,

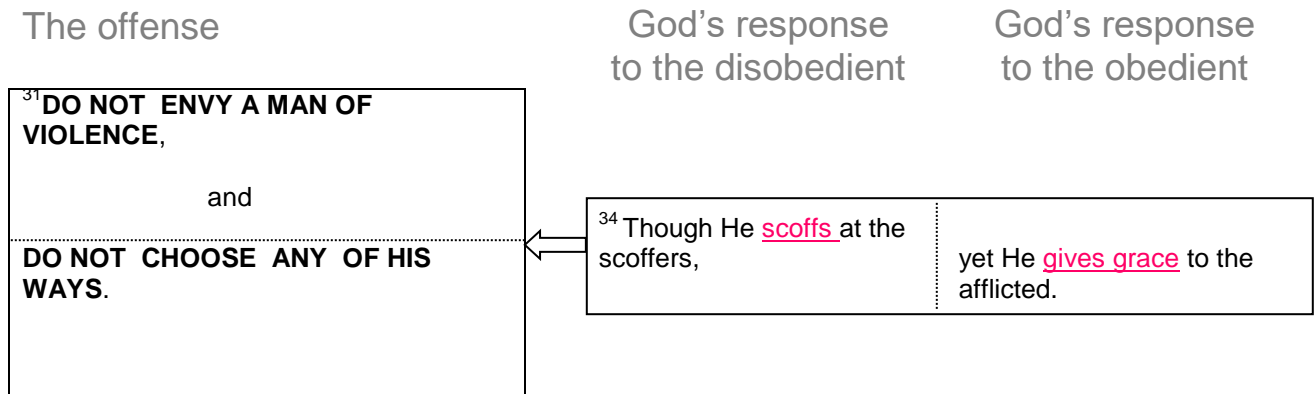
but He blesses **the dwelling**
of the righteous.

It is obvious to see that the LORD pronounces a *curse* upon the home of those who treat their neighbor with contempt or contention. As such, the LORD will not do anything to bless the wicked man's home or help him out of the hurts, heartaches, and losses that he generates for himself as a direct result of his sinful actions. On the other hand, the LORD is pleased to bless the home of a man who lives in a good, right, and legal manner (righteous). Since he is a good and godly man, the LORD desires nothing but good toward him, and the fellowship this kind of man enjoys with his LORD is worth all of the effort that goes into living a good and godly life.

3) How the LORD treats scoffers and the afflicted (vs. 34)

Though He scoffs at the scoffers, yet He gives grace to the afflicted.

By now you probably have a good idea about where the logic of this paragraph is heading. The LORD scoffs at the man who scoffs at God, His Word, and those who try to live a good and godly life. The wicked man talks in a ridiculing and demeaning manner toward the LORD, so the LORD does the same to him in return. The LORD simply stands back and allows the normal and natural results of the wicked man's violently sinful deeds to destroy him. On the other hand, the LORD is pleased with the way the godly man depends upon God's grace when the wicked man afflicts him, and as a result, He gives the godly man more and more grace to stand up under the trails and persecution he endures for the testimony of Christ. I am sure you would agree that receiving the grace of God is far better than experiencing the punishment and loss that results from the wicked man's sinful lifestyle.



4) The results of good and bad behavior (vs. 35)

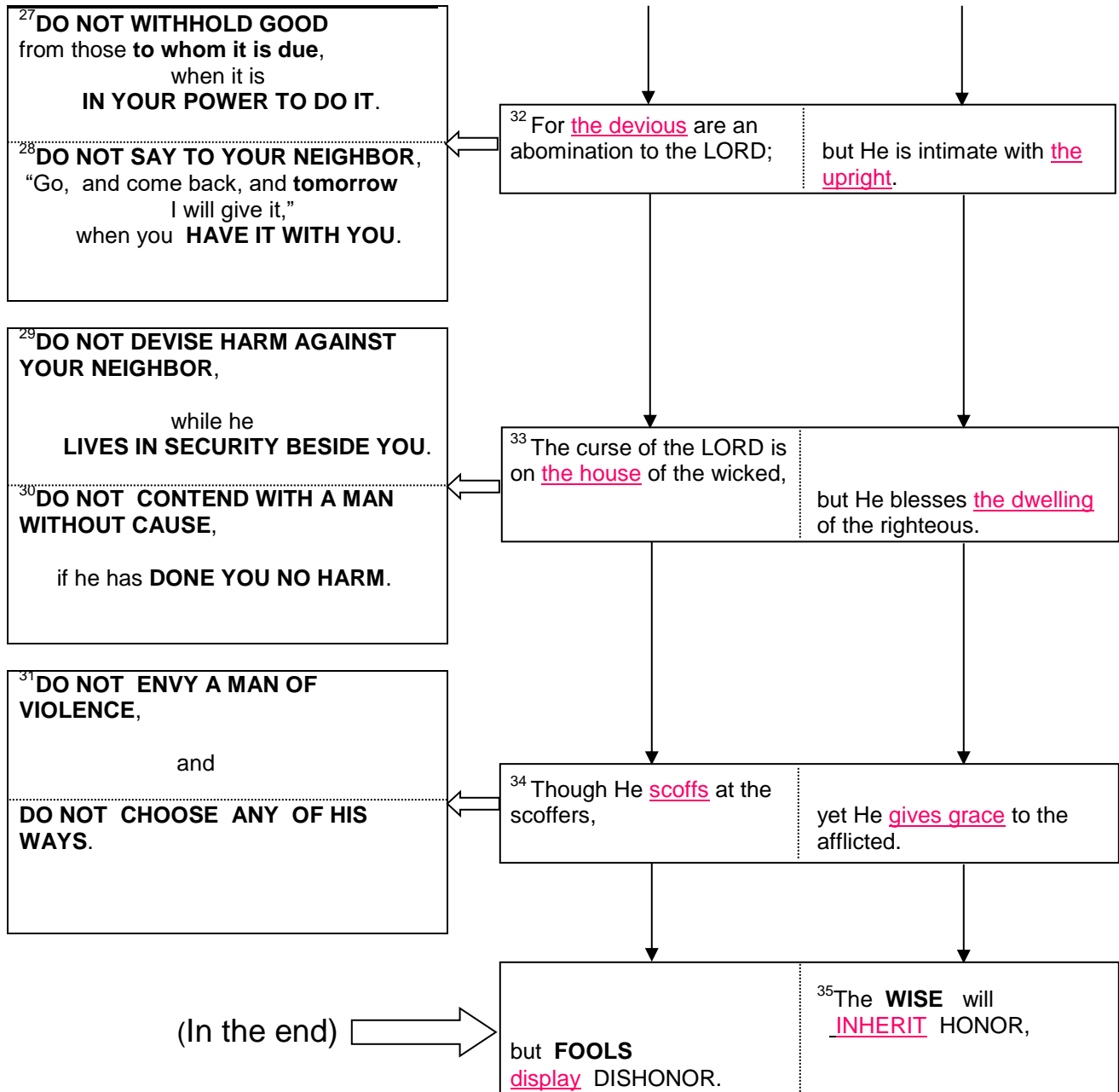
The wise will inherit honor, but fools display dishonor.

Hang in there with me. We are almost finished with the discussion of the last part of Proverbs chapter three. Notice in the chart below how verse 35 says that the one who disobeys verses 27-30 is a fool, and it says that those who obey Solomon's commands are wise. Notice also that whereas wise men inherit honor and praise as a result of their good and godly lifestyle, fools display dishonor and disgust as a result of the stupid, foolish, and sinful things they do. I would much rather have good men give me praise and honor for being and doing good than to have good men look down upon me with scorn and disgust as a result of my stupid, destructive, and selfish attitudes and actions. I believe you would wholeheartedly agree. See the completed chart on the following page. It shows the relationship between all of the verses in this paragraph of text.

The offense

God's response
to the disobedient

God's response
to the obedient



This concludes the basic discussion of paragraph three of Proverbs chapter three. We will now look at the second half of paragraph two of the chapter and combine them like we did with the first half of the chapter. Follow along, and you will see the beauty of the logic of this half of the chapter as well.

B. The security wisdom provides (Prov. 3:19-26)

¹⁹ *The LORD by wisdom founded the earth, by understanding He established the heavens.* ²⁰
By His knowledge the deeps were broken up and the skies drip with dew. ²¹ *My son, let them*

*not vanish from your sight; keep **sound wisdom** and **discretion**,²² so **they** will be life to your soul and adornment to your neck.²³ Then you will walk in your way securely and your foot will not stumble.²⁴ When you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.²⁵ Do not be afraid of sudden fear nor of the onslaught of the wicked when it comes;²⁶ for the LORD will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being caught.*

1. Recognize the tools the LORD used in creating the world (vv. 19-20).

*¹⁹ The LORD by wisdom founded the earth, by understanding He established the heavens.²⁰ By His knowledge the deeps were broken up and the skies drip with dew.²¹ My son, let **them** not vanish from your sight;*

Notice the word **them** in verse 21. I fear that too many times we read right over words like this without understanding what they are really teaching. It refers to **wisdom**, **understanding**, and **knowledge** all of which the LORD used to create everything visible and invisible. He had the knowledge to know what to make, the understanding to know how to make them, and the wisdom to make them the best and in the best way. When He created, He put the laws of physics into motion generating real stability. These laws can be depended upon to continue working the same in the future as they have in the past.

2. Realize the importance of acquiring and using those same tools (vv. 21-22).

*keep **sound wisdom** and **discretion**,²² so **they** will be life to your soul and adornment to your neck.*

Gregory, notice the word **they** in verse 22 above. To what does it refer? Look at the second half of verse 21, and you will see that it is referring back to **sound wisdom** and **discretion**. These are important commodities to possess. You see, you and I can experience security in our lives when we use sound wisdom, understanding, and knowledge on a regular basis. We need biblical knowledge in order to know what we should and should not do; we need biblical understanding in order to know why we should or should not do certain things; and we need sound, practical wisdom in order to know the best way to do those things. All of these things together produce a good and godly life resulting in security that lasts. It is critical that we don't let them slip away from us. We especially need **sound wisdom** and **discretion**. As you will remember, **sound wisdom** is doing those practical things that simply make good sense. This would be like being kind to your neighbor, telling the truth, not going places where you know there is danger, saving money for a rainy day, etc. These things just make good sense. We also need **discretion**. As I said earlier, **discretion** is two-sided. It is the ability to see a problem or opportunity for what it really is and not what it appears on the surface, and it is the ability to figure out good solutions that will bring about good results. If we will do this on a regular basis, we will live a long life (**life to your soul**) and establish and maintain a good and godly reputation (**adornment to your neck**). Others will see it, and it will be as lovely in their sight as the finest necklace any woman could wear.

3. Visualize the value of using these tools on a regular basis (vv. 23-26).

²³ Then you will walk in your way securely and your foot will not stumble.²⁴ When you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.²⁵ Do not be afraid of sudden fear nor of the onslaught of the wicked when it comes;²⁶ for the LORD will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being caught.

a. Your path through life will be secure (v. 23)

²³ Then you will walk in your way securely and your foot will not stumble.

Sound wisdom and **discretion** will either smooth the rough spots of life or guide you around them. Since you will be able to wisely navigate life's obstacles, you will indeed be able to **walk in your way securely**. It is not as though the bumps and hard knocks of life will not be there, but you will have the knowledge, understanding, insight, discretion, and wisdom to see them for what they are and either find a way to navigate around them, remove them, or proceed through them unscathed. That's what verse 23 means when it says **your foot will not stumble**. This is

what Solomon was referring to in Prov. 4:12 where he wrote, *“When you walk, your steps will not be impeded; and if you run, you will not stumble.”* Isn't this a wonderful promise? We can expect this security when we use wisdom, but wicked men and women do not have it that good. Prov. 4:19 says of them that, *“The way of the wicked is like darkness; they do not know over what they stumble.”* It also says in Prov. 24:16, *“For a righteous man falls seven times, and rises again, but the wicked stumble in time of calamity.”* Only people with sound wisdom and discretion can experience such a smooth path through life. Others have a rough road ahead.

b. You will not be afraid while you are asleep (v. 24)

²⁴ *When you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.*

If you have and maintain *sound wisdom* and *discretion*, you will sleep peacefully, totally unafraid of what life may bring your way in the night hours. In fact, you will sleep like a baby (*your sleep will be sweet*) and will awaken refreshed. You will not only be ready for the day, but you will be eager to face the challenges of the new day.

c. You will not be afraid while you are awake (vv. 25-26)

²⁵ *Do not be afraid of sudden fear nor of the onslaught of the wicked when it comes;* ²⁶ *for the LORD will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being caught.*

When you are awake you will *not be afraid* of what may come your way. Wicked men and women are always planning some evil deed against innocent people. We saw as much when we examined Prov. 1:8-19. Notice verse 25 above does not say “if” wicked people do these things. No, it says *“when”* they do so. Sometime, somewhere, wicked people will try to harm you or take unfair advantage of you, but even then you have no need to be afraid because you will know that the LORD is the one protecting you. *Your confidence* will be in Him, and He will not allow you to be caught in the wicked man's trap. Job 1:6-10 show us how even Satan admitted that the LORD protects His own. The text says,

⁶ *Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them.* ⁷ *The LORD said to Satan, “From where do you come?” Then Satan answered the LORD and said, “From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it.”* ⁸ *The LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil.”* ⁹ *Then Satan answered the LORD, “Does Job fear God for nothing?”* ¹⁰ *Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.* (Text underlined for clarity).

So, since the LORD is the One protecting you He certainly will *keep your foot from being caught*. That's His job, and He does it extremely well. You can count on it every moment of the day or night. Isn't it wonderful the kind of things *sound wisdom* and *discretion* will do for a born-again child of God? I am constantly amazed. Let me illustrate. My wife, daughter, grandsons, and I met at 6 AM on a Wednesday morning in Greenville to drive to Charleston. We had no sooner taken our seats in my daughter's van when a 19-year-old man approached us with a sawed-off shotgun to rob us. He ordered me out of the car, and because I had trained extensively in combat style handgun use, I came out of the car gun first. He saw that he was about to die, so he turned and ran. Sound wisdom was understanding the need to train in case someone desired to hurt me or my family, and discretion was choosing to advance on my opponent instead of allowing him to hurt one or more of us.

As you can see, the second half of the second paragraph of Proverbs chapter three shows the security that comes from avoiding evil. This is important to understand because we will now merge verses 19-26 with the third paragraph of the chapter, and you will see the beauty of the logic of the second half of the chapter. Find the table you printed labeled **“The security that comes from not doing evil.”** We will reference it as we proceed through this discussion. You will have to put on your thinking cap, but I believe you'll like what you see. I am amazed each time I see it.

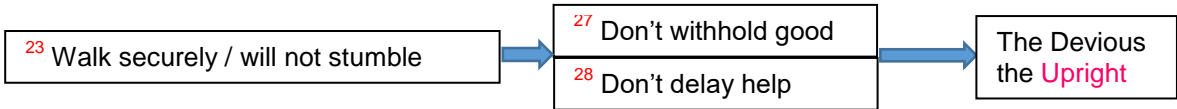
The logic of this half of the chapter is absolutely beautiful, and as you might expect, it is equally as fascinating as the first half of the chapter. Notice how verses 27-35 in the table look just like we saw in the text layout at the completion of our discussion of Prov. 3:27-35 (paragraph three). As you will remember, we saw how the second half of paragraph two (Prov. 3:19-26) showed the security that comes from avoiding evil practices. Refer to the

visual below. We will build a chart like we did in the first half of the chapter. It is an abbreviated version of the table you printed. Be sure to refer to the printed table as well as this abbreviated visual as we proceed.

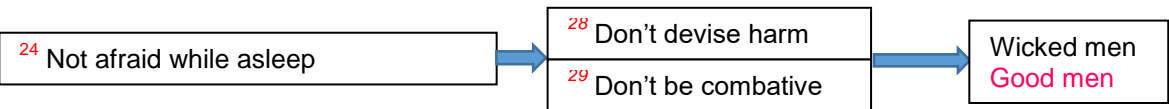
We thoroughly discussed verses 19-22 and saw how important wisdom, knowledge, understanding, sound wisdom, and discretion are to the man who desires real security.

¹⁹ *The LORD by wisdom founded the earth, by understanding He established the heavens.* ²⁰ *By His knowledge the deeps were broken up and the skies drip with dew.* ²¹ *My son, let them not vanish from your sight; keep sound wisdom and discretion,* ²² *so they will be life to your soul and adornment to your neck.*

Now, verse 23 shows that those who are **upright** do not withhold good and do not delay giving help to those in need will walk securely and will not stumble. They will have a smooth path through life. God is intimate with them, but He hates the man who is devious and who either will not help someone in need or delays helping him if at all.



Verse 24 shows that **those who do not do** hurtful things behind his neighbor's back or fight with him in the open when the neighbor has done absolutely nothing wrong will sleep peacefully without any fear that something awful will happen to them during the night. The LORD blesses those who live like this, but He only curses the house of those who are evil, contentious, and argumentative.

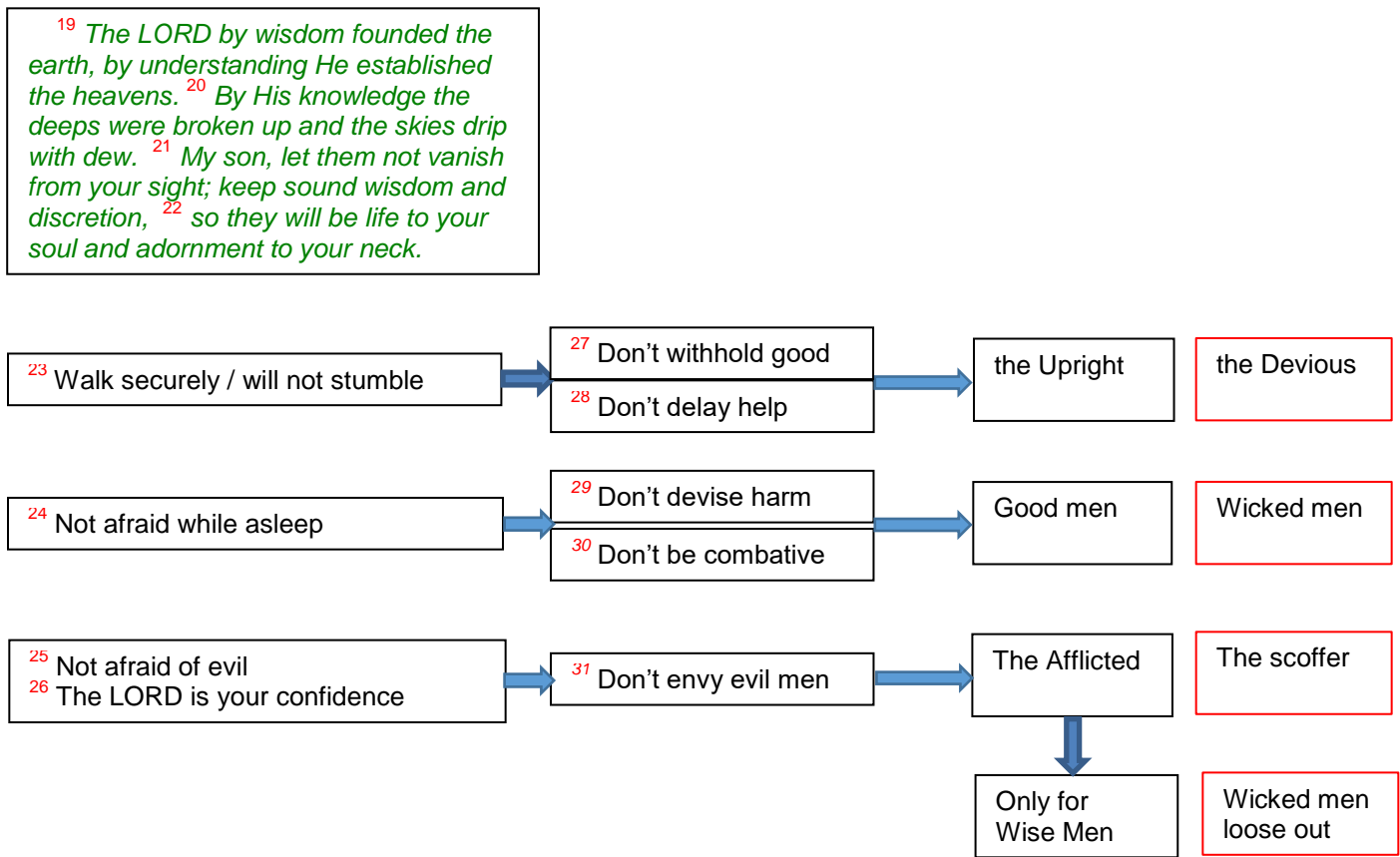


Verses 25 and 26 show that godly men will not be afraid of being hurt by wicked men during the day because the godly man doesn't want anything to do with wicked men, let alone want to be like him. The LORD gives ample amounts of grace to **the man who is being afflicted** by evil men, and consequently the godly man can have complete confidence that the LORD will protect him. Conversely, the LORD stands back and scoffs at those who scoff at God and those who desire to live godly.



Now let's pull all of this together. See the completed chart below. The essence of this half of the chapter is stated in verse 31. It teaches that people who do not do the evil things listed in verses 27 through verse 30 **inherit honor** because of their good and godly conduct toward God and men. On the contrary, those who do these evil things **display dishonor** as a result of their greedy, contentious, and evil conduct toward their neighbor. Take a close look at the full-page table you printed before we started this discussion. It may take some meditation time in

order to fully understand all that this section is teaching, but the time will be worth the work. See the completed chart below. The boxes in red are those who do not qualify for security from God.



Let's briefly review what we have learned so far. It is obvious from verses 19-20 that wisdom, understanding and knowledge are important to the LORD. Therefore, they should be important to us. But why? It is quite simple. Verses 21 and 22 tell us that regularly maintaining sound wisdom and discretion will produce life at its best and will cause us to become beautiful people in the eyes of good people. Now look at verse 23 on the table. Notice how maintaining these things results in real security and a path through life that is void of the hurts and losses that wicked men must endure as a result of their sin. Why does this happen? Scroll across the row to verses 27 and 28. It happens because we have not been selfish. Instead, we will have been generous to those in need. Now locate verse 24 in the chart. Notice how maintaining sound wisdom and discretion results in peaceful sleep, the kind of sleep where there is no fear of what evil that might come our way during the night at the hands of wicked men. This is why Solomon wrote in Pro. 19:23, *The fear of the LORD leads to life, so that one may sleep satisfied, untouched by evil.* Now scroll across the row to verses 29 and 30. This happens because we have not made an enemy of our neighbor by being deceitful or contentious. Finally, locate verses 25 and 26. Notice how there is no need to fear what evil men may do to us because the LORD is our security, and He is always there to protect us. Why does he do this? Scroll across to verse 31. There you can see that shunning the evil man and clinging to the LORD produces this security. Because we have not done the evil things evil men have done, the LORD is glad to protect us. As verse 35 shows, we can either be a fool and engage in all or some of the evil things listed, or we can be good and godly men and enjoy the peace and security that results from good and godly behavior. The choice is mine, and the choice is yours. Which will you choose?

As you can see, the second half of Proverbs three is rightly entitled **The security that comes from not doing evil.** Now I ask you, isn't the logic of chapter three absolutely wonderful? I think so, and every time I read or study Proverbs chapter three, I am amazed all over again. Son, I hope you see and appreciate the beauty and wonder of Proverbs. Solomon did such a tremendous job of teaching us how to be wise and live wisdom in a good and godly

manner. Praise the LORD for Solomon and his writings. Now it is our turn to live what he taught us. Gregory, God wants to give you this wisdom. Seek it as Proverbs chapter 2 outlines. Will you practice it as chapter 3 instructs? I hope you will. It will change your life forever.

Now that we have looked at the whole of Proverbs chapter three, what can we deduce from what we have learned? It is simply this: Since the fear of the LORD is the foundation upon which knowledge acquired (Prov. 1:7), and the fear of the LORD is the foundation of wisdom (Prov. 9:10), then the fear of the LORD is the driving force that will cause a believer in Christ to live what Proverbs three teaches. His love and reverence for his great God will drive him to do the good that verses 1-12 tell him he should do, and his fear of broken fellowship with such a great God will drive him to abandon all forms of sin and evil included in the list in verses 27-35. Living a genuine, biblical fear of the LORD is not burdensome. Rather, it is a joy, especially knowing the peace, contentment, and security that results from being faithful to the LORD and obedient to His Word. It is our responsibility, and it is our privilege as children of God. Son, don't play church. Instead, immerse yourself in the Scriptures, acquire a biblical fear of the LORD, and serve Him faithfully the rest of your life. Do it for me, do it for yourself, and do it for the LORD's glory. You'll never regret it.

Proverbs 4:1-27

Why live wisdom

In Proverbs chapter one, we saw the four steps to learning and living the book of Proverbs. We also saw the attitude we must acquire and maintain if we are to be successful in living the four steps. Next we saw the kind of friends we must reject if we are to maintain a genuine fear of the LORD, and then we saw what happens if we reject wisdom. In Proverbs chapter two, we saw how to search for and find a biblical fear of the LORD and ultimately wisdom. In Proverbs chapter three, we saw how wisdom is lived out in the life of a believer. Now in Proverbs chapter four, we will see why we should not only seek wisdom but practice it faithfully every day. This chapter is the practical application of the fear of the LORD. This chapter should drive a believer to avoid or abandon every sinful practice so that he doesn't let sin rob him of intimate fellowship with the Father. There are three paragraphs in this chapter, and they can be briefly outlined as follows.

1. My dad taught me to seek wisdom, and it worked for me (Verses 1-9)
2. It will work for you as well (Verses 10-19)
3. Be careful what you do (4:20-27)

Paragraph 1 – My dad taught me, and it worked for me. (vv. 1-9)

¹ *Hear, O sons, the instruction of a father, and give attention that you may gain understanding,*
² *for I give you sound teaching; do not abandon my instruction.* ³ *When I was a son to my father,*
tender and the only son in the sight of my mother, ⁴ *then he taught me and said to me,*

"Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments and live; ^b acquire wisdom! Acquire understanding! Do not forget nor turn away from the words of my mouth. ⁶ Do not forsake her, and she will guard you; love her, and she will watch over you. ⁷ The beginning of wisdom is: Acquire wisdom; and with all your acquiring, get understanding. ⁸ Prize her, and she will exalt you; she will honor you if you embrace her. ⁹ She will place on your head a garland of grace; she will present you with a crown of beauty."

1. Solomon started by getting his own sons' attention (verses 1-2)

¹ *Hear, O sons, the instruction of a father, and give attention that you may gain understanding,*
² *for I give you sound teaching; do not abandon my instruction.*

Solomon was a teacher and a preacher, but he was also a father. Here at the start of chapter four he presented his discourse to his "*sons*." My good friend Dr. Randy Pike reminded me one day that the Scriptures only record Solomon as having one son and two daughters. It would seem logical to assume that he had quite a few sons and daughters since he had 700 wives and 300 concubines. It is possible, though, that he had only 3 children if his sperm count was low. In that case, he would have had difficulty getting his wives pregnant. You decide, but how many children he had is not important to our discussion. What is important is the fact that we can learn the same valuable lessons Solomon tried to teach his own *son(s)*.

Notice that his sons were to *hear* the instruction of their father. Strong's says that to *hear* means *to listen to, yield to, to obey, be obedient*. So then, hearing in this sense is more than acknowledging the fact that someone has spoken. Rather, it is listening with the intent of understanding what is being said and then being willing to respond properly. Obedience is the goal here. In the next phrase of our text Solomon said *give attention*. This word is much like *hear*, but this one refers more to *paying attention to detail* so that you will not only learn what is being taught, but learn it accurately. So then, in a sense, you learn knowledge through instruction, and you learn understanding by grasping the reasons behind what is being said. That is what brings *understanding* to light.

The word *instruction* in verse one is the same Hebrew word as *discipline* in Prov. 1:3. We discussed this word earlier in the commentary, but it bears repeating. As we said there, Strong's defines *instruction* or *discipline* as [discipline](#), [chastening](#), [correction](#). Paraphrases of the dictionary definitions for these three words are 1) [discipline](#) is defined as [training that corrects, molds, or perfects the mental faculties or moral character; to train or develop by instruction and exercise esp. in self-control](#); 2) [chastening](#) is defined as [to correct by punishment or suffering; to cause to be more humble or restrained](#); and 3) [correction](#) is defined as [implies taking action to remove errors, faults, deviations, defects](#). So, the goal of instruction is threefold: 1) to train young men so that they will have more self-control and character, 2) to punish them so that they will become better people, and/or 3) to correct them so that they will abandon wrong practices and choose to do the right things instead. It is obvious that all three aspects of instruction are designed to be of benefit even though it may be painful when they are applied.

Verse two gives the reason Solomon's advice and instruction should be considered important enough to learn and obey. Solomon simply said, "*I give you sound teaching.*" What is *sound teaching*? It is not merely someone's personal opinion of what he thinks is good and right. No! It is teaching based upon accurate, authoritative, and trustworthy knowledge accompanied by sound understanding. This is teaching that has been proven to be reliable, and you can be confident that following it will lead you down the right path of life. It is sure to produce good and beneficial results. Without doubt, this is reason enough to listen to and learn from what Solomon had to say. Having shown the importance of his teaching, Solomon warned his sons by saying, "*do not abandon my instruction.*" Notice the wording of the verse. He didn't say, "don't fail to *learn* my teaching." Instead he said, "You already know my teaching, so *don't forget it*, and *don't let it slip away* from you, and *don't simply turn your back on it.*" To *abandon* something is much different than failing to learn it. It is to jump ship or simply cast something aside. As a result of Solomon's wording in this verse, we can add the grayed text to verse two. It would read, "*I give you sound teaching; (therefore) do not abandon (or throw away) my instruction.*"

2. He told his son what his dad had taught him (verses 4b-9)

A) He taught me when I was young (verses 3-4a)

King David was a wise and godly man, and he wanted his son Solomon to grow up to be a wise and godly man as well. He knew that Solomon would one day reign as king over Israel, so he took Solomon aside for some one-on-one teaching time. In verses 1-9, Solomon wanted his son to understand and appreciate the fact that what Solomon's dad had taught him had worked well for him personally. He said, "³ *When I was a son to my father, tender and the only son in the sight of my mother,* ⁴ *then he taught me and* (the following is what he) *said to me.*" (Grayed text added for clarity). When the teaching session took place, Solomon's heart was *tender*, that is, he was a young child. At that time David had sons by his other wives, but he did not have any other sons by Bathsheba.

B) He taught me to obey (verse 4b)

Verse 4 "*Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments and live.*"

David started his instruction by saying, "*Let your heart hold fast my words.*" Let's talk about some of the words in this part of the verse. Notice how David gets right to the heart of the matter. He said to let obedience come from *your heart* and not merely from your mind. Anyone can memorize instructions and obey them, but the only people who will still be keeping them years from now are those who make them so important that they are a matter of the heart. If obedience depended on nothing more than mental assent, then, in time, it would be easy to let other things become more important. This could easily allow the really important things to slip away.

What does it mean to "*hold fast*"? Simply put, it is to make them stick. Another way of saying it is to make them a conviction, not a preference. You might say, "What's the difference?" A preference is something I choose to do if at all possible, where a conviction is something I must do regardless of the cost or consequences, even if it ends up causing my death. David was saying that obeying his teachings (*his words*) was important enough to make it a conviction. When something becomes that important, it also becomes a matter of the heart. OK, what is important enough to make it a conviction? It is knowing and obeying (*keep*) the teachings and commandments of David (and of the Scriptures in general). So then, we need to make doing them so important that doing so comes from the very depths of our inner being—that is, *our heart*. These things need to be practiced over and over again until they literally become who and what we are.

David said, “*keep my commandments and live.*” Notice how he stated that obeying his words will cause the doer to live. Wait a minute, I am already alive. So what does it mean to “*live*”? Living, in this context, must be experiencing life at its very best and having joy and peace even when unfortunate circumstances come upon you. Obeying (*keep*) the teachings and commandments of Scripture gives the doer meaning and purpose. Life takes on a whole new perspective, and it is a wonderful experience. David knew that those who learn and follow the principles and commandments of Scripture will experience a long and vibrant life. I used the word Scripture because David’s *commandments* are part of the Bible record, and the Word of God contains a lot of other principles and commands that we would do well to follow if we want to enjoy this vibrant and long life.

C) He got right to the point – Get wisdom (verse 5a)

Verse 5a “*Acquire wisdom! Acquire understanding!*”

Armed with the right attitude about learning, David now told Solomon that he needed to *acquire* something? The dictionary defines *acquire* as *to get or come to have as one’s own*. So then, Solomon was saying that his son (and we) needed to make wisdom his own. We saw how to do that in our discussion of Proverbs chapter two. I must remind you that wisdom is a gift from God. Prov. 3:13-20 tells us, “*How blessed is the man who finds wisdom and the man who gains understanding.*” As we said before, finding wisdom is the same thing as receiving it as a gift from God. That is why James 1:5 tells us, “*But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.*” (Bolded and underlined words in both verses are for emphasis). It is easy to see, then, that James supports Solomon’s teaching that wisdom is a gift directly from the hand of God. Notice, though, that the next phrase of verse 5 of our text says, “*Acquire understanding!*” As I have stated before, understanding is not wisdom but is a component of wisdom. As we saw in the wisdom pyramid discussed in the commentary on Proverbs chapter one, the fear of the LORD is the foundation upon which wisdom is built. Trustworthy knowledge and sound understanding are gained from the perspective of the fear of the LORD, and these two things together generate dependable insight which, in turn, produces good discretion. At this point, God will gladly give us wisdom. So then, wisdom and understanding are the things we should strive to gain. They are most important.

D) He showed me the security that comes from wisdom (verses 5b-6)

1) Wisdom will guard me

Verse 5b-6 “*Do not forget nor turn away from the words of my mouth. ⁶ Do not forsake her, and she will guard you; love her, and she will watch over you.*”

Three different words of warning are used in these two verses. They are *don’t forget*, *don’t turn away*, and *don’t forsake*. As you will see, each one is a more serious error than the previous one. 1) **Don’t forget** — this is an unfortunate decision. David warned Solomon not to let wisdom quietly slip away because of neglect. If wisdom is used every day and if every day is a new pursuit for more wisdom, you will not *forget* about wisdom. If wisdom is lost out of neglect, it will leave you susceptible to making poor and costly decisions. 2) **Don’t turn away** — this is also an unwise decision. He warned Solomon not to *turn away* from wisdom in order to follow the emotions of the moment or some selfish personal desire. We saw how forgetting wisdom will cause you to wander into some poor or sinful situations out of ignorance. Here he said not to purposely turn away from wisdom because if you do, somewhere, sometime, you will purposely choose to engage in distorted or sinful activities. Once you use wisdom for a while, you will see how well it works in every situation, and this should be enough to cause you to choose wisdom over any other option no matter how you might “feel” about it at the moment. This second situation is worse than unfortunate. It is a recipe for failure and loss. 3) **Don’t forsake** — this is an unforgivable decision. David also warned Solomon not to *forsake* wisdom. Doing so would be like abandoning ship. You jump off never intending to get back on the ship again. If you value wisdom enough, you will never simply give up on her. Abandoning wisdom is something a foolish man would do so that he can enjoy his sin whenever, wherever, and however he wants to do it. This third situation will bring about severe loss and/or total disaster. Don’t be foolish. Instead, maintain wisdom.

2) Wisdom will watch out for her owner's safety.

Verse 6a says, *"Do not forsake her, and she will guard you."*

David wanted Solomon to understand that wisdom is security. In Ecclesiastes 7:12 Solomon wrote, *"For wisdom is protection just as money is protection, but the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the lives of its possessors."* The thing to keep in mind here is that wisdom will protect you as long as you consistently rely upon her. In essence, she is like a well-trained, dedicated military sentry, standing *guard* to protect you. Of course, the security wisdom provides is much better because wisdom protects her owner without having to resort to weapons. She simply causes her owner to live such a good life and make such good decisions that there will be no justifiable reason for anyone to want to harm him. If you choose to disregard wisdom (*forsake her*) and make a poor decision, you will remove the *guard* from duty and tear down the wall of protection. Then hurts and losses can come in to adversely affect you. It is something like having a security guard at the door of your house when you live in a crime-ridden area. If at some point you give the guard a night off for good behavior, you open yourself up for any criminal to take advantage of your poor judgment. As a result, it will be easy for someone to break in and steal your property or harm you. As long as you maintain good wisdom, she will be on duty guarding you every moment of the day and night. In that case you are well protected.

3) Wisdom will watch out for her owner's welfare.

Verse 6b says, *"love her, and she will watch over you."*

We talked about forsaking wisdom—that is, turning your back on wisdom and walking away from her. The exact opposite of forsaking wisdom is to *love* wisdom. Our text says, *"love her, and she will watch over you."* Stop and think about something for a moment. The only way you are going to continue acquiring and using wisdom for a lifetime is if you *love* having and using her. Prov. 8:17 tells us *"I (wisdom speaking) love those who love me; and those who diligently seek me will find me."* For you to love her, you must realize that wisdom is the best, the most valuable, and the most successful way to have a peaceful, joyful, and satisfying life. Doing whatever you desire at the moment just doesn't cut it. If you love wisdom enough to become and stay intimate with her, she will constantly be alert for those things that might cause trouble for you, and she will give you the wisdom to maneuver through or around those situations. Only this kind of intimacy with godly wisdom can allow her to be on the lookout for your welfare every moment of the day or night, even while you are asleep.

E) He showed me the blessings wisdom will generate (verses 7-9)

1. Wanting wisdom is the starting point of becoming wise

Verse 7 *"The beginning of wisdom is: Acquire wisdom; and with all your acquiring, get understanding."*

I love this verse because it is what generated my study of Proverbs. When I first read it, I had to ask myself, "How could acquiring wisdom be the beginning of wisdom? Why would Solomon define the word by itself?" At that point in my life, I tried to define wisdom, and I couldn't do it. After a while, I began thinking that by studying Solomon's writings I might be able to learn what wisdom is all about. So, I started studying Proverbs in earnest. I didn't learn much right away, but after a few years of immersing myself in the book, I began learning what wisdom really was. After more than 27 years of studying and meditating upon the book, it has become increasingly more clear.

Our text says, *"The beginning of wisdom is: Acquire wisdom."* How can this be? Actually, it is quite simple. The first step toward acquiring wisdom is a **desire** to have it. Once you have this desire, you will **start searching** for her, and you will find some wisdom. You may not learn a lot at first, but it is a start. The wonderful thing about wisdom is that the more you have, the more you will want. So, being willing to start searching for wisdom truly is the beginning, or the starting point of getting wisdom. This concept makes good sense to me now although it didn't at the beginning. Our text also says that *"with all your acquiring, get understanding."* Notice the semicolon in the verse. It is obvious then that the two phrases complement each other. It makes good sense for Solomon to say this

because wisdom depends upon sound understanding in order to make good and productive decisions. You and I need wisdom, and we need understanding. The more we understand, the more complete and effective will be our wisdom. It is as simple as that.

2. Valuing wisdom will result in honor

Verses 8-9 ⁸ *Prize her, and she will exalt you; she will honor you if you embrace her.* ⁹ *She will place on your head a garland of grace; she will present you with a crown of beauty."*

Gregory, how does someone *prize* wisdom? Strong's defines this Hebrew word as *to lift up, cast up, exalt*. The dictionary defines *prize* as *an enviable or highly valued possession*. Therefore, to *prize* wisdom is to recognize from the heart that she is the most valuable possession you could ever own, and you need to determine in your heart to make her your own for a lifetime. If you lift her up and put her on such an elevated pedestal, then she will exalt you. OK, then what does it mean to *exalt*? Strong's defines the word as *to rise, rise up, be high, be lofty, be exalted*. So then, if you will give wisdom such an important place in your life, she will lift you up in the eyes of men as someone worthy of praise. So then, *prize* and *exalt* her, and enjoy the fruit of owning and using her.

Next he said that *she will honor you if you embrace her*. The dictionary defines *embrace* as *to eagerly or seriously take up or adopt*. Therefore, get your arms around wisdom in an intimate hug and hold on to her for dear life. If you do, this same wisdom will cause you to receive well-deserved honor and praise from men in return. If you will prize and embrace wisdom, then she will in turn exalt and honor you. She will *exalt you*, and *she will place on your head a garland of grace*—that is, she will cause men to rightfully view you as a man of dignity. You will wear this designation like a king would wear a royal crown. In addition, she will *honor you*, and *she will present you with a crown of beauty*—that is, wisdom will cause men to see you as a wonderful person, someone beautiful in the eye of the beholder. Not everyone will see you this way, but good and godly men will. See the chart below. It should be self-explanatory.

My Action	Her response	The end result
<i>Prize her</i>	<i>she will exalt you</i>	<i>She will place on your head a garland of grace</i>
<i>embrace her</i>	<i>she will honor you</i>	<i>she will present you with a crown of beauty</i>

Gregory, it seems obvious to me that these are sufficient reasons to pursue wisdom and hang on to her for life. I feel certain that you will agree. Now let's reword David's advice for your benefit and encouragement.

⁴ Grab a firm hold on what I have to teach you, and don't let it go. Do what I tell you and keep doing it for life. ⁵ Get wisdom!, Do whatever it takes, but get it. While you're at it, be sure to get sound understanding. ⁶ Son, don't forget what I have taught you, and don't turn your back on what I have to tell you. Once you get wisdom, don't abandon her. If you hold on to her, she will provide the best security you could ever find, and if you love her she will constantly be working in the background to make things work out for your benefit.

⁷ The starting point of wisdom is having the desire and self-discipline to get involved in a search for wisdom. Remember though, while you are searching for wisdom, get all the understanding you can find. ⁸ If you lift up wisdom as your most valued possession, she will lift you up in the eyes of men and women, and she will cause others to honor you for your wisdom. ⁹ If you hold her as in a close embrace, she will cause you to be seen as one who has won the race of life, and she will make you a beautiful person on the inside.

JLSParaphrase

On the following page you will find a text layout of this portion of the chapter. Please be reminded that the text layout is intended to be read from left to right and from top to bottom just like you would read a book. If you read it this way, it will read exactly as it would from my New American Standard Bible.

¹ **HEAR**, O sons, the INSTRUCTION of a father,
 and
GIVE ATTENTION that you may GAIN UNDERSTANDING,
²For I give you SOUND TEACHING;
DO NOT ABANDON MY INSTRUCTION.

³When I was a son to **my father**,
tender and the only son in the sight of my mother,
⁴then **HE** TAUGHT ME
 and SAID TO ME,

“ Let your heart
HOLD FAST MY WORDS;
KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS and LIVE;

⁵ACQUIRE **WISDOM!**
 ACQUIRE UNDERSTANDING !

DO NOT FORGET
NOR TURN AWAY FROM THE WORDS OF MY MOUTH.

⁶**DO NOT FORSAKE HER** and she will **GUARD YOU**;
LOVE HER and she will **WATCH OVER YOU**.

⁷The BEGINNING of **WISDOM** is;

ACQUIRE **WISDOM**;
 and with all your acquiring
 GET UNDERSTANDING.

⁸**PRIZE HER**, and she will **EXALT YOU**;
 she will **HONOR YOU** if you
EMBRACE HER ⁹She will **PLACE ON YOUR HEAD A**
GARLAND OF GRACE;
 she will **PRESENT YOU WITH A**
CROWN OF BEAUTY. “

Paragraph 2 – It will work for you as well (vv. 10-19)

1) Verses 10-13 Solomon's encouragement and warning

¹⁰ *Hear, my son, and accept my sayings and the years of your life will be many.* ¹¹ *I have directed you in the way of wisdom; I have led you in upright paths.* ¹² *When you walk, your steps will not be impeded; and if you run, you will not stumble.* ¹³ *Take hold of instruction; do not let go. guard her, for she is your life.*

We saw in paragraph one how Solomon shared his father David's teaching with his own "sons." In verse ten, he changed to "son." This must be referring to Rheoboam since he is the only son mentioned by name. It is interesting to note that the godly king David taught his son Solomon to pursue wisdom, and he heeded his dad's advice. Then the good man Solomon taught his son Rheoboam to pursue wisdom, but his son disregarded his dad's teaching and chose worldly friends instead. Why do you suppose Rheoboam disregarded his wise dad's advice and teaching? Think about it for a moment. Ecclesiastes tells us that Solomon pursued many things, but none of them brought lasting satisfaction. He pursued intellectual excellence, but it didn't satisfy (Eccl. 1:12-18). So, he pursued unrestrained physical pleasures, but they didn't satisfy him (2:1-2). Then he tried drinking alcoholic beverages to see if they would satisfy him. They didn't (2:3). After that he poured all of his energies into acquiring more and better possessions. They didn't satisfy him either (2:4-8). Then he acquired power and greatness, but it didn't satisfy him because he finally understood that people of generations to follow would not remember him for his greatness (2:12-16). People outside of the palace probably thought that Solomon had it all together and didn't experience some of the frustrations normal men endure, but Rheoboam lived with Solomon and was watching his dad as he pursued all of these things. I suppose that as Rheoboam grew older, he saw how his dad found no lasting satisfaction from all of his endeavors and never seemed to be content or find the joy of the LORD. Then when Solomon said "accept my sayings" I can almost hear Rheoboam saying in his heart, "What's the use? It didn't work for you. Why should I waste my energies when one as wise as you failed to find satisfaction and fulfillment there?" In a sense, I can sympathize with Rheoboam, but I cannot excuse him. Nonetheless, the things Solomon taught his son and what he teaches us as we read Proverbs and Ecclesiastes are valid principles and will produce good results for those who practice them. The fact that Solomon didn't find satisfaction and fulfillment in wisdom does not mean that every man will be disappointed with wisdom. You and I can find lasting satisfaction and fulfillment in acquiring and using wisdom as long as we accept *his sayings* and obey them. The apostle Timothy said it well in First Timothy 6:6 where he wrote, "*But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment.*" Rheoboam's experience is a vivid warning to fathers. It should help us recognize that we need to learn to be content with life and be consistent in our love of and service to the LORD as an example to our children. Then they will hopefully follow our example and learn to love and serve the LORD willingly for a lifetime.

Gregory, what will you get in return if you accept and obey what Solomon taught? Simply put, "*the years of your life will be many.*" Do you want to live to a ripe old age? Then learn and do what Solomon taught. It is as simple as that.

Solomon was a dedicated teacher. Ecclesiastes 12:9 tells us that "*In addition to being a wise man, the Preacher also taught the people knowledge; and he pondered, searched out and arranged many proverbs.*" Based upon 1 Kings 4:29-34, we can safely assume that he also taught the people on a fairly regular basis. The text reads,

²⁹ *Now God gave Solomon wisdom and very great discernment and breadth of mind, like the sand that is on the seashore.* ³⁰ *Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the sons of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt.* ³¹ *For he was wiser than all men, than Ethan the Ezrahite, Heman, Calcol and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was known in all the surrounding nations.* ³² *He also spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were 1,005.* ³³ *He spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon even to the hyssop that grows on the wall; he spoke also of animals and birds and creeping things and fish.* ³⁴ *Men came from all peoples to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom.*"

This was the kind of wise man and teacher he was, and here in Proverbs chapter four, he was attempting to teach his own son like he taught people all over the known world. How, then, did Solomon teach his son?

He taught by lecture

In verse 11 of our text, Solomon wrote, *“I have directed you in the way of wisdom; I have led you in upright paths.”* It says that he *directed* his son. What does it mean to *direct*? When someone directs traffic, he stands in the street and signals drivers to go, turn, or stop. When someone directs a play, he or she gives verbal instructions and constructive criticism for the actors to follow. In Solomon’s case, he was giving verbal instruction to his son in a lecture type one-on-one session. Those lessons were geared toward understanding *the way of wisdom*. Strong’s Concordance indicates that *way* is *a direction; manner, habit, way; of course of life (fig.)*. In essence, it is a direction in life with reference to a man’s thinking and decision-making. Wisdom will always choose to do what is best and most productive, and she will always be moral and good while doing so. So Solomon was basically saying, “Son, I have given you verbal type classroom instructions on how to find wisdom and how to live it as a regular habit of life.”

He taught by example

The second phrase of our verse says that Solomon *led* his son *in upright paths*. How did he lead his son? He did it by living what he taught. What did Solomon show by example? He demonstrated how to live an *upright* life. Understand something here. Solomon was truly a great man. He was wealthy beyond our wildest dreams, he was the most powerful ruler of his day, he was the wisest man among men, and he was a truly good man. Yes, he was a moral, upstanding man, and his life showed it. So, when Solomon told his son that he had *led* his son in *upright paths*, he was telling the truth. By his example, he showed his son how to follow *upright paths*. As you will remember, to be *upright* is *to do what is right in the sight of the LORD*. This is not the same as being blameless. That is how men see us. The word *path* in our verse is defined by Strong’s as *entrenchment or track*. Whereas the *way* is a direction in life, *path* is more like a railroad track or a deep rut in a dirt road. Once you get on the track or in the rut, you are stuck with whatever direction it takes you until or unless you can get free from them. So Solomon was basically saying, “Son, I have demonstrated how to live in a manner that is pleasing to the LORD. Now it is your turn to do what you have seen me do! Therefore, find wisdom, and use it to do what is right in the sight of the LORD.”

Here is what he taught about wisdom

A. It will make for a smooth path through life

Verse 12 *“When you walk, your steps will not be impeded; and if you run, you will not stumble”*

What did Solomon mean when he wrote, *“when you walk?”* All of us walk every day, but *walk* in this context must refer to what we do, what we try to accomplish, and how we go through life in general. All of us have some days that are smooth sailing and others that are filled with trials and difficulties. Life is that way, but it doesn’t have to be filled with roadblocks and detours. Solomon told his son that if he would *accept my sayings*, then his *steps will not be impeded*. Strong’s defined *impede* as *to bind, make narrow, cause distress*. In a general sense, to be *impeded* is to experience resistance or difficulties in some form or another. With reference to the context of verse eleven, *impede* must refer to something that would “hinder your progress” or “block your way” as you walk the road of life. So, if you learn and use the wisdom Solomon offers, you can expect to maneuver around or through the difficulties of life that would otherwise hinder you. Then, by using your wisdom, you will make decisions that will solve problems or secure opportunities that would otherwise trip you up and cause all sorts of difficulties for you. The best part about all of this is that you can do it with a joyful spirit.

What, then, did Solomon mean when he wrote, *“if you run?”* Most of us don’t run very often, but *“run”* in this context must be in reference to when you get in a hurry and are heavily involved in one endeavor or another. It would be easy to overlook something or not see a problem coming when you are so intent on getting something done. Wisdom will enable you to see such things so that they won’t trip you up (*stumble*) and end up stopping your progress.

B. It will make your life secure

Verse 13 *“Take hold of instruction; do not let go. guard her, for she is your life.”*

In verses 10-13, Solomon basically said that accepting his sayings and doing them would produce a long and fruitful life. He had verbally instructed his son, and he had shown him by example how to live the truths he taught. He told Rehoboam that following his teachings would make life smooth and unhindered. Now in verse 13, Solomon makes the appeal, *“Take hold of instruction.”* Many times in Proverbs wisdom is personified as her, but in this passage *instruction* is called *her*. As we said at the beginning of our discussion on Proverbs chapter four, *instruction* involves 1) training designed to produce more self-control and character in the recipient, 2) punishment designed to make the recipient a better person, or 3) correction designed to cause the recipient to abandon wrongful practices and choose to do the right instead. All of us need correction from time to time. Solomon encouraged his son to not only *take hold of instruction*, but *do not let go*. Yes, grab ahold, and hang on for dear life. It is one thing to accept discipline and correction patiently, knowing that it is for our own good, but it is another thing entirely to appreciate and welcome instruction. Receiving instruction is not always a pleasant experience. In fact, sometimes it is downright painful. None of us particularly enjoys painful experiences, so it is natural to want to avoid such things. Solomon warned, *“guard her.”* You and I need to put safeties in place that will guarantee that we will be receptive to both instruction and discipline. We need to recognize the truth of Prov. 10:17 when it says, *“He is on the path of life who heeds instruction, but he who ignores reproof goes astray.”* We also need to be reminded about Prov. 6:23 which says, *“For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching is light; and reproofs for discipline are the way of life.”* Yes, discipline and instruction are good for us. In fact, according to our text *“she (instruction) is your life.”* That’s right. Instruction makes us into good and godly men who live and act in a good, just, and lawful manner resulting in a long and joyful life. If we are left to our own devices without advice or correction, we would most likely wander into all kinds of hurts and heartaches. Be careful that you don’t reject or abandon discipline and correction. You will be the better man for it.

Having warned his son about the benefits of accepting instruction and the loss that comes from ignoring it, he now moved to the crux of his advice.

2) Verses 14-19 Don’t run with wicked people. You won’t like the end result.

¹⁴ Do not enter the path of the wicked and do not proceed in the way of evil men. ¹⁵ Avoid it, do not pass by it; turn away from it and pass on. ¹⁶ For they cannot sleep unless they do evil; and they are robbed of sleep unless they make someone stumble. ¹⁷ For they eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence. ¹⁸ But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, that shines brighter and brighter until the full day. ¹⁹ The way of the wicked is like darkness; they do not know over what they stumble.

A. Things to avoid (verses 14-15)

These two verses show five things we should avoid in order to protect ourselves.

1. Don’t make friends with wicked men or women.

Solomon said, *“Do not enter the path of the wicked.”* In other words, don’t become close friends with them and start living the way they do. To illustrate *enter*, picture wicked people doing their evil deeds in one room, and you living godly in another. Don’t leave your room and go into their room in order to find out if you might like living the way they do.” Son, don’t make the mistake of entering their room. Simply stay away so that you don’t get started down the wrong road.

2. Don’t get involved in their sinful manner of living.

He said, *“do not proceed in the way of evil men.”* Strong’s defines *proceed* as *to go on, advance, make progress*. If you do enter their room, don’t go along with them or participate in their evil deeds. Put the brakes on and stop any progress you were making toward getting involved with what they are doing. It is best not to get started down that road at all, but if you already have, stop all progress right now. Do you remember Solomon’s

warning in Prov. 1:8-19 where he advised his son to say no when evil men who try to entice him to join them in their evil deeds? The same principle holds true here too.

3. If you know they plan to do some evil deed, avoid the place where it will take place.

Part of living a good and godly life is having and maintaining a genuine, biblical fear of the LORD. As we discussed earlier in this commentary, a genuine fear of the LORD causes its possessor to avoid or abandon every sinful practice. Therefore, if you fear the LORD, and I hope you do, make it a practice to *avoid* the people and places where evil men practice their evil deeds. That way you will not be tempted to get involved with them, and you won't be apprehended by law enforcement and have to experience the same penalty that they pay for their sin.

4. Don't go by the scene just to observe. Find another route.

If you know that evil men or women are planning to do something wicked or sinful, don't go near the place so you can watch the deed unfold. Why put yourself in a situation where you may be tempted to join with them? What's worse, why put yourself in a place where you might be considered an accomplice and take a chance on being apprehended by law enforcement? It is much better to stay away so that you are not tempted. Like Solomon said, *"Do not pass by it."* Don't even go near where the action is taking place. This is the best and safest way.

5. If you happen upon it, turn away and hightail it out of there.

If you accidentally happen upon people doing evil deeds, get out of there. Solomon said, *"Turn away from it and pass on."* That's right. Just turn around and go back the way you came. There is no benefit to a believer if he watches evil men practice their wickedness. In fact, seeing it may tempt a weak believer to fall. Be like Joseph in Genesis when Pharaoh's wife tried to get him to join her in bed. Simply turn and run the other way. It is the safest way to live.

B. Why you should avoid them (verses 16-17)

Evil people are always dreaming up more perverted things to do. In fact, many times *they cannot sleep unless they do evil*. They enjoy it that much. In fact, *they are robbed of sleep unless they make someone stumble*. Strong's defines *stumble* as *to stumble, bring injury or ruin to, overthrow*. Basically, they are doing things to some innocent person that will cause hurts, heartaches, or loss. Why is this so? Because they thrive (*eat the bread of*) on doing something that will cause hurts, heartaches, or loss (*wickedness*) for some innocent person, and they get drunk on (*drink the wine of*) beating up some man or woman or causing violent physical damage to someone (*violence*). These people are downright mean and calloused, and sooner or later the consequences of their sin will come crashing down upon their heads. Don't be there when they are caught and punished.

C. Why you should do good instead? (verse 18)

A wicked man enjoys the thrill of doing evil, but a *righteous* man enjoys the peace and contentment that comes from living a good and godly life. As a result, life for him just keeps getting better and better. It is similar to the way the sun *shines brighter and brighter* as it transitions from dawn to noon day when it shines its brightest. The life of a truly righteous man keeps getting better and better as time goes by. This is one of the rewards that come from living a good and godly life.

D. What the wicked can expect in the end (verse 19)

The way of the wicked is like darkness; they do not know over what they stumble.

In contrast to the way life keeps getting better and better for the righteous man, a wicked man walks through life blinded by his sin. As a result, he stumbles and falls when the consequences of his sin come crashing down upon him to take their toll. He can be compared to a man walking somewhere in total darkness. He will trip over anything that gets in his way because he cannot see it. The wicked man is just like that. So, there is good reason to live a righteous life and avoid getting involved in the activities of wicked people. It just makes good sense to avoid wicked

people and the sinful things they do.

Here is a layout of this portion of text.

Proverbs 4:10-19 It worked for me, and it will work for you.

¹⁰ **HEAR**, my son, and **ACCEPT** my sayings,
and the years of your life will be many.

¹¹ I have "directed you" in the **way of wisdom;**
I have "led you" in **upright paths.**

¹² When you walk, your steps WILL NOT BE IMPEDED;
and if you run, you WILL NOT STUMBLE.

¹³ **TAKE HOLD** of **instruction;**
DO NOT LET GO.
GUARD HER, for **she** is your life.

¹⁴ DO NOT ENTER
DO NOT PROCEED

the **path** of **the wicked**, and
in the **way** of **evil men**.

¹⁵ AVOID **IT**,
DO NOT PASS BY **IT**;

TURN AWAY FROM **IT** and
PASS ON.

¹⁶ For **they** cannot sleep unless **they** do evil;
and **they** are robbed of sleep unless **they** make someone **STUMBLE**.

¹⁷ For **they** eat the bread of wickedness,
and drink the wine of violence.

¹⁸ But the path of the righteous is like the LIGHT OF DAWN,
that shines **BRIGHTER and BRIGHTER** until the full day.

¹⁹ **The way** of **the wicked**
is like

DARKNESS;

They DO NOT KNOW over what **they** **STUMBLE**.

Paragraph 3 – Be careful what you do (vv. 20-27)

1) Guard your heart (Verses 20-23)

²⁰ *My son, give attention to my words; incline your ear to my sayings.* ²¹ *Do not let them depart from your sight; keep them in the midst of your heart.* ²² *For they are life to those who find them and health to all their body.* ²³ *Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life.*

A. How you need to approach learning (verses 20-21)

In paragraph one, Solomon said, “*Hear and give attention.*” In paragraph two, he started by saying “*hear and accept.*” Now in paragraph three, he started by saying “*Give attention, and incline your ear to my sayings.*” To **give attention** is to focus on the speaker and give him your undivided attention. It means to set aside all of those things that would distract you from hearing all that the speaker is trying to convey. To **incline your ear** is to realize the value of wisdom and make hearing so important that you want to hear what a wise man has to say. When you want to hear wise teaching, you are well on your way to becoming a wise man.

Verse 21 tells us not to forget what Solomon taught. He said that we should not let his teachings out of our sight and that we should make them so important to us that we obey them again and again and again until they become a matter of the heart and not the head. That is what it means to *keep them in the midst of your heart.*

B. The blessings that result from being so teachable (verse 22)

The benefit of making them an integral part of who we are is that they will result in life at its best, one that is enjoyable, fulfilling, and satisfying. That’s why Solomon said that his teachings are *life to those who find them.* He also said that obeying his sayings would result in *health to all their body.* I have heard it said that a lot of people have literally made themselves sick as a result of the stresses, pressures, and worries that weigh them down. Living Solomon’s teachings and the rest of the Scriptures will result in peace, contentment, and joy. These things alone will enable the body to heal itself resulting in a longer, healthier, and more enjoyable life. These are reasons enough to choose, learn, and follow Solomon’s teachings.

C. Why you need to be so teachable (verse 23)

Verse 23 is the key to all that we believe, say, and do, and it is the key verse for the chapter. It states, “*Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life.*” This is such a true statement. What I am in my heart will determine what I do and say. What I believe, what I hold dear, and what I desire will flow from my heart like the water from a natural spring on a hillside. These things, *the springs of life*, will determine where I go in life and what I accomplish. These are an expression of what I am inside and what I treasure in my heart. An evil heart pours out evil things, and a pure heart pours out good and beneficial things. Christ said in Mark 7:18-23,

¹⁸ *And He *said to them, "Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him,* ¹⁹ *because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?" (Thus He declared all foods clean.)* ²⁰ *And He was saying, "That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man.* ²¹ *For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries,* ²² *deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness.* ²³ *All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man."*

That is why it is so very important for you to guard what goes into your mind and ultimately becomes part of your inner being—your heart. So, it is indeed important to “*watch over your heart with all diligence.*” Strong’s says that *watch over* means **to preserve, guard from dangers**. In essence we are to keep our eyes and ears open and filter everything that tries to enter our eyes, ears, and mind so that no worthless thing finds entrance. If you will do this, then only good things will enter your heart. You accomplish this by being careful about what you see, what you

listen to, with whom you associate, and where you go. Only good conversations, good visuals, and good conduct should be part of your life, and you should reject everything that is otherwise. David felt strongly about this. He expressed it in Psalm 101 vs 3 where he wrote, *“I will set no worthless thing before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; it shall not fasten its grip on me.”* We are to protect our heart *with all diligence*. Strong’s defines *diligence* as to *guard, guard post, act of guarding*. In other words, we are to stand guard over our heart like a sentry would guard a military outpost. We are to stand against intruders and fight them off if necessary. You and I should *be diligent* about it—that is, we should pour all of our energies into seeing that it happens. It is the only way to successfully guard the heart. It is hard work. There is no doubt about that, but this kind of work promises great reward.

As we wrap up paragraph two of this chapter, I can almost hear Solomon saying something like,

²⁰ Since my dad’s teaching worked well for me, I am certain that my teaching will work equally as well for you. Do you hear me? Are you actually paying attention to what I have said? Have you made my words something you want to hear and do? I certainly hope so. ²¹ Keep these instructions in sight all the time and never lose your focus. In fact, make them so important to you that they will emanate from the very depths of your inner being. ²² If will you do this, you will enjoy life at its best and have a healthy body. ²³ Everything you are and do emanates from your heart, so guard carefully what you allow to enter into it.

Gregory, this is what every father wants for and from his son, and I want the same for you. I desire this for you because hearing and obeying God’s Word produces vibrant life and health. If you live like this, you will be free from the stresses and anxieties others experience, and your peace of mind will aid in generating a healthy body full of vim and vigor.

2) Guard your actions (Verses 24-27)

A) Guard your mouth—quit saying perverted things (verse 24)

²⁴ *Put away from you a deceitful mouth and put devious speech far from you.*

Be meticulously careful about what you say. Say only good and beneficial things, and associate with people who do the same. Prov. 3:3-4 are a good reminder here. They say, *“Do not let kindness and truth leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favor and good repute in the sight of God and man.”* This is the way a godly man should speak. Verse 24 of our text doesn’t say don’t be deceitful with your words. Rather, it says that you should stop being deceitful. Be honest and open instead. Our verse also says to *put devious speech far from you*. The KJV translates *devious* as *perverse*. Strong’s defines this Hebrew word as *perversity or crookedness*. Basically, it is immoral or perverted conversation. A follower of Christ has no business using dirty, immoral, or perverted speech. The believer’s conversation should always be kind, true, morally sound, and edifying. This is the kind of speech wisdom displays. So, we should stop and think about what we are going to say before we say it, and when we do speak it should be kind and truthful.

B) Guard your eyes—quit looking at things you shouldn’t dwell upon (verse 25)

²⁵ *Let your eyes look directly ahead and let your gaze be fixed straight in front of you.*

When this verse says *look directly ahead* or *straight in front of you*, it must refer to not letting your eyes wander onto something that would generate sinful thoughts or desires. When you happen to glance at something like this, immediately look somewhere else. By all means, don’t allow *your gaze* to dwell upon something offensive. Choose to focus *your gaze* only on those things that are good and godly, and the results will be good and godly. The word *gaze* implies intently fixing your focus on something. This is fine when the thing being observed is good and godly, but it is wrong when the thing being viewed is sinful or immoral.

It is important to guard what you allow yourself to see because Prov. 27:20 tells us that *“Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied, nor are the eyes of man ever satisfied.”* Gregory, you’re a normal red-blooded young man, and

when a skimpily clad woman walks into view, your eyes are naturally attracted to her body. Sinful thoughts may follow if you are not careful. It doesn't matter how many skimpily clad women you have seen in the past, your eyes will still go to her body. The patriarch Job realized this, but he told us how he overcame it. In Job 31:1 he said, *"I have made a covenant with my eyes; how then could I gaze at a virgin?"* In today's vernacular, Job was saying that he had promised himself that when he saw an attractive young woman, he wouldn't allow himself to think lustful, sexual thoughts about her. You see, in order to protect himself, he had put a safeguard in place. This protected him from such visual temptations. You and I must do the same in our day. Son, be meticulously careful about what you watch. It is the safest way. I formed a habit several years ago. When I see a woman that is dressed so as to stimulate men to lust, I say to myself, "She is not mine. I have no right to her. Besides, I can find all of the satisfaction I need in my wife and experience no guilt as a result." The interesting thing is that I really can find satisfaction in my wife. You can too if you help her thoroughly enjoy the sexual relationship. See my commentary on how to adultery-proof your marriage starting on page 246.

C) Guard your feet—Choose carefully where you go (verses 26-27)

²⁶ Watch the path of your feet and all your ways will be established. ²⁷ Do not turn to the right nor to the left; turn your foot from evil.

Be meticulously careful about where you go and with whom you associate. Establish good and godly boundaries as to where you will go and avoid anything that could be construed as questionable. If you will do this, then your manner of living will be established on a firm footing. Don't deviate from frequenting good places and doing good things, and if you are currently involved in some sinful practice, you should abandon it immediately. When you happen upon a place or situation where you would be tempted to indulge in or lust after sinful activities, don't do it. Simply keep walking straight ahead, and *"do not turn to the right nor to the left."* If you happen upon some sinful activity, then do as Solomon advised, *"turn your foot from evil."* Just get out of there and don't go back. Avoiding or abandoning every sinful practice is the essence of a genuine fear of the LORD, and without a fear of the LORD, you will never find biblical wisdom. First Thessalonians 5:22 states this principle as, *"Abstain from all appearance of evil."* It is as simple as that. You may miss out on some of "the fun," but the rewards of good and godly living are more than worth it.

On the following page you will find a layout of this portion of the text.

Proverbs 4:20-27

²⁰ My son,

give attention to **my words**;
incline your ear to **my sayings**.

²¹ Do not let them depart from your sight;
keep them in the midst of **YOUR HEART**.

²² For they are life to those who find them, and
health to all their whole body.

²³ Watch over **YOUR HEART** with all diligence,
for from **IT** flow the springs of life.

²⁴ Put away from you a deceitful **MOUTH**, and
put devious **LIPS** far from you.

²⁵ Let your eyes look directly ahead And
let your gaze be fixed straight in front of you.

²⁶ Watch the path of your feet
and all your ways will be established.

²⁷ Do not turn to the right nor to the left;
Turn your foot from evil.

Conclusion and application

As a quick review, in paragraph one (verses 1-9), Solomon's told his sons how his dad had taken him aside when he was just a young lad and taught him some valuable lessons concerning wisdom. He also told how learning and obeying his dad's instructions had enabled him to live a good and godly life and become a wise man. In paragraph two (verses 10-19), Solomon encouraged his son to choose wisdom and avoid getting involved with wicked people or their wicked activities. Solomon basically said that since his dad's instruction worked so well for him, he was sure his own teaching would work equally as well for his son. Finally, in paragraph three (verses 20-27), Solomon told his son that everything a man does is an expression of what was in his heart. Therefore, his son needed to be careful to guard his thinking so that undesirable things did not enter his heart. In addition, he was to be careful what he said, what he saw, and where he went. These three things pretty much cover every aspect of a person's life. If you master them, then you will be sure that only good and beneficial things reside in your heart.

So Gregory, are you seeking to gain and use wisdom? Are you doing the good and beneficial things I have taught you? Are you obeying the Scriptures? I hope you can answer yes to all three of these questions because good health and long life are the benefits of doing so. Read and study the Scriptures so that you can learn the truths contained there, but do it in order to become more godly by doing what you learn. Knowledge without application is of little profit, but obedience to the Scriptures has great reward. Always study the Scriptures so that you can live them. This is when your study becomes most beneficial. Please be careful what you say, what you allow your eyes

to dwell upon, and where you go. In short, strive to live a good and godly life as you learn and live the Scriptures. Ask the LORD to help you, and He will be glad to do it.

Chapter 10

[Return to Index](#)

The adulterous woman

Men's sexual desires and the adulterous woman

Proverbs chapters 1-9 are a stand-alone section of the book of Proverbs. There are 256 verses in these chapters, and 76 of them deal with illicit sexual actions or attitudes. Son, that is a full 1/3rd of the verses. I know because I counted them. There is no doubt that men have a strong sex drive. It starts shortly after puberty, and it stays with him up into old age. Most women have no idea how strong the sex drive is in men, and consequently many women dress in sexually alluring or suggestive clothing with no concern whatsoever about the temptation they are placing before the eyes of men. I imagine this is a result of the makeup of women compared to men. Experts tell us that women are sexually excited primarily by romance and touching, but men are sexually excited by sight. Since women are not excited by looking at a man, women do not seem to understand the way she sets a man's mind in motion sexually at the sight of a scantily clad woman whose clothing leaves little to a man's imagination. Judging by the number of verses on sex in the first nine chapters of Proverbs, Solomon must have felt that this subject needed a lot of attention. After all, he understood the male sex drive. Why else would he acquire 700 wives and 300 playthings called concubines with whom he could enjoy sexual relations any time he felt the urge whether it be day or night. Yes, he knew! (You need to understand that in Bible times, sex with a man's wife appeared to be only for propagation of children, whereas sex with a concubine was merely for the man's pleasure.)

Gregory, there are several passages in Proverbs 1-9 that deal directly with sex outside of marriage. All but one of them calls it adultery, but for the sake of this discussion, I would like for you to think of all sexual intercourse outside of marriage as adultery. The text is talking directly about a man sleeping with someone else's wife, but in the New Testament, we have learned that any engagement in sexual intercourse outside of marriage is a sin.

Son, you have been taught from youth to understand that sex outside of marriage is wrong, and I want to share this discussion with you to support and enhance what you have already learned about your own sexual needs and desires. I also want to show you how keeping yourself pure sexually is actually preparing yourself for a strong and lasting marriage. I trust you will continue to do so because it is such a sweet experience to approach the wedding altar pure for her. The dedication and confidence this brings into a marriage goes a long way toward making a strong, committed marriage. Once married, she can and will want to satisfy your every sexual desire as the two of you work at satisfying each other's needs. We'll say more about this later in the discussion.

There are two types of women discussed in Proverbs. There is the excellent wife (virtuous woman - KJV wording) of chapter 31, and there is the promiscuous woman. She is called an adulteress in chapters 2, 5, 6, 7 and is pictured as a prostitute in chapter 9. Our discussion of the adulteress and those who indulge in forbidden sexual pleasures with her will include discussions on the appropriate passages in these five chapters of Proverbs. Chapter 2 will show how a genuine fear of the LORD will deliver you from the clutches of an adulteress woman or a prostitute. Chapter 7 will show you how she seduces a man to sleep with her. The last paragraph of chapter 6 will show you how a jealous husband can and will hurt you if you are foolish enough to go to bed with his wife. The last paragraph of chapter 9 will show you how seeking illicit sexual pleasures with a prostitute is a cheap imitation for seeking wisdom and its true blessings. And finally, chapter 5 will show you how your wife is the perfect alternative to an adulteress. In order to get the most out of this study, we will discuss these chapters in this order. By the time we finish this discussion, you will see the correlation between the chapters and understand the danger of getting involved with an adulteress. You will also understand the blessings of allowing your own wife to be all that you could ever find in the arms of another woman, and more.

The adulteress – the power to avoid her

[Return to Index](#)

Proverbs 2:10-11; 16-19

¹⁰ For wisdom will enter your heart and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul; ¹¹ discretion will guard you, understanding will watch over you..... ¹⁶ To deliver you from the strange woman, from the adulteress who flatters with her words; ¹⁷ that leaves the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God; ¹⁸ for her house sinks down to death and her tracks lead to the dead; ¹⁹ none who go to her return again, nor do they reach the paths of life.

We have already discussed this passage in the commentary on Proverbs chapter 2. Therefore, we will only do a brief review and then make application. As you will recall, the essence of Proverbs 2 is that if you will be faithful to practice a passive, active, and continual search for wisdom (verses 1-4), then over time, you will discern a genuine fear of the LORD and discover who GOD is, what He is, and how He works in the affairs of men. Then you will figure out the right way to live and act in this world. These two things will rescue you from evil men (verses 12-15) and from sexually immoral women (verses 16-19) as seen above.

In Prov. 2:10-11, we are told that once you gain a genuine fear of the LORD, *wisdom will enter your heart*, and then *discretion* and *understanding* will protect you. We now jump to verse 16 which says that these three things (wisdom, understanding, and discretion) will deliver you from the adulteress. Strong's defines *deliver* as *to snatch away, deliver, rescue, to be plucked out*. Literally, these three things will rescue you from her grasp and from the adverse and painful consequences of becoming sexually involved with her. Verse 16 mentions *the strange woman*. This most likely refers to *the adulteress*. The main character is a married woman. The text indicates that she doesn't seduce men to sleep with her for pay, but she does it because her sexual and/or emotional needs are not being met by her husband at home. Let me ask you. Is it more destructive to sleep with a prostitute than to sleep with another man's wife? No, they both lead a man down the pathway to disaster and quite likely a premature death. Both women take the same approach, and they both are seductive and inviting to a man who lacks understanding. So, let's see what Proverbs chapter two has to say about an adulterous woman.

- 1) Verse 16 shows that she *flatters* a man.

She does this to her advantage and to his disadvantage. What is flattery? Strong's defines this Hebrew word as *to be smooth, slippery, deceitful*. The dictionary defines it as *to praise too much, untruly, or insincerely, as in order to win favor*. She does her best to say things he longs to hear and to say them in a way that makes the man feel like he is the most desirable male around. That's why Solomon told us in Proverbs 5:3, "*For the lips of an adulteress drip honey and smoother than oil is her speech.*" A man who understands what she is trying to do will let her know right away that he's not interested, but a man who doesn't know better will easily be drawn into her trap by the sweetness of her words and her sensual body language.

- 2) Verse 17 states that she *"leaves the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God."*

An adulterous woman is unfaithful to the husband she married when they were both young. She literally turns her back on the promise she made on her wedding day to keep herself only unto him as long as they both shall live. For whatever reason, she has become dissatisfied with him and is not finding emotional and/or sexual satisfaction at home. So, she seeks fulfillment outside the home. She has also turned her back on the promise she made to God that she would be faithful to her husband until death. Over time, she has convinced herself that her promise isn't important, and her physical and emotional needs are more important than some old promise she made years before. One of the problems with an adulterous relationship is that since she has been unfaithful to her husband, there is no reason to believe that she will be faithful to you if you get involved in an adulterous relationship with her. She may deeply care for you in the beginning, but what makes you think that she won't become dissatisfied with you like she did her husband? The answer is obvious. After she is tired of you, there is a real possibility that she will throw you to the wolves like she did her husband and seek another willing man who will give her a new and more exciting experience.

3) Her sinful manner of living will ultimately lead to the grave.

If she is successful in persuading you to join her, then you, too, will suffer the same fate as her and the other men who have slept with her. Verse 18 states, *"for her house sinks down to death and her tracks lead to the dead."* One of the things I have seen about the wicked in Proverbs is that, as a general rule, they will experience a premature death because of their sinful activities. Therefore, if you want to live a long and satisfying life, then fear the LORD and be faithful to one woman for life.

4) If you choose to indulge in illicit sexual relations with her, you can never go back and undo the sinful deed.

Verse 19a states that *"none who go to her return again"* The phrase *go to her* refers to penetrating her in sexual union. If you engage in sexual intercourse with another man's wife, then in God's eyes you and she are one flesh. This is wrong because this ought to be reserved for the marriage bed, not the bed of an adulteress or a prostitute. Once a man experiences the thrill of illicit sex, he will never be the same. It is like eating your first candy bar - once you get a taste for it, you will want more. So, a young man is likely to go back to her again and again. Since sleeping with her is so alluring, many men never break the pattern. As a result, they will never *reach the paths of life*. Their sinful practices will keep them from coming to Christ in salvation, and consequently they will miss out on heaven. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 tells us,

*⁹ Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, ¹⁰ *nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.* ¹¹ *Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the LORD Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.*" (underlining added for clarity)*

There are many believers who practiced some of these sins before coming to Christ, but once they were saved they abandoned them. Regardless of what a person claims to believe, those who continue in the sinful practice of adultery simply will not enter heaven. The verses above are very clear about that.

Summary of this passage

Gregory,

Proverbs chapter 2 details God's plan for you. It tells you how you are to study the Scriptures diligently until you learn **knowledge**, **understanding**, and **discernment**. When you gain **these three things**, God will give you wisdom as a reward for your searching. This is important because wisdom and understanding are all that you will need to avoid the trap a prostitute or an adulterous woman may seek to spring upon you. You will be able to recognize her intent and distance yourself from her before she has a chance to get her claws into you. Just remember. Proverbs chapter 2 gives you the understanding you will need to deliver yourself from evil men and immoral women. All you will need then is the determination to keep yourself pure for the LORD's glory. I hope and pray that you will always do that.

An adulterous woman – the tricks of her trade

[Return to Index](#)

Proverbs 7 The tools of her trade

This chapter will show you the method an adulterous woman uses to seduce a man into joining her in sexual pleasures. It is important to understand how she approaches a man and how she uses enticing speech, sensuous dress, and sensuous body language to persuade him to become a willing partner. Solomon did a wonderful job of illustrating this for us.

1) The importance of acquiring and using wisdom (verses 1-5)

7:1 My son, keep my words and treasure my commandments within you. ² Keep my commandments and live, and my teaching as the apple of your eye. ³ Bind them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart. ⁴ Say to wisdom, "You are my sister," and call understanding your intimate friend; ⁵ that they may keep you from an adulteress, from the foreigner who flatters with her words.

Solomon started most of his discourses in Proverbs chapters 1-9 by encouraging his son (or sons) to listen carefully to what he had to say and then to obey his teaching. Chapter seven is no exception. He used the words *keep* and *treasure* in verse one. Strong's defines *keep* as *to keep, guard, observe, give heed*. In other words, obey what I (Solomon) tell you and put safeguards in place (guard) so that you will continue doing so. You *treasure* these truths by making them so valuable to you that they literally become a matter of the heart. This way you will remember them and practice them a lot longer than if you were to merely memorize them. Verse two is much like verse one. In verse one he said, "*keep my words,*" and in verse two he said, "*keep my commandments and live.*" If you will do what Solomon taught, then you will live a long and fruitful life. Of course, this implies that if you join an adulterous woman in forbidden sexual pleasures, you can expect to live a shortened and troubled life. In verse one he said, "*treasure my commandments within you,*" and in verse two he said, "make obeying my teaching like *the apple of your eye.*" In other words, make them so special to you that they stand out above everything else you know. Solomon wanted his son to realize how much his future happiness depended upon doing what Solomon was trying to teach him. He really wanted his son to keep his truths in view, so he wrote in verse 3a, "*Bind them on your fingers.*" This is like tying a string around your finger to remind you of something important. In verse 3b he wrote, "*write them on the tablet of your heart.*" In other words, rehearse them so often that they literally become part of your very being. If you do this, in the end, they will become who you are, and you will be secure because of it.

Solomon was intimate with wisdom and had great understanding. Since he fully realized their value, he wanted his son to experience the same. In verse 4 we read, "*Say to wisdom, 'You are my sister,' and call understanding your intimate friend.*" Wisdom and understanding are inseparable, and Solomon encouraged his son to become so intimate with both of them that they would become like a member of the family or at least intimate friends with him. The reason Solomon encouraged his son to make wisdom and understanding such close companions is that if his son would do so, they would guard, protect, and *keep* him from falling prey to the flattering and seductive words of a sensuous, adulterous woman. Verse 5 reads, "*that they may keep you from an adulteress, from the foreigner who flatters with her words.*" Every man needs the kind of protection wisdom offers if he is to avoid becoming another casualty of immoral women. These women don't normally set out to destroy a man, but if he chooses to enjoy forbidden sexual pleasures with her, she will destroy him nonetheless.

So, verses 1-5 basically say that you and I need to get wisdom and understanding so that we will not be easily seduced by a prostitute or adulterous woman. We need to make obeying Solomon's advice so important that we adhere to it until the day we die. We must practice the truths he shared because they are our security. Indulging in illicit sexual relations will most certainly result in hurtful and costly consequences.

In general, modern poetry consists of rhyme and meter. Hebrew poetry is different. I am told that it is a paralleling of thoughts. As such, there are some interesting associations in the text layout below. Look at verses 1-4. Notice how in verses 1 and 2, he showed us *what we should do with Solomon's teachings*, and in verses 3 and 4, he showed us *how we should value and secure them*. In addition, notice the three colored lines connecting boxes of the same color. Let's look first at the **BLUE** line and boxes. In verse 1, he said that we should *keep* his words. This appears to be what we do and say—the things others can see us do. In verse 3, he showed us an example of how to find a way to constantly remind ourselves of these truths the same way tying a string around a finger will remind us of something. That way each time we are faced with a choice between right and wrong, the Word of God will be in sight to guide us down the right path of life. Next let's look at the **GREEN** line and boxes. In verse 1, Solomon said that we should *treasure* his teachings *within* us. This appears to refer to who and what we are on the inside. Verse 3 shows us that we should treasure his teachings by writing them on the tablet of our heart. We can do this by living and doing his teachings every day. Eventually, they will become such an integral part of us that they literally become who we are. At that point, they will have become a heart attitude. Finally, let's look at the **PURPLE** line and boxes. In verse 2, Solomon wrote that we are to observe and do (*keep*) his commandments and teachings. Living them will enable us to experience life at its best (*live*) and will, in time, cause us to consider them the most beautiful things we have ever seen (*as the apple of your eye*). Verse 4 shows us that we can do this by making wisdom literally a part of the family (*my sister*) and making understanding our closest and most *intimate* of friends. If you and I will do these things and make doing them a habit of life, then they will protect us from the

clutches of an adulterous woman. Claim them, use them, and make them part of your very being, and you will be safe from her for a lifetime. If you neglect these teachings or let them slip away, then you will become potential prey to this immoral woman. Don't feel you are exempt from this temptation either because even one of our former pastors fell prey to adultery. Gregory, you know what to do, so please do it for life.

Proverbs 7:1-5

¹ My son,

KEEP My WORDS, and

TREASURE My COMMANDMENTS within you.

² KEEP My COMMANDMENTS and live, and

My TEACHING as the apple of your eye.

³ BIND THEM on your fingers;

WRITE THEM on the tablet of your heart.

⁴ SAY to WISDOM, "You are my sister," and

CALL UNDERSTANDING your intimate friend;

⁵ That THEY may KEEP YOU

from an adulteress,

from the foreigner who flatters with her words.

Notice how verse 5 teaches that an adulteress uses flattery to open the door of a man's ego. This is a very effective tool in her arsenal, so recognize it early. It may be that she is lonely and hurting because she isn't getting the physical or emotional support from her husband at home, or she may be attracted to you where she works or at places she frequents. Gregory, you are a nice guy, and your kind words and encouragement may cause her to look up to you and find encouragement. Over time, she may make some romantic advances toward you telling you how wonderful and exciting you are. Then, if you don't curb the advance of the relationship, you might allow her to lead you into an adulterous relationship. The best thing to do is to stop the situation as soon as you recognize that it is starting. We will deal with this early in the discussion of Proverbs chapter 5, so we'll reserve further discussion until then.

So, what should be our response to this portion of text? It is simply that we need to spend a lot of time reading, studying, and meditating upon Scripture with the intent of living what we learn. This way the Scriptures will literally become an intimate part of who we are and what we do. Remember that from a purely physical standpoint, when we **don't** eat, our appetite kicks in, and we become hungry for food. Spiritually, when we 'eat' from the Bible, our appetite grows, and we become more hungry for the Word. Therefore, the more we study and meditate upon the Word of God, the more we will want to learn of His Word. In the process, that same Word of God will become the

security that will safeguard us from illicit sexual relations as well as a host of other sinful vices. This is what Solomon was trying to get across to his son in this first part of Proverbs chapter 7.

In the next section of Proverbs 7 (verses 6-23) we will find a young man going to meet an adulteress while at the same time the woman is coming out to him. It seems obvious that an initial contact had taken place at some earlier date, and they had agreed to rendezvous at a predetermined time. He and she had become familiar with each other, and she had persuaded him to join her at her house for a night of sexual pleasures. Obviously, he had agreed. Judging by the fact that both of them started making their way to the pre-arranged meeting point after dark, both he and she wanted to keep it a secret so that her husband wouldn't find out what they were doing. So, the stage is set. Now let's see how the whole thing plays out.

2) The importance of understanding how she works (verses 6-23)

The hunted (the man) seeks the hunter (the woman) (verses 6-9)

⁶ For at the window of my house I looked out through my lattice, ⁷ and I saw among the naive, and discerned among the youths a young man lacking sense, ⁸ passing through the street near her corner; and he takes the way to her house, ⁹ in the twilight, in the evening, in the middle of the night and in the darkness.

Solomon described the scene of a young man making his way through the city streets at twilight to rendezvous with a married woman. Notice how he knew where he could find her. That's because, as we said above, they had become acquainted and had planned the whole thing in advance. It also seems clear that the man was not completely convinced that he wanted to follow through with the agreement. This is a logical assumption based upon the fact that after they met at a street corner near her house, the woman felt she needed to convince him to come to her house. You will see this as we progress through this discussion. This guy waited until twilight hoping he wouldn't be seen or recognized, and I am reminded of a popular song in the 50's or 60's entitled *The Night has a Thousand Eyes*. As best I remember, the lyrics went something like this: "The night has a thousand eyes, and a thousand eyes can't help but see if you've been true to me."

The *young man* in our narrative is what Solomon called *naive*. As we said earlier in this commentary, a naive man is not necessarily a bad person. Where he falls short is that he seldom evaluates the consequences of his choices in life. He simply does things based upon how he feels about it at the moment. As a result, he makes many costly and hurtful decisions and then has to endure the adverse consequences of his stupid choices. Our text says in verse seven that this young man was *lacking sense*. He was ignorant of the costs or consequences of engaging in an adulterous relationship. That must have been the case because if he had understood all that it would cost him, he would never have gotten intimately involved with a married woman. The thing to remember here is that he was seeking her and knew where to find her. See the text layout on the next page.

⁶ For at the window of my house
I looked out through my lattice, and
⁷ I saw among the naive,
I discerned among the youths,
a young man **LACKING SENSE**,

⁸ Passing through the street NEAR HER CORNER; and
he takes THE WAY TO HER HOUSE,

⁹ in the twilight,
in the evening,
in the middle of the night and
in the darkness.

Before we proceed with verses 6-9 it will be helpful to see what Solomon was trying to convey in verses 6 and 7. Notice the sequence of his wording describing how he came to understand what he was seeing. It just happened

that Solomon *looked* out the window of his palace. When he did, something caught his eye, so he honed in on the young man in question. That is when he *saw* what the young man was doing. So, he kept looking and saw the whole thing play out before his eyes. It was then that he *discerned* (figured out) what the young man was attempting to do. Solomon shared those same words in another passage of Proverbs. There he wrote in Prov. 24:30-34 which says,

³⁰ *I passed by the field of the sluggard and by the vineyard of the man lacking sense, ³¹ and behold, it was completely overgrown with thistles; its surface was covered with nettles, and its stone wall was broken down. ³² When I saw, I reflected upon it; I looked, and received instruction. ³³ "A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest," ³⁴ then your poverty will come as a robber and your want like an armed man.*

Here he *saw* a vineyard that was run down. Then he *reflected* upon what he had seen at a casual glance. He *looked* again only this time more closely, and he *received instruction* (discerned). Notice how he happened to see a situation and took the time and effort to look at it more closely so that he could figure out the real cause and condition of the problem. Both Prov. 24:32 and 7:6-7 teach the same learning sequence. This should be everyone's learning process, but someone without trustworthy knowledge and sound understanding does not have the **insight** to see a problem for what it really is instead of what it appears on the surface. The naïve man sees an affair with another man's wife as a fun adventure. He does not see the consequences that will follow because he has a skewed perspective of the opportunity. A wise man has the **insight** to see beyond the pleasure of sexual intercourse and see the hurts, heartaches, and losses that await the man who joins an adulteress in bed. We could dissect this aspect further, but you can study this part of the commentary more if this is not clear. Gregory, study and meditate upon the Scriptures so that you will gain the **insight** you need to see every problem or opportunity for what it really is and not what it appears on the surface. Once you gain this ability, your **discernment** will enable you to make good and productive decisions based upon trustworthy insight. I pray you will.

The hunter (the woman) seeks the hunted (the man) (verses 10-12)

¹⁰ *And behold, a woman comes to meet him, dressed as a harlot and cunning of heart. ¹¹ She is boisterous and rebellious, her feet do not remain at home; ¹² she is now in the streets, now in the squares, and lurks by every corner."*

There is no doubt that this young man was seeking the woman so that he could enjoy illicit sexual pleasures with her, but notice in verse ten how at the same time she was seeking him. They planned to meet, and she was looking forward to the adventure. This verse also says that she was *dressed as a harlot*. Now how does a prostitute dress? She dresses as sensually as she can in order to generate lustful desires in the men whose path she hopes to cross. The woman in our text is a man's wife, and as such she couldn't go around town in broad daylight dressed like a slut. Oh, but it was not daylight. It was twilight, and she knew that the semi-darkness would hide her from the general public's eye. She also knew that there would still be enough light for the man to see her and lust after what he saw. I'm sure you can picture it. She probably wore a short, sexy skirt or form-fitting shorts that looked like they were molded onto her. Her blouse probably showed lots of cleavage so that he could see more of her breasts than a man should. At any rate, the way she dressed left little to the man's imagination. I can hear her say something like this to herself, "That's right, go ahead and look at me with desire. I want you, and that's why I dressed so sexy for you." She knew her sensual dress would excite him to passion with sexual desire, and she hoped it would let him know that she really wanted him. Verse 10 also says that she is *cunning of heart*—that is, she knows all of the tricks of the trade and when to use them. She knew exactly what to say and do that would enable her to be successful at seducing the man.

Verse 11 states that this woman is *boisterous*—that is, she is loud, bold, and forward. She is not intimidated in the least to flaunt herself in front of the man she wants to seduce. It is doubtful that she is this way in public, but she is this way when she is alone with the man she wants to join her in bed. She is also *rebellious*—that is, she is going to have her own way, and she isn't going to let anyone keep her from getting it. Keep in mind that this woman is not a prostitute. She merely wants emotional and/or physical satisfaction with a man. It appears obvious that she isn't getting one or both at home, so she feels she must pursue it outside the home. Notice also, in verse 11, that she is not content to *remain at home*. Her discontentment with her marital relationship has driven her to seek fulfillment

outside the home. That is why verse 12 shows her out in the streets seeking a man to engage in illicit sexual pleasures with her.

It seems logical from this verse that the naïve man did not show up on time. When this happened, she went all over town looking for him, scouring every corner in case the man didn't fully understand where they were to meet. She didn't want to miss out on the opportunity, so she started looking everywhere in hopes of finding him. Notice how she walked the streets and made her way to the town square. At each intersection she *lurked* before proceeding any farther. She would hide in the shadows, as it were, looking the situation over to be sure that no one would catch her with her potential lover. Then when the coast was clear, she would move out and continue her search.

So, it is obvious that she was searching for him while he was searching for her. Both parties were looking forward to enjoying the illicit sexual pleasures that awaited them at her house. Ah, but as we shall see, he was interested but not totally sure that he should go with her and engage in sexual union. She would have to convince him that he really wanted her badly enough to go home with her. Now see the text layout below.

¹⁰ And behold, a woman comes to meet him,

dressed as a harlot and
cunning of heart.

¹¹ She is boisterous and rebellious;
her feet do not remain at home;

¹² She is now in the streets,
now in the squares and
lurks by every corner.

The hunter (the woman) is very persuasive (verses 13-20)

¹³ *So she seizes him and kisses him and with a brazen face she says to him:*

¹⁴ *"I was due to offer peace offerings; today I have paid my vows. ¹⁵ Therefore I have come out to meet you, to seek your presence earnestly, and I have found you. ¹⁶ I have spread my couch with coverings, with colored linens of Egypt. ¹⁷ I have sprinkled my bed with myrrh, aloes and cinnamon. ¹⁸ Come, let us drink our fill of love until morning; let us delight ourselves with caresses. ¹⁹ For my husband is not at home, he has gone on a long journey; ²⁰ he has taken a bag of money with him, at the full moon he will come home."*

Notice how she initiates the contact (verse 13)

When she saw him she took the initiative. Immediately she was all over him hugging and kissing in the most seductive way. She wrapped her arms around him in a sensual embrace (*seizes him*) and her kisses were equally as sensual. They were not a peck on the cheek either but really sensual kisses. Then she put on *a brazen face* and started telling him all the reasons why he should join her in a night of lovemaking. Strong's defines *brazen* as *to be strong, prevail*. The dictionary defines it as *showing no shame; bold*. In other words, by her facial expression, she boldly asserted that she had a lot to offer, and he would have the night of his life if he agreed to join her in bed. The logic of what she told him goes like this:

1) She gave the impression she was a religious woman and right with God (verse 14-15).

She told him that she had gone to church that very day and performed the required ritual her religion demanded. Since she felt that her sacrifice made her right with GOD, in her mind she had license to do whatever she wanted (*Therefore I have come out to meet you*). Notice that she was religious but not godly. Once she felt it was OK to go looking for the man, she did it with great enthusiasm (*to seek your presence earnestly*). It is no wonder she was eager because she was probably genuinely excited about the romantic evening they would share together. To help him understand how pleased she was that they found each other

she said, *“and I have found you.”* I can almost hear her say something like, “Thank God, I was able to find you!” Since she didn’t think she was doing anything wrong, I imagine she could make such a statement without any sense of guilt or remorse. You might ask, “Could someone actually thank God for the privilege of sinning?” Consider Proverbs 30:18-29 where Agur was trying to show his sons that their view of sin was distorted and needed to be corrected. The verses read, *There are three things which are too wonderful for me, four which I do not understand: The way of an eagle in the sky, the way of a serpent on a rock, the way of a ship in the middle of the sea, and the way of a man with a maid. This is the way of an adulterous woman: She eats and wipes her mouth, and says, “I have done no wrong.”* Do you see how this woman has talked herself into believing she would not be doing anything wrong by going to bed with another man? It is hard for me to understand how someone can believe this, but I’m sure some do.

2) She told him about all of the romantic preparations she had made (verses 16-17).

She said, “I have put sexy, silk sheets on my bed and sprinkled it with gentle perfumes. Everything is ready for us to enjoy an absolutely wonderful night of lovemaking.”

3) She invited him to enjoy her body as much and as long as he wanted (verse 18).

I can hear her say something like, “Come join me. We can make love all night. You can have all of me you want. We can hug and kiss or anything else your heart desires. We’ll have the time of our lives. The sky is the limit. Come on. Say you will. You won’t regret it, I can assure you.” This would be a dream come true for the worldly man who wants to go to bed with any willing woman, but it can also be enticing for a believer who has not determined that he will be faithful to his wife no matter what the cost. A former pastor of ours is solid proof of this. He got involved in an adulterous relationship with a woman in our church and ended up leaving his wife to marry the other man’s wife. Son, always be on your guard so that you don’t let your emotions get out of control and take you down with her. I know of several pastors and missionaries who have fallen in a moment of weakness, so be careful that you don’t become another statistic.

4) She told him that there was no chance of her husband catching them (verse 19-20).

The first problem was that her husband was not at home where he could meet her emotional and sexual needs. He was probably not meeting those needs when he was home, but nonetheless, he was not there when he was needed. It is hard on a marriage when a husband is away from the home, especially when it is for a long period of time. A wife needs him to be with her to meet her needs. Notice the text says that *he has gone on a long journey*. He planned on being away for a long time because *he has taken a bag of money with him*. Then too, she knew exactly when her husband would return. She said that *at the full moon he will come home*. I understand a moon cycle to be approximately 28 days. She was correct when she said that they would have plenty of time to enjoy lovemaking for several nights undisturbed and undetected.

Now, her arguments might sound pretty good to a worldly man with lustful thoughts and desires, but they are ineffective when used on a man who fears the LORD and understands the potential consequences. Unfortunately, the man in our text wanted illicit sexual intercourse, so her arguments sounded inviting and safe enough.

The results of joining her in bed are devastating (verses 21-23)

Our text says, *“With her many persuasions she entices him; with her flattering lips she seduces him.”* The dictionary defines *entice* as *to attract by offering hope of reward or pleasure*. It also defines *seduce* as *to persuade to do something disloyal, disobedient*. So then, she put the right bait in front of the man which would give him hope of serious pleasure (*entice*), and she convinced him that being deceitful and disloyal was okay (*seduce*). He didn’t have to think about it long because the text says that *suddenly he follows her*. She had given him her best arguments, and he jumped at the chance. He allowed the passion of the moment and the promise of pure sexual pleasure to override logic. This is the kind of decision-making process naïve men and women use. In essence, they are fools, and that is why they make so many poor and costly mistakes. He followed her into her bed all right, but the text says that this naïve man followed her *as an ox goes to the slaughter* and *as one in fetters to the discipline of a fool*. He was totally unaware of the high cost and disastrous consequences that would await him for violating her. In essence, she was not only leading him to her bed for an evening of fun, but she was also leading him to

severe hurts, heartaches, and possibly a premature death. Why do I mention a premature death? Because verse 21 states that he follows her *until an arrow pierces through his liver*. I have been told that people in Solomon's day considered the liver to be the seat of emotions. In our day we consider it to be the heart. Therefore, we could reword the verse to say that he followed her *until an arrow penetrated his heart and killed him*. Now, who would hurt him like that? As you will see when we discuss Proverbs 6:20-35, it is most likely the adulterous woman's jealous husband. Now, you can't blame a husband for being angry with a man who violates his wife, but jealous men will do extreme things, even resorting to murder to get even with the offender. To the understanding mind, such a high cost is not worth the few moments of sexual pleasure with another man's wife. A prudent man would refrain, and with good reason.

See a text layout below.

Prov. 7:13-21

<p>¹³ So she seizes him and kisses him, and with brazen face she says to him;</p>	
<p>¹⁴ "I was due to offer peace offerings; today I have paid my vows.</p> <p>¹⁵ Therefore I have come out to meet you, to seek your presence earnestly, and I have found you.</p> <hr/> <p>¹⁶ I have spread my couch with coverings, with colored linens of Egypt.</p> <p>¹⁷ I have sprinkled my bed with myrrh, aloes and cinnamon.</p> <p>¹⁸ Come, let us drink our fill of love until morning; let us delight ourselves with caresses.</p> <hr/> <p>¹⁹ For the man is <u>not at home</u>, he has gone on a long journey;</p> <p>²⁰ He has taken a bag of money with him, at full moon he will come home."</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;">We're good to go</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;">Everything is ready</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">Don't worry — we won't get caught</div>
<p>²¹ With her MANY PERSUASIONS she ENTICES him; With her FLATTERING LIPS she SEDUCES him.</p>	

3) The importance of Solomon's warning to reject her (verses 24-27)

²⁴ Now therefore, my sons, listen to me, and pay attention to the words of my mouth. ²⁵ Do not let your heart turn aside to her ways, do not stray into her paths. ²⁶ For many are the victims she has cast down, and numerous are all her slain. ²⁷ Her house is the way to Sheol, descending to the chambers of death.

Dr. Charles Woodbridge used to say, "Whenever you see the word therefore in Bible text, be sure to find out what it is there for." In this case, Solomon was saying that in light of the high cost of joining another man's wife in adultery, *listen to me, and pay attention* to what I am trying to teach you. It is critical for you to learn how to avoid such women because your future and your very life are at stake.

Solomon had two things he wanted to get across, and both were very important. First, *do not let your heart turn aside to her ways*. Do you understand what this phrase is saying? It is simply this: don't make decisions based solely upon the emotions of the moment. If you allow your mind to think sensual thoughts about a woman, you shut the door to the security a biblical fear of the LORD provides, and you allow lustful desires to enter your heart. If allowed to progress unchecked, these lustful desires will generate uncontrolled passion, opening the door to joining

her in an adulterous relationship. This is when you allow *your heart* to desire the use of her body for your own selfish lust. It can start so subtly. You look at an attractive woman and allow your mind to think sexual thoughts. If you continue the practice, before long, you will begin to undress her in your mind. If you continue the practice long enough, you will end up wanting to share a bed with her. Then, if the opportunity presents itself, you will actually indulge in sexual relations with her during the heated passion of the moment. Oh, but this doesn't have to happen. If you will guard your heart and mind so that you stay pure and clean, you will not fall like that. Read my commentary on Proverbs chapter 5, and you will learn how to adultery-proof your marriage.

The second thing Solomon wanted to get across was "*do not stray into her paths.*" Don't go where women like this frequent. In fact, don't even allow yourself to wander into her territory. If she can't get to you, she can't hurt you. Simply stay as far away from her as you can.

It is critical to follow Solomon's advice because as verse 27 tells us, adulterous women all over the world have led untold numbers of men to the women's beds and ultimately to the men's ruin (*cast down*) or to a premature death (*her slain*). Her house is where her bed is, and her bed is where the adultery takes place. Therefore, her house *is the way to Sheol* (or the grave), and it is like an escalator, descending until it stops at death's door. Gregory, don't go there.

Below is a text layout of this portion of the passage.

<p>²² SUDDENLY he follows her, as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as one in fetters to the discipline of a fool, ²³ until an arrow pierces through his liver; as a bird hastens to the snare,</p> <p>SO he does not know that IT WILL COST HIM HIS LIFE.</p>

Summary of chapter seven

In the first paragraph of Proverbs 7 (verses 1-5), Solomon encouraged his son to acquire *wisdom* and *understanding*. He advised his son to become intimate with *them* and realize the importance of using both of *them* every day. If he would do this, then *they* would be the protection he needed in order to avoid becoming prey to some adulterous woman. In the second paragraph of chapter 7 (verses 6-23), Solomon illustrated how an adulterous woman seeks out some naïve man and persuades him to join her in illicit sexual relations. He told how she is bold and forward and puts everything she has into her attempt to seduce a man to join her in bed. Then he showed the disastrous consequences once the deed was done. Finally, in paragraph three (verses 24-27), Solomon admonished his son to avoid her. He told him that doing so was critical because untold numbers of men before him have been ruined or killed by adulterous women. Solomon basically said, "Don't be the next one to be hurt or killed by her." The cost is simply too great.

Gregory, understand something here. Not all adulterous women are as bold and rebellious as the woman Solomon illustrated. Some women are weak, lonely, or in need of emotional support. A man may simply befriend her, and in doing so, he may form a special bond between them. In time, if he is meeting her emotional needs, she may become a willing partner to move the relational into the physical realm. It is quite likely that a relationship like this will end up in bed. Son, if you find a woman who is lonely or has emotional needs, it is in your best interest to direct her to another woman who can help her. Don't take a chance of her becoming dependent upon you for emotional support. It just isn't safe. It is obvious when a woman boldly comes on to you, but is even more dangerous when a woman grows to depend upon you and wants to take it further. Simply don't go there.

On the following page, you will find a complete layout of Proverbs chapter seven.

⁶ For at the window of my house
⁷ I **looked** out through my lattice, and
 I **saw** among the naive,
 I **discerned** among the youths,
 a young man **LACKING SENSE**,

⁸ Passing through the street **NEAR HER CORNER**; and
 he takes **THE WAY TO HER HOUSE**,

⁹ in the twilight,
 in the evening,
 in the middle of the night and
 in the darkness.

¹⁰ And behold, a woman comes to meet him,

dressed as a harlot and
 cunning of heart.
¹¹ She is boisterous and rebellious;
 her feet do not remain at home;
¹² She is now in the streets,
 now in the squares and
 lurks by every corner.

¹³ So she **seizes him** and **kisses him**, and with brazen face **she says to him**;

¹⁴ "I was due to offer peace offerings;
 today I have **paid my vows**.
¹⁵ Therefore
 I **have come out to meet you**,
 to **seek your presence earnestly**,
 and I **have found you**.
¹⁶ I have **spread my couch** with coverings,
 with colored linens of Egypt.
¹⁷ I have **sprinkled my bed** with myrrh, aloes and cinnamon.
¹⁸ Come, let us drink our fill of love until morning;
 let us delight ourselves with caresses.
¹⁹ For the man is **not at home**,
 he has gone on a long journey;
²⁰ He has taken a bag of money with him,
 at full moon he will come home."

²¹ With her **MANY PERSUASIONS** she **ENTICES** him;
 With her **FLATTERING LIPS** she **SEDUCES** him.

²² **SUDDENLY** he follows her,
 as an ox goes **to the slaughter**, or
 as one **in fetters** to the discipline of a fool,
²³ until an **arrow pierces through his liver**;
 as a bird **hastens to the snare**,

SO **he does not know** that **IT WILL COST HIM HIS LIFE.**

Here is a different look at this passage.

Proverbs 7:6-23

⁶ For at the window of my house
⁷ I looked out through my lattice, and
I saw among the naive,
I discerned among the youths,
a young man **LACKING SENSE**,

Solomo

⁸ Passing through the street NEAR HER CORNER; and
he takes THE WAY TO HER HOUSE,

Him

⁹ in the twilight,
in the evening,
in the middle of the night and
in the darkness.

¹⁰ And behold, a woman comes to meet him,

dressed as a harlot and
cunning of heart.
¹¹ She is boisterous and rebellious;
her feet do not remain at home;
¹² She is now in the streets,
now in the squares and
lurks by every corner.

¹³ So she seizes him and kisses him, and with brazen face she says to him;

Her

¹⁴ "I was due to offer peace offerings;
today I have paid my vows.
¹⁵ Therefore
I have come out to meet you,
to seek your presence earnestly,
and I have found you.
¹⁶ I have spread my couch with coverings,
with colored linens of Egypt.
¹⁷ I have sprinkled my bed with myrrh, aloes and cinnamon.
¹⁸ Come, let us drink our fill of love until morning;
let us delight ourselves with caresses.
¹⁹ For the man is not at home,
he has gone on a long journey;
²⁰ He has taken a bag of money with him,
at full moon he will come home."

²¹ With her **MANY PERSUASIONS** she **ENTICES** him;
With her **FLATTERING LIPS** she **SEDUCES** him.

²² **SUDDENLY** he follows her,
as an ox goes to the slaughter, or
as one in fetters to the discipline of a fool,
²³ until an arrow pierces through his liver;
as a bird hastens to the snare,

Him

SO he does not know that **IT WILL COST HIM HIS LIFE.**

Here is third look at this passage.

Proverbs 7:6-23

⁶ For at the window of my house
I looked out through my lattice, and
⁷ I saw among the naive,
I discerned among the youths,
a young man **LACKING SENSE**,

⁸ Passing through the street NEAR HER CORNER; and
he takes THE WAY TO HER HOUSE,

⁹ in the twilight,
in the evening,
in the middle of the night and
in the darkness.

¹⁰ And behold, a woman comes to meet him,

dressed as a harlot and
cunning of heart.
¹¹ She is boisterous and rebellious;
her feet do not remain at home;
¹² She is now in the streets,
now in the squares and
lurks by every corner.

He wants

She offers

¹³ So she seizes him and kisses him, and with brazen face she says to him;

¹⁴ "I was due to offer peace offerings;
today I have paid my vows.
¹⁵ Therefore
I have come out to meet you,
to seek your presence earnestly,
and I have found you.
¹⁶ I have spread my couch with coverings,
with colored linens of Egypt.
¹⁷ I have sprinkled my bed with myrrh, aloes and cinnamon.
¹⁸ Come, let us drink our fill of love until morning;
let us delight ourselves with caresses.
¹⁹ For the man is not at home,
he has gone on a long journey;
²⁰ He has taken a bag of money with him,
at full moon he will come home."

She persuades

²¹ With her **MANY PERSUASIONS** she **ENTICES** him;
With her **FLATTERING LIPS** she **SEDUCES** him.

²² **SUDDENLY** he follows her,
as an ox goes to the slaughter, or
as one in fetters to the discipline of a fool,
²³ until an arrow pierces through his liver;
as a bird hastens to the snare,

He dies

SO he does not know that **IT WILL COST HIM HIS LIFE.**

These are interesting perspectives about this passage, but however you look at it, any guy who joins an adulteress in bed is doomed. He is already either a ruined man or a dead man. He just doesn't know it yet, **but he will**. You can count on it!

Adultery - and a jealous husband

[Return to Index](#)

Proverbs 6:20-31

I used to think that the last paragraph of Proverbs chapter six was merely a condensed version of chapter seven, but I now understand that it is different. It is a warning about the disaster or death a jealous husband can and may inflict upon a man who violates his wife. Try to keep this thought in mind as we proceed through this portion of the chapter.

1) Obey what mom and I have taught you. It will save your life (verses 20-24)

²⁰ My son, observe the commandment of your father and do not forsake the teaching of your mother; ²¹ bind them continually on your heart; tie them around your neck. ²² When you walk about, they will guide you; when you sleep, they will watch over you; and when you awake, they will talk to you. ²³ For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching is light; and reproofs for discipline are the way of life ²⁴ to keep you from the evil woman, from the smooth tongue of the adulteress.

Verse 20 states, *“observe the commandment of your father and do not forsake the teaching of your mother.”* A father's *commandment* is something like, “Son, don't ever get involved with an adulterous woman. She will hurt you. Trust me, it will happen.” It is more of a command without extensive explanation. A mother's *teaching* is more like, “Son, don't ever fall prey to an adulterous woman. She will hurt you, and here is why.” She tries to explain the reason for not doing this so that he can understand why he should abstain. From the time you were a child, your mom and I have tried to teach you how to live a good and godly life. We taught you about salvation in Jesus Christ by faith alone, and when you were about 5 years old, you invited Christ into your heart to be your LORD and Savior. We tried our best to be open and frank with you about sexual matters. As far as we have been able to tell, you could ask any question you wanted, and we would do our best to answer it without criticism or embarrassment. One thing is certain though. What we have taught you and what we have required of you (*commandment*) are important. In fact, they are important enough to follow for the rest of your life. Now, what does Solomon have to say about this kind of teaching? He said in verse 21 that you should *bind them* (the teaching and commandments) *continually on your heart*. OK, how do you bind something *on your heart*? It is simple. You practice them until they become such an integral part of you that they literally become who you are. When you do this, they will flow from your inner being to give you good and godly direction through life. The goal here is to learn them so well and value them so much that you literally store them in your heart, not merely in your mind. This is what we call a conviction and not a mere preference. This will be what guides your thoughts, actions, and approach to life. Solomon also had something to say about what other people will perceive about you. He said, *“tie them around your neck.”* Do men wear a necktie to help them live better? No, they wear one so that other people can see it and know that they either like to dress well or they feel that wearing a tie is appropriate for the occasion. I believe the thrust of the second half of verse 21 is saying that you should wear the commandments and teaching as it were a necktie for all to see. If you will make *the commandments* and *teaching* a matter of the heart, then you need to display them by your obedience for all to see. If you will, they (your father's commandments and your mother's teaching) will benefit you in three ways.

A) They will give you clear direction in life

Verse 22a says that *“When you walk about, they will guide you.”* In other words, they will guide you no matter what problem or opportunity presents itself and no matter how difficult the situation. You won't have to go through the day flying by the seat of your pants hoping you will make good decisions that will produce good results.

B) They will protect you during the nighttime

Verse 22b says, “*when you sleep, they will watch over you.*” Knowing and obeying dad’s commandments and mom’s teaching will cause you to live such a good life that no one will feel the need to get back at you because of some hurt you have caused them. That is because the teachings will enable you to live such a good life that no one can rightfully accuse you of wrongdoing. In other words, you will not be faultless, but you will be blameless. Therefore, you can sleep peacefully without a worry in the world. This is your protection.

C) They will give you continual course corrections throughout the day

Yes, they will guide you by telling you how to live and act throughout the day. Verse 22c says, “*when you awake, they will talk to you.*” Keep in mind that the word “*they*” is referring back to your father’s commandments and your mother’s teachings. I can understand how verses talk to me after having invested approximately 15,000 hours of study and meditation on Proverbs. Quite often the truth of a verse comes to mind throughout the day, and many times I awaken in the night thinking about some aspect of the book.

Now, why do these three results occur? It is because dad’s commandments are *a lamp*. Okay, what is *a lamp*? Strong’s says that this Hebrew word means *a small light with the brightness of a candle*. It is not a very intense light, but it does give light. Our verse also says that mom’s teaching is *a light*. Strong’s indicates that this Hebrew word is more *like the brightness of the noon day sun*. Now that’s about as bright as it gets here on earth. So then, dad telling his son, “Don’t do that”, gives the son some direction, but mom’s “Don’t do that because it will come back to hurt you, and here’s why”, gives her son a much more complete and useful understanding of the situation.

Another thing to keep in mind is that we all have blind spots. These are areas of our lives that we seem unable to see about ourselves. We sometimes do or say things that offend or are not necessary. Other people can see our deficiency right away, but many times we do not see where we need correction or improvement. Solomon said in verse 23b that *reproofs for discipline are the way of life*. Strong’s defines *reproof* as *rebuke, correction, reproof, punishment, or chastisement*. The dictionary defines it as *to express disapproval*. So then, when someone tells me I am wrong or that I am making a mistake, these are times when I can benefit from their insight. If no one ever told me I was doing something wrong, then I might not realize it on my own. We need to be open to correction. If we depend solely upon what we know or think, we are likely to steer ourselves down the wrong course of life. Solomon, as wise a man as he was, depended solely upon his own view of things to determine what he should or should not do. When he had exhausted what there was to learn of godly wisdom, he was still unfulfilled, so he turned to a pursuit of worldly wisdom. When that didn’t satisfy him, he turned to a pursuit of acquiring more and better possessions. When that didn’t satisfy, he turned to a pursuit of physical pleasures. Those things didn’t satisfy him either. Dr. Ravi Zacharias made an interesting comment on one of his radio broadcasts of *Let My People Think*. He said that “David had the prophet Nathan to correct him when he was doing wrong, but Solomon had no prophet to correct him.” Thus Solomon did what was right in his own eyes. Unfortunately, that process caused him to lose his kingdom. Based upon the disastrous end of Solomon’s life, it is clear that we should be open to the advice and counsel of godly people who can see a deficiency in our life and choose to tell us about it. This is especially true when we consider the main topic of our text — adultery.

Solomon wrote verses 20-23 in order to arrive at his warning in verse 24. In verses 20-22, he told us what we need to do, and in verse 23, he told us why we need to do it. Now in verse 24, Solomon said that doing all of these things will *keep you from the evil woman, from the smooth tongue of the adulteress*. Making the teachings and commandments of Scripture an integral part of who you are will help you recognize a woman’s advances early so that you can stop them immediately. We saw in the other passages above how a prostitute or an adulterous woman will come on to you with such smooth and alluring speech, sensual facial expression, and body movements. If you are not determined to stay pure, you could very easily fall prey to her advances. Son, don’t be deceived. Being in a place where a woman is coming on to you by showing that she really, really wants you can be a strong temptation. Please, don’t ever think that you are above falling for her advances because untold numbers of men, saved and unsaved alike, have succumbed to the advances of an adulterous woman. As a result, they became engaged in a full-fledged adulterous affair which ruined their lives, their ministry, and their future. Son, take my advice, and avoid her at all cost.

2) Don't allow yourself to end up wanting her (verses 25-31)

²⁵ *Do not desire her beauty in your heart, nor let her capture you with her eyelids.* ²⁶ *For on account of a harlot one is reduced to a loaf of bread, and an adulteress hunts for the precious life.* ²⁷ *Can a man take fire in his bosom and his clothes not be burned?* ²⁸ *Or can a man walk on hot coals and his feet not be scorched?* ²⁹ *So is the one who goes in to his neighbor's wife; whoever touches her will not go unpunished.* ³⁰ *Men do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy himself when he is hungry;* ³¹ *but when he is found, he must repay sevenfold; he must give all the substance of his house.*

Many adulterous women are very shapely and very attractive. On top of that, when a woman wants to seduce a man, she gets fixed up really pretty and puts on very sensual, suggestive clothing hoping to catch the eye and ultimately the heart of some unsuspecting man so that she can get him into her bed. Solomon had it right when he wrote in verse 25a, *“Do not desire her beauty in your heart.”* I am sure Solomon knew how tempting it is for a man to look at and admire a beautiful woman. No doubt he understood how easy it is for a man to undress her in his mind and wish he could enjoy sexual pleasures with her. Christ knew it too when he told the people in Matthew 5:27-28, *“You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY’; but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”* Son, if you make a habit of looking at a beautiful woman and wishing you could have her, in time, you may try to find a way to have her. At that point, you will have desired her “from the heart.” Be careful because lots and lots of men have let it happen to them.

Verse 25b discusses another temptation for a man. It says, don't *“let her capture you with her eyelids.”* A woman can look at you with a longing, sensual look and facial expression and, in effect, tell you, “I really like you, and you can have me if you want me. I'll give you anything you want. How about it?” Face it. There are women out there who will be this bold, and they will follow it up with a fling in bed. Son, be on the alert, and make a conscious effort of avoiding such a woman. Your wisdom and understanding will guard you if you will use them.

OK. We understand that we should not let ourselves cultivate a desire to want to jump in bed with such a woman, and we understand that we should constantly be on guard so that we don't let a woman seduce us with her longing and sensual looks and facial expressions. But why should we be so careful? The answer is found in verses 26-31. Simply put, the cost of enjoying a few minutes or hours of sexual pleasure is not worth the lifetime of hurts, heartaches, and losses that result from such actions. Verse 24 mixes *the evil woman* and *the adulteress* in the same lump of clay, so we will too. When verse 25 mentions *harlot* (or prostitute), we understand that it can be referring to an adulterous woman because at the end of this portion of text, it talks about the hurt a man will receive by the hand of her jealous husband. Therefore, the harlot in this particular portion of text must be a married woman.

The hurts and losses that will result from joining her in bed

Verse 25 says that *“on account of a harlot one is reduced to a loaf of bread.”* The idea here is that once an adulterous woman seduces a man, enjoys sexual pleasures, and then tires of him, he is of no more value to her than a loaf of bread. She will toss him aside as useless, and she won't care how he gets hurt or what their relationship will cost him. Then too, adultery is looked upon as disgusting in a moral society. Such a society would look down upon the man and woman as some sort of low life, worth no more than a loaf of bread. Unfortunately, our modern society looks lightly upon adulterous relationships and accepts them as a somewhat normal practice. Even so, right is right no matter how many are opposed to it, and wrong is wrong no matter how many are in favor of it.

In spite of the hurts that result from an adulterous relationship, this kind of woman *“hunts for the precious life.”* Every man's life is precious to God and to good people, but that's just it. A woman like this is not a good person. She may be religious or try to put on an illusion of being a good woman, but she is a selfish woman. When she seduces a man, she is not looking out for his good. No, she is only trying to satisfy her own emotional and/or physical needs in whatever way she can. Obviously, she is not a prudent woman who seriously evaluates the consequences of her choices in life; otherwise she would abandon such a sinful practice before it starts. It is also obvious that a man who goes to bed with her is not a prudent man either, otherwise he would not allow her to seduce him.

To support his argument, Solomon gives two very important reasons why a man should avoid an adulterous woman's attempt to seduce him. First, he will be punished in the end. It may come about in several different ways,

but it will happen. No man who indulges in an adulterous relationship will be exempt. Verses 27-29 state, *“Can a man take fire in his bosom and his clothes not be burned? Or can a man walk on hot coals and his feet not be scorched? So is the one who goes in to his neighbor’s wife; whoever touches her will not go unpunished.”* Solomon asks two questions. Can a man come into contact with glowing cinders without his clothes catching on fire? No, they will always be burned to some extent. (We’re assuming general clothing, not fireproof clothing that has only been developed in the last 100 years). The second question is, can a man walk on red hot coals without blistering his feet? In general, no. I have heard of some supposedly demon-possessed people who were reported to have been able to do this without being burned, but average man cannot. He will always be burned. So then, the answer to both questions is a resounding ‘no’. Therefore, Solomon’s conclusion will always be true when he wrote, *“So is the one who goes in to his neighbor’s wife; whoever touches her will not go unpunished.”* The phrase *“goes in to his neighbor’s wife”* means that he has penetrated her in sexual intercourse. Any man other than her husband who penetrates her will be punished for it. In the next section of chapter six, we will see how the man should expect to receive that punishment.

The second reason why a man should avoid an adulterous woman’s attempt to seduce him is that it will be extremely costly financially. Verses 30-31 state, *“Men do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy himself when he is hungry; but when he is found, he must repay sevenfold; he must give all the substance of his house.”* These verses tell us that a man who steals in order to get enough to eat will have to pay back seven times as much as the value of what he stole to stay alive. People won’t hold it against a man for stealing to stay alive, but they will still require him to make retribution. The implication here is that a man who steals his neighbor’s wife by violating her in sexual union could be required to make retribution up to and including everything he possesses. That is a pretty high cost for a few hours of sexual pleasure.

3) A jealous husband just might get even with you (verses 32-35)

³² The one who commits adultery with a woman is lacking sense; he who would destroy himself does it. ³³ Wounds and disgrace he will find, and his reproach will not be blotted out. ³⁴ For jealousy enrages a man, and he will not spare in the day of vengeance. ³⁵ He will not accept any ransom, nor will he be satisfied though you give many gifts.

Solomon is about to conclude this portion of text. He has already said that his son should listen to and obey the advice of his mother and father. He also said that doing so would keep him from getting involved in an adulterous relationship (verses 20-24). He then told his son not to let his heart desire her because the cost is too devastating for the few hours of pleasure (verses 25-31). He now gets to the crux of the matter with regard to the punishment that will come back upon a man who sleeps with another man’s wife (verses 32-35).

The first thing we see is that a man who commits adultery *“is lacking sense.”* What does it mean to *lack sense*? As we said in the discussion above, the man lacking sense is, in essence, a naïve man. He doesn’t have the ability or the desire to investigate the consequences of his decisions in life. Therefore, he makes many poor and costly decisions. The first thing that comes to my mind is the statement, “That guy doesn’t have the sense to get out of the rain.” I’m sure you’ve heard this or something like it. The dictionary defines *sense* as *the ability to think or reason soundly; normal intelligence and judgment; often as reflected in behavior*. In the same way, the guy in the rain doesn’t seem to have the ability to figure out that he will get wet if he simply stands there, so the guy who sleeps with his neighbor’s wife doesn’t seem to have the ability to figure out that he will be punished for such a despicable act. As a result, *“he who would destroy himself does it.”* I have seen firsthand evidence of this. When I became an adult, I learned that my dad had been involved in an adulterous relationship with seven different women while he was still married to my mom. I was too young at the time to recognize what my dad was doing, but when my dad died, he was a ruined man. He seemed unable to let God forgive him because he seemed unable to forgive himself. He destroyed our family, he caused his children to carry bitter memories of him, and nothing good came out of it. I still hurt today in some ways as a result of what he did to our family.

Solomon expanded this thought by saying in verse 32, *“Wounds and disgrace he will find, and his reproach will not be blotted out.”* Strong’s states that *wounds* insinuate *a blow; to strike or wound*. In essence, this verse is saying that there is a good chance that somebody is going to beat him up on account of what he did to another man’s wife. We’ll get there in a little bit, but verse 34 tells us that a jealous husband is the most likely one who will inflict those wounds. Our verse also says that he will be *disgraced*. Strong’s indicates that *disgrace* means *shame, disgrace, reproach*. When it is discovered that a man has slept with another man’s wife, people in a moral society will look down upon him with disgust. It is unfortunate that in our modern-day society adultery is an accepted practice. Even so, there are many people who still consider an adulterer someone to look down upon. Thank the

LORD that there are still some good people in the world. Our verse also says that his reputation will be destroyed (*his reproach*), and his damaged reputation will stay with him until the day he dies (*will not be blotted out*). Even after he is dead, those who knew about his sin of adultery will remember his reputation with disgust. Of course, after he dies, he will carry his unconfessed and unforsaken sins to the judgment day where will he stand before God to be condemned.

All that we have discussed so far about this passage leads us to one person—a jealous husband. Verse 34a tells us, *“For jealousy enrages a man.”* To be *enraged* is *to be out of control in anger*. In this state of mind, a man will do and say things he would never do or say under normal circumstances. After all, someone has violated his wife. She was his, and his alone until some other man slept with her. His jealousy is primarily directed toward the man, but it is quite possible that he will show anger toward his wife as well. So, when a jealous husband becomes enraged, what will he do? Verse 24b tells us that *“he will not spare in the day of vengeance.”* He won’t stop his quest to get even no matter what it takes to get the job done. He has a vendetta, and it is so important to him that he will invest all of his energies to complete it. Because he is so enraged, verse 35 tells us that *“He will not accept any ransom, nor will he be satisfied though you give many gifts.”* When a husband is this angry, it doesn’t matter what you try to give him to appease his anger, he won’t take it. All he wants to do is hurt you for hurting him by violating his wife. I’m sure you have seen news reports of this kind of thing happening in our day. Society may accept adultery as permissible, but we who know Christ in salvation know better. It is obvious that we are in the minority, but that’s okay. We know that we are obeying the LORD in the matter.

The conclusion of Proverbs 6:20-35

In Proverbs chapter 2, you saw how a fear of the LORD will deliver you from immoral women. In Proverbs chapter 7, you saw how the adulterous woman goes about seducing a man and the hurts and losses that result. Now in chapter six, you saw how a man involved in an adulterous relationship could be hurt or killed by a jealous husband. Obviously, the cost is not worth the few hours of pleasure you would enjoy in the arms of another man’s wife. We have seen the devastation that results from becoming involved with an adulterous woman. Now we will see the devastation that results from becoming involved with a prostitute.

The Prostitute

[Return to Index](#)

Proverbs 9:13-18

¹³ The woman of folly is boisterous, she is naive and knows nothing. ¹⁴ She sits at the doorway of her house, on a seat by the high places of the city, ¹⁵ calling to those who pass by, who are making their paths straight: ¹⁶ “Whoever is naive, let him turn in here,” and to him who lacks understanding she says, ¹⁷ “Stolen water is sweet; and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.” ¹⁸ But he does not know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol.

Proverbs chapter nine is beautiful to behold. As chapter eight of Proverbs comes to a close, you will see how Proverbs chapter nine gives the reader one more chance to choose wisdom over the pleasures of this world. As such, the essence of the chapter is a comparison between finding meaning and satisfaction in wisdom (which is God’s best) or finding temporary physical satisfaction without any meaning by pursuing worldly pleasures (which is Satan’s imitation). A wise man will pursue wisdom and find a personal relationship with Jesus Christ in the process, but a fool wants nothing to do with Jesus Christ, the one and only God of the universe. In this discussion, we will only look at the third paragraph of chapter 9 (verses 13-18) because it uses the prostitute as an example of the kind of pleasures the world has to offer.

What type of person is she? (verse 13)

It must be noted right away that the woman of folly in this passage is obviously a prostitute. It is logical to assume this because verse 15 tells us that she advertises her wares to the public for all to see, and she will service any man who comes to her. The adulteress advertises her wares too, but she does it generally for one man and not in public. Our verse says that this woman of folly (the prostitute) is *boisterous*—that is, she is loud and forward. You

may remember that we touched upon this with regard to the adulteress in the commentary on Proverbs chapter seven above. The prostitute is not intimidated in the least because as we said before, she feels she is not doing anything wrong.

The woman of folly is *naive and knows nothing*. If you will recall, a naive person is someone who seldom evaluates the consequences of his choices in life. Therefore, he makes many poor choices with hurtful and costly results. This woman acts and reacts in this manner. She doesn't think things through. No, she merely does what comes natural. She doesn't have a clue about the hurts, heartaches, and losses she will generate for herself and her partner by her immoral actions, but then she doesn't have enough sense to care.

Where she calls (verse 14)

All right, we know what kind of woman she is, but what does she do? Well, she lives in a house in one of the most visible sectors of town (*the high places of the city*), and she sits on her porch by *the doorway of her house* advertising her merchandise (her sensual body) waiting for some naive man to come along and offer to pay to have sex with her. She knows that there are some men who are always ready to jump at the chance to climb into bed and enjoy illicit sex with any woman who will give him her body for his own selfish gratification. She wants men of this persuasion to see the merchandise she offers and desire her. Wise men won't do this, but naive men will.

How she calls (verse 15)

She doesn't sit at the door of her house quietly. Verse 15 tells us that she is actively *calling to those who pass by*. She isn't saying a greeting like, "How are you? I hope you have a good day." No sir. It is more like, "Hi handsome. I'm available. Come to me, and we'll party. Come on, join me, and we'll enjoy sexual pleasures together." She is not bashful either, so she offers herself without shame.

Who she calls (verse 16)

What kind of men does she try to persuade to have sex with her? Before we answer that, notice once again in verse 13 how she is *naive* and *knows nothing*? This is important because here in verse 16, we learn that she is calling men who approach life the same way she does. They are *naive* and don't have the sense to know better (*him who lacks understanding*). These are the kind of men who will jump into bed with any woman who will give him her body for his selfish use. Verse 15 also tells us that she is not merely calling immoral men to join her. No, she is calling those *who are making their paths straight*. In other words, she tries to entice good, moral men to abandon their morals and join her in forbidden sexual pleasures. Wise and prudent men who have made up their mind to stay pure are not tempted by the prostitute. They understand the devastation that awaits if they join her in sexual relations. Oh, but good men who have not evaluated the results of a relationship with her can be tempted to join her in bed. You and I must guard ourselves against such a destructive decision because I know of several brothers in Christ who have enjoyed a night with a prostitute or an adulteress only to be found out and have their reputation ruined. Although such a woman may not realize it, her lifestyle will take good men down into the depths of sin along with her. Some men have become lax in this area, and after a while, they ended up joining a woman in forbidden sexual pleasures. Unfortunately they are ruined men today because of it.

What she promises (verse 17)

Now, what does she say in her attempt to persuade good men to abandon their morals and jump in bed with her? She says to *naive* men, *"turn in here."* In other words, "Hey fella, you'll like what I have to offer. Come with me, and we will enjoy some good sex. You'll have the time of your life." She also says to men who *lack understanding*, *"Stolen water is sweet; and bread eaten in secret is pleasant."* In other words, she says that enjoying sex with her is as exhilarating (*is pleasant*) and pleasurable (*is sweet*) as stealing a watermelon out of your neighbor's watermelon patch.

The disaster that awaits both him and her (verse 18)

Now, from a purely physical standpoint, engaging in sexual relations with another woman would be a pleasurable experience. Every man knows that, but good men also know that when the consequences of the sin come home to roost, it isn't so good after all. This is true because a man who joins her in sexual pleasures is already either a ruined or a dead man. He just doesn't know it yet. Verse 18 tells us, *"But he does not know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol."* Do they really die? You betcha. I saw firsthand how an adulterous relationship can take its toll on a man. Many years ago my own dad was shacking up with seven women while he was married to my mom. I learned about it years after the fact. Son, I watched my dad become a ruined man. His relationship with the LORD died, his relationship to his wife and kids died, and his peace and contentment vanished. All that was left was to physically lie down and die which he did a few years ago. The scars of his sin are still carried by my brother, my sisters, and me.

This paragraph of text does not lend itself to a useful text layout, so I'll reserve a full text layout for the end of our discussion of the whole of Proverbs nine. You will find it near the end of that chapter of my commentary.

We have talked about how a fear of the LORD will deliver us from an adulterous woman and from a prostitute. We have also seen the hurts, heartaches, and losses that result from engaging in sexual pleasures with someone other than a man's own wife. Now we will see how to adultery-proof a marriage. What you will read in Proverbs chapter five coupled with a genuine fear of the LORD will be sufficient to deliver you from becoming involved in any adulterous or extra-marital sexual relationship.

How to adultery proof a marriage

[Return to Index](#)

Proverbs 5

Prov. 5:1-6	Be warned—the adulteress is a bitter pill to swallow.
Prov. 5:7-14	Be warned—you'll pay a heavy price for getting involved with her.
Prov. 5:15-23	Be encouraged—your wife is the best alternative to an adulteress.

Section 1 What the adulteress is really like. (Prov. 5:1-6)

1) The Warning (verses 1-2)

¹ My son, give attention to my wisdom, incline your ear to my understanding; ² that you may observe discretion and your lips may reserve knowledge.

Gregory, as we have seen, Solomon started many of the first nine chapters of Proverbs by saying something like "Stop what you are doing and pay close attention to what I am about to tell you. This is important stuff, so listen carefully with the intent of doing what I advise." Here in verse 1a he stated, *"My son, give attention to my wisdom."* He is about to warn his son once again about the danger of getting involved with an adulterous woman, and he wanted to gain his son's full attention so that he would not miss any of the wisdom Solomon was about to share with him. Next in verse 1b he said, *"incline your ear to my understanding."* The dictionary defines *incline* as *to pay heed; listen willingly*. In other words, make listening to and doing what I say something you really want to do.

A) Recognize an adulterous woman's advances

OK, so what did Solomon feel was so important about what he had to share with his sons? Well, he knew that an adulterous woman was bad news, and he wanted to help his sons recognize her advances and respond properly in order to stay out of trouble. Notice please that there is a semi-colon separating verses one and two. Therefore the thoughts of both verses go together. Verse 2a states, *"that you may observe discretion."* What does this phrase mean? The process of *observation* is to examine something as long as it takes in order to recognize and understand the thing being studied. In this case, it is recognizing a woman who displays the characteristics of

an adulteress. *Discretion* is the ability to accurately judge between something good and something undesirable or bad. So, to combine these two ideas, to *observe discretion* is to see and **recognize** when a woman is either making subtle advances toward you or being outright blatant about her advances toward you. If a man is too naïve to know when a woman is trying to seduce him, there is a good chance that he may fall prey to her seduction. Therefore, it is in our best interest to be aware of how a woman may make sexual advances.

B) Tell her you don't want any part of it

Verse 2b states, *"and your lips may reserve knowledge."* Since this phrase is referencing *your lips*, it must be referring to something you say in response to her advances. So, what does it mean to *reserve knowledge*? Strong's states that *reserve* means **to guard, in a good sense (to protect, maintain, etc.)**. Knowledge then is the information needed to keep yourself out of trouble and stay pure. Therefore, using your *lips to reserve knowledge* is to **tell her** firmly, but nicely, that you recognize what she is trying to do and that you are **not interested** because you want to stay pure and true to your wife and your God. So then, when you *observe discretion*, you recognize the advances an adulteress is attempting and how it can hurt you severely. Then, using *your lips to reserve knowledge* is responding to her to let her know that, without a doubt, you are not interested in joining her in illicit sexual pleasures. This is the wisdom that Solomon was trying to convey to his sons. If his sons understood and obeyed what he taught, they would be free from the hurts and heartaches that come from getting involved with an adulteress. On the other hand, if they ignored or rejected his advice, they would have to pay the price for their sin.

2) The reason for the warning (verses 3-6)

³ For the lips of an adulteress drip honey and smoother than oil is her speech; ⁴ but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. ⁵ Her feet go down to death, her steps take hold of Sheol. ⁶ She does not ponder the path of life; her ways are unstable, she does not know it.

A. Her seductive words are an enticing trap (verse 3)

³ For the lips of an adulteress drip honey and smoother than oil is her speech;

Why is it so important to be able to recognize when a woman is trying to seduce you? What is it about what she says and how she says it that can be so dangerous? It is because *"the lips of an adulteress drip honey and smoother than oil is her speech."* When the verse says that her words *drip honey*, it means that what she says and how she says it is sweet to the ear of a naïve man or one who is ignorant of her devices. Let's face it, knowing that a woman really wants you can be an exhilarating experience. It causes your heart rate increase, and it flatters your ego. In short, it is a real thrill, but not for a man who is committed to a life of purity for himself, his wife, and his LORD. There is a battle raging for the souls of men, and Satan will readily use an adulterous woman to ruin a man who is trying to live for the LORD. He will also use her to keep an unsaved man from coming to the LORD. When the verse says that *smoother than oil is her speech*, it is saying that the way she comes across is so sensual, warm, and inviting. It is so enticing to the uninformed man. You and I need to be extremely careful to recognize when a woman is coming on to us. Many otherwise good and godly men have fallen prey to her and ended up deeply involved in an adulterous relationship. It has ruined their lives, their reputations, and their ministries. Don't be so naïve as to think that it could not happen to you. Believe me, it can. I have even seen homely men seduced into going to bed with a married woman. Son, be careful and vigilant.

B. Her offer of sexual union will hurt you (verses 4-6)

1) She will hurt you personally

⁴ but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword.

Before we proceed, notice the semi-colon between verses 3 and 4. This indicates that both verses go together as a single thought. From a purely physical standpoint, every man knows that it would be a thrilling experience to have a beautiful woman seduce him with sweet and inviting words. Thrilling as it may be, not all men understand

the end result of getting sexually involved with another man's wife. The verse says, "*in the end she.*" When the relationship is over and she has gotten her claws into you, she will be a bitter pill to swallow. The dictionary defines *wormwood* as *a bitter, unpleasant, or mortifying experience*. An adulterous woman does not have your best interest at heart. She is in it for what she can get out of the relationship, and if you get hurt in the process, that's just too bad. The verse says that she is *sharp as a two-edged sword*. In the end, she will hurt you every bit as much as if she had cut you with a knife. Son, the aftermath of an adulterous relationship can be absolutely disastrous. Therefore, recognize this from the beginning and stop it before it gets started. This is the best and safest way to deal with the situation.

2) She will lead you to a premature death

⁵ *Her feet go down to death, her steps take hold of Sheol.*

The words *her feet* and *her steps* are essentially the path of life or manner of living she has chosen to follow. Unfortunately, this manner of living leads to a dead end where a premature death awaits the man who joins her. It will happen to her, and it will happen to you if you become sexually involved with her. I have even seen it happen to pastors and other men in full-time Christian service. I am amazed at the number of good men who are forced to leave the pastorate every year because they became involved in an adulterous relationship. You and I need to be especially alert in this regard since even godly men have fallen prey to her. If the godly man David could fall for Bathsheba so quickly and so completely, we need to be even more alert to the danger of adultery.

3) She doesn't understand the damage she is causing

⁶ *She does not ponder the path of life; her ways are unstable, she does not know it*

As we saw in the discussion of Proverbs 9:13-18, the prostitute is a naive woman. Verse 13 of that chapter tells us that *the woman of folly is boisterous, she is naive and knows nothing*. In verse six above, an adulterous woman *does not ponder the path of life*. She does not seriously evaluate the consequence of her sinful actions. Instead, she merely does what feels good. If she would stop and take a serious look at what she is doing, or is about to do, she would not do those things knowing that her sin is very costly. Not only is she ignorant of the consequences of her actions, but she doesn't have a clue about the fact that she is *unstable*. The dictionary defines this word as *changeable; variable; fluctuating; unreliable; fickle*. She doesn't operate on integrity and character. Instead, she does whatever sounds good or feels good at the moment, and she may change her mind often. In short, you cannot depend upon her to be consistent about anything. As a result, she is easily led astray, and she is ready to lead some unsuspecting man astray with her. Recognize this fact and avoid her.

See a text layout of this portion of text on the following page.

Proverbs 5:1-6

¹ My son,

GIVE ATTENTION
INCLINE YOUR EAR to my wisdom,
to my understanding;

² That you may observe discretion, and
your lips may reserve knowledge.

³ For the lips of an adulteress drip honey, and
smoother than oil is her speech;

BUT
IN THE END

she is bitter as wormwood,
sharp as a two-edged sword.

⁵ Her feet go down to death,
her steps lay hold of Sheol.

⁶ She does not ponder the path of life,
Her ways are unstable,
She does not know it.

Section 2 A warning—stay away from her (Prov. 5:7-14)

⁷ Now then, my sons, listen to me and do not depart from the words of my mouth. ⁸ Keep your way far from her and do not go near the door of her house, ⁹ or you will give your vigor to others and your years to the cruel one; ¹⁰ and strangers will be filled with your strength and your hard-earned goods will go to the house of an alien; ¹¹ and you groan at your final end, when your flesh and your body are consumed; ¹² and you say,

"How I have hated instruction! and my heart spurned reproof! ¹³ I have not listened to the voice of my teachers, nor inclined my ear to my instructors! ¹⁴ I was almost in utter ruin in the midst of the assembly and congregation."

The warning (verses 7-8)

⁷ Now then, my sons, listen to me and do not depart from the words of my mouth. ⁸ Keep your way far from her and do not go near the door of her house.

Armed with the knowledge that an adulterous woman is a bitter pill to swallow, Solomon now says, "listen to me and do not depart from the words of my mouth." What were the words he had to share? They were simply this: "Stay away from her and don't go near her house or the places she frequents. If you are not where she can get to you, she cannot seduce you." This is the same kind of advice we would give to a drunk who is trying to stay sober. We would tell him not to go near a bar where he would be tempted to go in and have a drink. If you are not in the vicinity of an adulterous woman, she cannot tempt you to go to bed with her. It is as simple as that.

The consequences (verses 9-11)

⁹ *or you will give your vigor to others and your years to the cruel one;* ¹⁰ *and strangers will be filled with your strength and your hard-earned goods will go to the house of an alien;* ¹¹ *and you groan at your final end, when your flesh and your body are consumed;*

There is no doubt that sexual relations with a beautiful woman is exciting and pleasurable. Otherwise, men all over the world wouldn't do it. The thrill and excitement of the moment are almost overwhelming, and sometimes even otherwise disciplined men will allow themselves to become so emotionally excited to passion that they cannot stop themselves. Oh, but there is a heavy price to pay for enjoying such an experience.

1) You will lose your vitality (verse 9a)

⁹ *you will give your vigor to others*

Do you have a lot of get-up-and-go? Are you full of energy and able to do lots of things? That energy, that forcefulness, and that intensity are what the word vigor is referring to in our text. If you were to get involved in an adulterous relationship, you would literally give those away. The stress of hiding your relationship, of keeping your mistress happy, and of lying to your wife will all take their toll on your energy level. This is bad enough, but there is more.

2) You will be in bondage to Satan the rest of your life (verse 9b)

and your years to the cruel one

If you commit adultery, you become a slave to the devil. Your sin will bind you, and, in essence, you will be serving Satan for years to come. Some men abandon their sin, confess it to their wife, and start all over again, but most simply live with the mess they have made of their life and endure the consequences. Satan knows First Corinthians 6:9-11. It reads, *“Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the LORD Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.”* He would love to trick you into the trap of adultery knowing that you would most likely be held in bondage there for the rest of your life. He wants you to be his servant.

3) You will work for others and lose your wealth (verse 10)

¹⁰ *and strangers will be filled with your strength and your hard-earned goods will go to the house of an alien*

Once a man gets trapped in an adulterous relationship, he will most often find it necessary to give money to his mistress. He will have to work harder to generate enough income to meet his needs, his family's needs, and what his adulterous partner demands of him. So in a very real sense his strength (the energy he expends to generate income) will go to strangers outside of his family. The cost of such a relationship is always greater than a man wants to pay, but pay he will. It would be so much better if men would consider the cost before they enjoy the pleasures.

4) You will lose your health (verse 11)

¹¹ *you groan at your final end, when your flesh and your body are consumed*

Stress and worry will take a heavy toll on a man's body when he has to sneak around and keep his illicit relationship secret. Then if or when he is caught, the stress put upon him by his wife will also take its toll on his health. My dad was an example of this. He had been involved in several adulterous relationships, and at the end of

his life, he could not forgive himself nor would he allow the LORD to forgive him. He realized that he had caused his children to harbor great bitterness toward him for what he had done, and he didn't know how to handle all of that. Having seen those detrimental results weigh my dad down physically, I can vouch for the fact that all of the detrimental things we have discussed will happen in some form or another to the man who gets involved in an intimate relationship with another man's wife.

5) You will regret your foolish decision (verses 12-14)

¹² and you say,

"How I have hated instruction! and my heart spurned reproof! ¹³ I have not listened to the voice of my teachers, nor inclined my ear to my instructors! ¹⁴ I was almost in utter ruin in the midst of the assembly and congregation."

Adverse consequences always surface once the deed is done. When they do, the sinner will be sorry he made such a stupid mistake. Of course, it will be too late to go back and undo what he has done, but in the end, he will express his stupidity. He will say something like this (my paraphrase):

¹² How could I have been so stupid as to hate it when people tried to teach me to stay pure and live in a good and godly manner ^{<instruction>}? Why was I so foolish as to treat with disgust ^{<spurned>} those who tried to get me to see the error of my ways ^{<reproof>}? ¹³ I didn't listen to my teachers, and I didn't make doing what I was instructed something I really want to do ^{<inclined my ear>}. ¹⁴ I came close to completely destroying my testimony before my brothers in Christ, especially the people of my own church. Oh, what a foolish thing I have done."

Regret can weigh heavily upon a man, and the mere pain of regret can pull him down into despair. The best way to avoid this condition is to determine ahead of time that you will not get involved with another man's wife. As we transition into section three of Proverbs chapter five, we will see the perfect alternative to an adulteress. Understand what the next paragraph of text is teaching, because it will enable you to adultery-proof your marriage.

On the following page you will find a layout of paragraph three of Proverbs chapter five.

Proverbs 5:7-14

⁷ Now then my sons,
listen to me, and
do not depart from the words of my mouth.

⁸ Keep your way **far from her,**
do not go near and
the door of her house.

⁹ Lest you give your vigor to others, and
your years to the cruel one;

¹⁰ Lest strangers be filled with your strength, and
your hard-earned goods go to the house of an alien;

¹¹ and you groan at the latter end,
when your flesh and your body are consumed,
¹² and you say,

“How have I hated instruction !
and my heart spurned reproof !

¹³ and I have not listened to the voice of my teachers,
nor inclined my ear to my instructors !

¹⁴ I was almost in ruin
in the midst of the assembly and congregation.”

Section 3 The perfect alternative to the adulteress. (Prov. 5:15-23)

¹⁵ Drink water from your own cistern and fresh water from your own well. ¹⁶ Should your springs be dispersed abroad, streams of water in the streets? ¹⁷ Let them be yours alone and not for strangers with you. ¹⁸ Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth. ¹⁹ As a loving hind and a graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times; be exhilarated always with her love. ²⁰ For why should you, my son, be exhilarated with an adulteress and embrace the bosom of a foreigner? ²¹ For the ways of a man are before the eyes of the LORD, and He watches all his paths. ²² His own iniquities will capture the wicked, and he will be held with the cords of his sin. ²³ He will die for lack of instruction, and in the greatness of his folly he will go astray.

Gregory,

Sexual promiscuity is running rampant worldwide and especially in America. Oh, but this does not give believers license to be sexually immoral. In fact, the LORD Jesus Himself said in Matthew 5:28 that if we even look at a woman with lustful thoughts of undressing her and/or taking her to bed, we are already guilty of committing adultery with her in our heart. Even though we may not say a word to her or touch her body in any way, we still become guilty of sin by the desire we allow our minds to cultivate. In God's eyes, we are just as guilty by thinking such a thing as we would be if we actually committed the physical act. Since we are not permitted or encouraged to engage in such immoral practices, how can we satisfy our sexual needs in a moral, legitimate, and acceptable way? The answer is simple! It is by each man allowing his own wife to satisfy any and all sexual needs and desires that he may have. Son, I realize that this presents a problem for you since you are not married yet, but one day the LORD will bring the right young lady your way to become your wife. When He does, you too will find her to be all you will ever need to satisfy all of your sexual needs. Until then, the only course of action you can take to be pleasing to the LORD is total abstinence from sexual activities. This is not always easy, but it is always the right thing to do.

Let your wife meet all of your sexual needs

1) Engage in sexual relations with your wife alone. She belongs to you alone.

Verse 15, *“Drink water from your own cistern and fresh water from your own well.”*

The word pictures in verses 15-23 are fascinating. Since the thrust of the chapter is safeguarding yourself against involvement with an adulteress, it seems clear that this whole paragraph is dealing with the same thing. As such, to *drink water* and to *drink fresh water* must refer to the partaking of sexual intercourse with your wife, but why is the same thing stated two different ways? Notice the words that these two thoughts accompany. The words *“drink water”* relate to satisfying your thirst from a *cistern* while the words *“drink fresh water”* relate to satisfying your thirst from a *well*. You might say, “Well, so what? What’s the difference?” There is not a vast difference, but there is a definite difference. Follow along as we examine these two thoughts.

Every one of us gets thirsty from time to time. When we do, we grab a glass of water and drink our fill. The water may not be cold and may not taste good, but it satisfies our thirst, nonetheless. We drink water because it is the normal and natural thing to do. It is a fact that men thirst for sexual satisfaction on a regular basis. Our verse says, *“drink water from your own cistern.”* A cistern is a holding tank. It stores rainwater that runs off from a roof. That water flows into the cistern and is stored until it is needed. The water isn’t the freshest nor is it necessarily cool, but it satisfies the thirst, nonetheless. *Drinking from your own cistern* can be compared to the daily, normal pleasure of satisfying your sexual needs through intercourse with your wife. It is nice, but there is nothing special about it. It is pleasurable, but it is the thing a man and wife enjoy on a normal, regular basis.

Ah, but there are those mind-blowing times when the experience is especially meaningful and much more pleasurable than the day-to-day “usual” experience. This is the kind of thing Solomon was suggesting when he used the phrase *“fresh water from your own well.”* There is something special about clear, cold, fresh water from a well that makes it much more refreshing than stored water taken from a lukewarm cistern. In much the same way, it is so thrilling when sexual intercourse with your wife is especially exhilarating. It is not the norm and occurs less frequently, but nonetheless, it is special.

In this verse, Solomon was saying that I can and should find complete sexual satisfaction in the arms of my own wife, and the same holds true for you. There is no justifiable reason to sneak off with my neighbor’s wife or pay some prostitute to satisfy my sexual needs. My wife is there for that purpose, and she is the one God designed to meet those needs. Therefore Solomon stated that we are to draw satisfaction and refreshment from our own stores – that is, our wife. This is the teaching of this verse, plain and simple.

2) Don’t sleep with anything that wears a skirt

Verse 16, *“Should your springs be dispersed abroad, streams of water in the streets?”*

Solomon asked two questions here, but, in reality, they are one and the same. The word *should* could rightfully be rephrased as “Since your wife is available and willing to meet all of your sexual needs, is there any good reason

to run to the arms of another woman to find fulfillment?" This is a valid interpretation, but we must expand upon it because the verse is dealing with a slightly different aspect of sex than the mere union of a man and a woman. The two words *your springs* refer to your own fertile sperm. After all, it is your sperm combining with an egg in your wife's body that makes a baby. There is a potential problem here though. You see, your sperm doesn't know or care whether you fertilize your wife or some other woman. That is your choice and one about which you must be very careful and completely disciplined.

The words *be dispersed abroad* are very interesting. The idea here is that of a large geographical area. Abroad usually means a country overseas or far from home. The main thing to remember here is that it is not home. It is somewhere other than home. This is what I believe Solomon was saying here: "Is there any good reason why you should sleep with women all over the country and implant your sperm into them?" The answer is an emphatic "no."

The last phrase of verse 16 asks why you should avoid having "*streams of water in the streets?*" Whereas *springs* in verse 16a refers to your sperm, I feel that *streams of water* in 16b may well refer to children of women you have fertilized. In other words, why should kids you fathered by other women be running all over the place while people know that you were their father? How do you think the wife of a man like this would feel knowing her husband had kids by several women? It's kind of obvious, isn't it?

The good and godly thing to do is to *let them be yours alone and not for strangers with you*. Your sperm should father children by "your wife," and the children she bears should be part of "your family." That is what God intended when he created man and woman. The family is a unit, and children reared in the home by loving parents fare much better than children raised by a single parent.

3) Let your wife fulfill your needs, and let her be all you need

Solomon wrote in verse 18, "*Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth.*" Your sperm (your fountain) is blessed when you enjoy sexual relations with your wife alone and have children solely by her. Enjoying sexual pleasures and having children with your wife should not be a chore, but should be something that causes you to *rejoice in your wife*. This kind of response brings lasting pleasure. Notice that Solomon didn't simply say "your wife" but *the wife of your youth*. This statement is fascinating coming from Solomon. I say this because he had 700 wives and 300 playthings called concubines. He could enjoy sexual pleasures whenever and with whichever woman of his harem or concubines he desired. It is certain, too, that these women wanted to please him. They did their best to see that Solomon thoroughly enjoyed the sexual relationship because that way they would have an opportunity to bear children for him. If a wife or concubine was a disappointment in bed, Solomon may decide not to sleep with her again, and her chance of having children would be gone. After studying Ecclesiastes, I am convinced that at some point in his life, Solomon realized that unbridled sexual pleasures do not satisfy. What really satisfies is sexual pleasures accompanied by commitment to one mate. You see, love and commitment cause sex to generate a much fuller and more satisfying experience. Solomon apparently never experienced a one-woman commitment that we married men enjoy today. Although Solomon may have experienced such a relationship for a short time with Pharaoh's daughter, other than that, he never experienced a commitment to one woman. He did realize too late what he had missed. I say he didn't have such a sweet relationship because he wrote in Ecclesiastes 9:9, "*Enjoy life with the woman whom you love all the days of your fleeting life which He has given to you under the sun; for this is your reward in life and in your toil in which you have labored under the sun.*" Notice the words *THE WOMAN*. He was saying that we should have one wife and be dedicated to her alone.

Since your sperm should only be implanted into your wife, allow her to be all you could ever find in the arms of another woman. Verse 19 tells us, "*As a loving hind and a graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times.*" What does this verse really mean, and how can it help me desire my wife over my neighbor's wife? I understand that *a loving hind* is a female deer in heat. She is ready for a mature buck to mount and fertilize her so that she will bear a fawn or fawns in the spring. The buck is so attracted to her that he will throw all caution to the wind for a chance to mount her and enjoy sexual intercourse. *A graceful doe* is a thing of beauty. She moves so gracefully and looks beautiful. We husbands should allow (*let*) our wives to excite us to passion the same way a doe in heat excites an eager buck to passion. Our verse says of my wife that I should *let her breasts satisfy you* (me) *at all times*, and that I should *be exhilarated always with her love*. *Exhilarated* simply means to *be invigorated or stimulated to passion*. I need to stop here and explain some things about this verse because understanding it is crucial to understanding the chapter.

It is normal and natural for a man to desire to fondle and kiss a woman's breasts. It is such a pleasurable experience both for the man and for the woman. The way many women today wear clothes that leave little or nothing to the imagination makes it hard for a man to look at one of these loose women and not think unclean thoughts. It is different when my wife bares her breasts in front of me. This is perfectly normal and comfortable for

both of us, and neither of us feels any shame. I have chosen to find satisfaction with her and reject the thought of finding satisfaction from seeing or fondling the breasts of any other woman. After all, if I were to engage in sexual pleasures with another woman in the dark where neither of us said a word, the physical sensations would be no different no matter which woman shared my bed. Let me illustrate. In Genesis 29:23-25 the Scriptures state *“Now in the evening he (Laban) took his daughter Leah, and brought her to him; and Jacob went in to her (had sex with her). Laban also gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah as a maid. So it came about in the morning that, behold, it was Leah! And he said to Laban, “What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served with you? Why then have you deceived me?”* (Grayed text added for clarity). Apparently, Jacob and Leah had sex in the dark and didn’t talk to one another. The thing I want you to understand here is that Jacob experienced the same pleasures he would have enjoyed with Rachel and didn’t know the difference until later. Another example of this is in Genesis 39 where Judah had sexual relations with his daughter-in-law thinking she was a prostitute. I’m sure he experienced the same physical sensations he would have enjoyed with his wife. He didn’t find out until later that this “prostitute” was in fact his own daughter-in-law. So, like I said, the purely physical aspect of the sexual relations will feel the same even with another woman. That being said, there is no benefit from a purely physical standpoint for me to seek another woman with whom I can enjoy sexual intercourse. As such, then, I can find the same kind of passionate and satisfying sex with my wife as I could ever find in the arms of another man’s wife. As a result, when I see a beautiful or sexy woman, I remind myself that she does not belong to me. I actually say to myself, “I have no right to touch her. Besides, she has nothing to offer me that I cannot find in the arms of my wife at home. Then too, when I have sex with my wife, I can do so without any guilt or remorse.”

I am going to be blunt with you, but not crude. Some men might read this and say, “Yeah, but you don’t know my wife.” I agree that some women don’t enjoy sex. In fact, my daughter tells me that she has talked with several nurses who admit to feeling used by their husband when they have sex. There is nothing mutual in it for those wives. This is unfortunate, but if your wife feels this way, the good news is that you can most likely change that. For many of our married years, I satisfied myself first, and then I tried to bring my wife to a climax. The experience for her was okay, but I wasn’t very successful in helping her get really cranked up. At some point in our marriage, I started trying to get her to climax even if I didn’t penetrate her during that session. I would make a mental note every time I touched or fondled her in a place or in a way that she particularly enjoyed. I try to use those touches again and again, and as I do, I learn more ways to bring pleasure to my wife. Over time it has helped her really enjoy the experience and look forward to more sessions more often. In the long run, by helping her enjoy our lovemaking, she is much more eager to meet my needs. Now I can honestly say that everything I could find in the arms of another woman I can find with my wife at home. Our relationship is filled with passion, pleasure, and satisfaction. Yes, it took work, time, and some denial of my needs to reach the goal, but the end result has been well worth the time and effort. She now knows that I am genuinely interested in finding more and more ways for her to thoroughly enjoy the relationship. As a result, I can truly understand verse 20 of our text. It says, *“For why should you, my son, be exhilarated with an adulteress and embrace the bosom of a foreigner?”* Son, if your wife knows that you are genuinely interested in and actively trying to help her enjoy sexual intercourse with you, then she will respond well. Even if she is hesitant in the beginning, in time, she will come to thoroughly enjoy the experience. When she does, sex takes on a new and wonderful dimension for both of you. When I became convinced that my wife is all I need, I set in place safeguards that will adultery-proofed our marriage. It is such a comfort and security to know that I can have all of my sexual needs met at home and not feel like I should look elsewhere. I’ll repeat myself here, but you, too, can help your wife enjoy the sexual relationship if you will work more on satisfying her needs than satisfying your own. It may mean denying yourself at times to work on helping her enjoy the experience, but in the long run, she will realize that you are really interested in helping her find satisfaction. When she does, she will be more willing to satisfy your needs. You both will win as a result.

Aside from the guilt and pain that result from an adulterous relationship, there is another reason why you and I should determine to be faithful to our own wives. It is because the LORD is watching and recording everything we do. Verse 21 states, *“For the ways of a man are before the eyes of the LORD, and He watches all his paths.”* This is the key verse for the chapter. It is exactly where the fear of the LORD comes into play. If we genuinely fear and respect our heavenly Father, we will not want to do anything that will offend or disappoint Him. If we engage in sinful activities, we will offend and disappoint Him, and we will set in motion adverse consequences that we must endure. Therefore, we need to be quick to recognize when a woman has designs on us (*observe discretion*), and we need to be quick to tell her in no uncertain terms that we are not interested (*your lips reserve knowledge*). Doing this will put feet to our fear of the LORD and will keep us from sinning against Him. The fact is, our pleasure is not the most important thing. Rather, the LORD’s pleasure is first and foremost. As we saw in Proverbs chapter nine, adultery is Satan’s cheap imitation for godly wisdom. It satisfies for the moment, but it never satisfies in the long run. Wisdom, though, satisfies for a lifetime.

Recognize the disaster that awaits those who engage in adultery

²² His own iniquities will capture the wicked, and he will be held with the cords of his sin. ²³ He will die for lack of instruction, and in the greatness of his folly he will go astray.

Let's face it. Every sinful act has its consequences. That is a fact of life. Way back in Genesis 4:3-8 God told Cain,

*³ So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground. ⁴ Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering; ⁵ but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell. ⁶ Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? ⁷ "If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, **sin is crouching at the door**; and its desire is for you, **but you must master it.**" ⁸ Cain told Abel his brother. And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him."*

Temptations bombard us every day. We can't go many places where women are not dressed in such seductive attire that they leave little to a man's imagination. Even in church, there are some women who dress seductively even though they probably don't have a clue how such dress will affect a man adversely. Like God told Cain, it is our responsibility to master sin and keep it under control. It is easy to give in to sin, but it takes effort and determination to keep from sinning. One of the secrets that will keep us from falling prey to adultery is to determine ahead of time that we will stand up and say no instead of falling for a woman's advances. I will talk more about this in the conclusion of this chapter, but for now, let's examine more of the adverse consequences of adultery. Understanding them will help us stay pure and avoid such women.

1) He will be caught and held in her trap

²² His own iniquities will capture the wicked, and he will be held with the cords of his sin.

We saw in paragraph two of Proverbs chapter five (verses 4-14) that it is extremely costly to sleep with another man's wife. Any man who will join her will be literally caught in the adulteress's trap. In reality, he will be trapped by the sins of his own making. Notice that verse 22 above says that he will be captured by *his own iniquities*. She faces consequences of her own, but the man is the one being discussed in this context. He doesn't pay for her sins. No, she must deal with the results of her sin, and he with his. Those who indulge in the short-term pleasures of an adulterous relationship will also be forced to endure the long-term repercussions that follow. These consequences won't let go of the offender. He must endure them for life. These are *the cords of his sin*.

I was watching a news report on television some time ago, and it had a full half hour of politicians who had been caught in illicit sexual scandals. I feel sorry for their wives and children, but they chose their own way and must endure the consequences of their actions. Our own former pastor destroyed his family by sleeping with a married woman. His life and the life of his family will never be the same. These kinds of things are such sad commentaries on fallen men.

2) His life will fall apart, and he may experience a premature death

²³ He will die for lack of instruction, and in the greatness of his folly he will go astray.

Men succumb to adulterous relationships because they either have not been taught better or didn't learn what others tried to teach them. There is ample information available so that anyone with a seeing eye or a hearing ear can learn and understand. The problem is that many men don't want to learn. They enjoy their sin too much, and they think they can get away with it without being caught or having to pay the penalty. In the end, the magnitude of their sin (*in the greatness of his folly*) will cause their life to take a drastic turn down the road to disaster. It is inevitable that their sin will catch up with them, and when it does, disaster waits just around the corner. An adulterer can never undo the deed once he commits it. He will have become a different man. Solomon was so right when in Prov. 2:19 he wrote, *"None who go to her return again, nor do they reach the paths of life."* A man is never the

same after the act. He is always worse off because of it and will most likely never recover. Son, determine from the depths of your soul that you will never fall prey to adultery. It is such a rough road for those who engage in it.

Now let's look at a layout of this portion of the chapter.

Proverbs 5:15-23

¹⁵ Drink water from **your own cistern**, and
fresh water from **your own well**.

¹⁶ Should **your springs** be dispersed abroad,
springs of water in the street?

¹⁷ Let them be **yours alone**, and
not for strangers with you.

¹⁸ Let **your fountain** be blessed, and
rejoice in the wife of your youth.

¹⁹ As a loving hind and a graceful doe,
let **her breasts satisfy** you at all times;
Be exhilarated always with **her love**.

²⁰ For why should you, my son,
be **exhilarated** with an adulteress,
and
embrace the bosom of a foreigner?

²¹ For the ways of man are
before the eyes of the LORD,
and **He watches** all his
paths.

²² His own iniquities will **capture** the wicked, and
he will be **held** with the cords of his sin
²³ He will **die** for lack of instruction, and
in the greatness of his folly he will **go astray**.

Summary of chapter five

Gregory, the best thing you can do is listen to wise instruction and do what you are taught (verse 1). Learn how to quickly and accurately determine when a woman has designs on you (verse 2a) and tell her in no uncertain terms that you are not interested in a romantic relationship with her (verse 2b). Realize that her smooth and inviting words, her seductive facial expressions, and her sensual body movements are extremely effective tools, and they can quickly draw you into her embrace if you are not careful (verse 3). Realize also that she is a bitter pill to swallow once she has her claws in you, and she will lead you to an early grave (verses 4-5). She will do this because she doesn't realize the damage she is doing to you or to herself (verse 6).

Son, I have taught you these truths in the past, but after reading this commentary, you should certainly know better than to get involved with this kind of woman. Simply stay away from her and don't go near her house or the places she frequents (verses 7-8). If you were to fall for her seduction and go to bed with her, you would give up your vitality (verse 9), you would end up giving your hard-earned income to others (verse 10), you would lose your

health, and you would end up groaning about your losses (verse 11). In the end, you would say, “I was stupid to despise those who tried to teach me to live godly. I rejected those who tried to correct me for my own good (verse 12). I didn’t listen to them because I was intent on enjoying my sin (verse 13). Now I have ruined my life and destroyed my reputation before my brothers in Christ and especially the members of my church (verse 14).”

Realize that there is a better way to enjoy sexual pleasures than with an adulteress. You can find all of the emotional and physical satisfaction you need at home. Allow your wife to be the perfect alternative to an adulteress. She can satisfy you on a regular basis everyday (verse 15a), and she can give you mind-blowing sex on those once-in-awhile special occasions (verse 15b). There is no reason to go around sleeping with anything that wears a skirt and end up with illegitimate kids running all over town (verse 16). No, no! Have sex with your wife and allow her to bear your kids so that they belong to you and your wife (verse 17). Let God bless your union and be thrilled with the wife of your youth (verse 18). Learn to see her as attractive and alluring and allow her to exhilarate you to sexual desire just like a buck is driven to mount a doe in heat (verse 19a). Be satisfied to fondle and kiss your wife’s breasts (verse 19b), and learn to enjoy passionate and fulfilling sex with her alone (verse 19c). She is the best alternative to an adulteress. After all, why should you allow another man’s wife to excite you to passion or fondle and kiss her breasts when your wife can satisfy your sexual needs at home whenever you need it and without regret (verse 20)?

There’s another and more important reason to allow your wife to satisfy all of your sexual needs. It is simply that the LORD is watching everything you do even if it is done in the darkness of night. He not only sees, but He is recording every thought and deed in His book. Every one of them will be brought to light at judgment day (verse 21). Be assured that when the LORD sees a man committing adultery, He will most certainly allow the normal and natural consequences of that man’s sin to come crashing down upon his head. Yes, his own sin will bind him as thoroughly as if he had been chained to a bull (verse 22), and he will wander aimlessly through life only to experience a premature and tragic death (verse 23).

Application

As I mentioned above, a full one-third of the verses in Proverbs chapters 1-9 deal with the topic of adulterous women and how you should avoid them. Solomon felt that this subject needed that much attention. As a quick review, Prov. 2:16-19 taught us that a genuine fear of the LORD will deliver a man from the clutches of an adulteress or a prostitute. Therefore, it would be in your best interest to discover what a genuine, biblical fear of the LORD really is and how to acquire it. (See chapter four of this commentary). It is critical that you acquire a fear of the LORD because it is what will generate the kind of security you will need to fare well in this life. Next, in Proverbs 7 we saw the method an adulterous woman uses to seduce a man and the disaster that follows if he joins her. In the last paragraph of Proverbs 6, we saw how a jealous husband may be the one to get even with the man who sleeps with his wife.

The adulterous woman is not the only hazard a man must avoid. The prostitute is another one. We were introduced to her in the last paragraph of Proverbs 9. There we saw that the result of engaging in sexual intercourse with her is equally as disastrous as engaging in sexual intercourse with another man’s wife. Finally, in Proverbs chapter 5, we saw that the perfect alternative to the adulteress or a prostitute is a man’s own wife. If he is willing to work at helping his wife thoroughly enjoy their sexual relationship, he will find in her all of the passion, excitement, and satisfaction he could ever find in the arms of another woman. God provided a wife to meet a man’s sexual needs if he will either allow her or help her do so. I realize that I am writing somewhat bluntly, but if you will take an honest look at chapter five, you will find that it is indeed very blunt. I have asked several men to read my paraphrase of Proverbs chapter five, and many of them had to go immediately to the Bible text to see if it really said what I wrote. Without exception, they found that the paraphrase was indeed accurate to the text.

The major emphasis in Proverbs chapter five is that a husband really needs to allow his wife to be or to become all that he could find in the arms of another man’s wife. This is important because she can stimulate him to as much passion and exhilaration as any adulteress or prostitute. The blessed part of this kind of relationship is that he can enjoy sex with her and lay his head on the pillow at night with a clean conscience.

Proverbs 5 has helped me to learn to be thrilled with my wife, not just satisfied. When I am out and around town, at work, or anywhere else for that matter, when I see a sexy woman, I remind myself that “She is not mine, I have no right to her, besides, she has nothing to offer me that I cannot find in the arms of my wife and with a clean conscience.” I literally say this to myself each time my mind starts to wander into unholy thoughts about a woman, and I really mean it. This is the key that I trust will guard my integrity and keep me from falling prey to adultery. Let’s face it. Real temptations are all around us. Even otherwise godly pastors have succumbed to the temptation. They became involved in an adulterous relationship, and their sin ruined their ministries. I realize that the first time

sleeping with some attractive woman would be exhilarating, but the grief and regret that follows is not worth the few minutes of sinful pleasure. Anyone who reads and understands what Proverbs 5 is really teaching will have the tools he needs to adultery-proof his own marriage. I love this chapter because it gives me peace of mind and security. Thank you, Solomon, for giving it to us. I also realize that all we have discussed covers only the physical side of marriage. Men and women must also work on the emotional, financial, and commitment side of marriage in order for the marriage to be solid. I will say, though, that becoming totally satisfied with my wife in the sexual area has really helped me maintain the emotional side of our marriage.

The conclusion of the whole discussion of the adulteress

In Proverbs chapter two, we saw the process by which we can find **knowledge, understanding, and wisdom**. Verses 16-19 showed us that **these things** will rescue us from immoral women and an adulterous relationship that could follow. In chapter seven, we saw the way in which an adulterous woman goes about seducing a man and the way a naïve man will follow her into her bed. It then showed the high cost of joining her. The last paragraph of chapter nine showed how the satisfaction that comes from pursuing illicit sexual pleasures is a cheap imitation for the satisfaction that comes from pursuing wisdom. In the last paragraph of chapter six (verses 20-35), we saw how a jealous husband can take vengeance upon you for violating his wife. Finally, in chapter five, we saw how an adulterous woman is trouble (verses 1-6), how costly and regretful it would be to join her (verses 7-14), and the best alternative to adultery—your wife (verses 15-23). Now the question becomes, what can we learn from all of this?

Son, it is obvious that engaging in an adulterous relationship with another man's wife would be pleasurable and exhilarating the first couple of sessions, but I suspect that it might also be very nerve-wracking trying to keep it secret. The thing to remember is that it comes with consequences greater than you would want to pay. Adultery always has a high price tag, but the guilty man will pay the price, nonetheless. We saw in chapter nine how seeking satisfaction through physical pleasures is a poor imitation for the satisfaction that comes from finding and using wisdom. Having seen the totality of the evidence Proverbs gives for abstaining from illicit sex, we now understand that the perfect alternative to adultery is your own wife. God planned it that way. Now that we have seen these truths, let's look at some practical application to what we have learned.

First, you and I need to be keenly aware of any advances a woman might make toward us. We don't need to be paranoid, but the warnings in Proverbs should have given us the insight we need to recognize when or if a woman has designs upon us. Armed with the truth that any sexual relations outside of marriage is wrong and an offence to a holy God, we must determine that we will stay pure by either waiting until marriage to engage in sexual intercourse or be faithful to the marriage covenant once married. This is the Bible way, and it is the right way.

Be aware that there are still temptations even for those of us who enjoy a sweet sexual relationship with our wife. Keep in mind that once you have seen one woman's body, in essence, you have seen them all. Even so, it is a real temptation for a man, married or not, to look at a woman wearing sensual clothing, and many times we look longer than we should. Solomon had it right in Proverbs 27:20 where he wrote, *"Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied, nor are the eyes of man ever satisfied."* We might walk into a grocery store and a woman walks by wearing little more than our imagination. We are so tempted to look at her breasts or more. It is a natural response, and if left unchecked, we will, in time, start to look with lust. This is the kind of thing that will start a man down the road to adultery. When I see a gal like that, I try to look away, and, as I said above, I actually say to myself, "She is not mine, I have no right to her, and besides, I can find in the arms of my wife everything I could possibly find in the arms of this woman and have a clear conscience about it." I do this because it reinforces my commitment to my wife and reinforces my desire to stay pure. This is good advice for any man, especially for those struggling in this area.

I was talking with Dr. Tony Miller one day, and he shared with me that while the husband should seek to meet the sexual needs of his wife, she should strive to be as sexually alluring and exciting toward her husband as any adulterous woman could be. It is right for her to do this for her husband, but it would be wrong for her to do this outside of the home or with any other man. If she will do this, it will give her husband even more reasons to avoid an adulterous woman. If both he and she respond to each other the way we have discussed, when he sees an attractive woman, he will be able to say with conviction, "She isn't mine, I have no right to her, and besides, I can find in the arms of my wife everything I could possibly find in the arms of this woman and have a clear conscience about it." This is the kind of security a couple needs.

All that Solomon wrote in chapters 1-9 about an adulterous woman portrayed her as a bold, assertive, loud talking woman. I agree that there are women like this around the world leading men into sin, but there are other

types of women who can either lead or follow us into an adulterous relationship. Let me give you several examples so that you can be aware.

There was an incident at a church where a woman wanted a baby, but for whatever reason her husband didn't or couldn't give it to her. The members of the church learned a few years later that she and a man in the church had been sleeping together, and she had conceived a baby by him. Your mom and I had noticed that while she was still attending the church, she dressed in a way that attracted the eye of men, and many times she could be seen fixing her hair or fixing her dress before singing a song so that she would look attractive. I can't understand how a man could get involved in such a relationship while he preached that adultery was wrong, but it happens. A number of good preachers and teachers every year get involved in an adulterous relationship and have to leave the ministry. It is so tragic. Since some men who preach and teach the truth fall, an average men like you and me need to be all the more vigilant.

Not all women are aggressive like Solomon's adulterous woman. Some are merely lonely. A man may provide a listening ear and try to encourage her. After a while, she becomes emotionally attached to him, and because of it, she needs him. Before long, their relationship becomes physical and may end up in an adulterous relationship. This is why a man should avoid being an ongoing listening ear for a woman in need. It would be much better for him to direct her to a woman counselor so that she could be the listening ear.

In all of his teachings, Solomon lays the blame on the woman, but there are times when the man instigates a relationship with a woman where she becomes a willing partner. When I was in my early teens, I remember hearing my dad say something about a woman who went to our church. This was long before I learned that my dad was engaged in adulterous relationships with several different women during the same period of time, all while he was married to my mom. Dad and I were standing in front of the church looking down a side street. The wife of a couple from church was standing in her yard, and dad said to me, "That woman would go to bed with me if I asked her." Apparently, he had had so many encounters like this that he knew which women would be receptive to his advances and which would not. My thought when he said that was, "Yeah, but what will happen when her husband finds out. All hell would break loose." (Excuse the expression.)

Some women are lonely or unfulfilled at home and desire to find that fulfillment outside the home. They may not be aggressive, but they will be a willing partner for a man looking for a fling. I am sure that if a man is looking for a woman to share sex, he could find one. There are plenty of weak women out there who will join him. I accidentally stumbled upon a Website one time called something like "Lonely wives." It was a site advertising willing women for any man who wants her. I closed it in a hurry, but women like this are out there.

Son, I hope you will take what we have discussed and use it to reinforce your commitment to be morally pure for the LORD's sake and for the sake of your future wife. When you and your wife-to-be come to the marriage altar as virgins, it will generate peace and commitment knowing that you have saved yourselves for each other. Then, as you grow as a couple, you both can have the confidence that you will stay true to each other over the years and can trust each other without reservation. Your mom and I share this kind of confidence, and it brings such peace and oneness. I trust you will strive to do the same.

Proverbs 6:1-5

Do not co-sign for anyone

¹ *My son, if you have become surety for your neighbor, have given a pledge for a stranger,* ² *if you have been snared with the words of your mouth, have been caught with the words of your mouth,* ³ *do this then, my son, and deliver yourself; since you have come into the hand of your neighbor, go, humble yourself, and importune your neighbor.* ⁴ *Give no sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids;* ⁵ *deliver yourself like a gazelle from the hunter's hand and like a bird from the hand of the fowler.*

I suspect that some young men and women reading this commentary may not know what it means to co-sign for someone. Our text uses the words *surety* and *a pledge* in verse one. Both are synonyms with co-signing. To co-sign simply means that you sign a binding contract stating that you will be responsible for the debt of another person if they default on their loan. Let's say that an acquaintance is having trouble trying to buy a car, but he needs one. If he could find some way to initiate a purchase, he could make the payments, but without help, he doesn't have enough down payment or qualifying credit to make the purchase. So, he will come to you asking if you will co-sign for him. It sounds simple enough, but knowing the nature of human beings, it is definitely not a good idea. The acquaintance may lose his job, and then he could not make the payments. Now you are left having to pay the loan from your own finances. This could easily end up costing you more than you would want to pay. There is one more thing to consider. When you sign the contract, you will most likely be required to pledge either money or property as collateral. Prov. 20:16 reads, *Take his garment when he becomes surety for a stranger; and for foreigners, hold him in pledge.* Prov. 27:13 says, *Take his garment when he becomes surety for a stranger; and for an adulterous woman hold him in pledge.* If you pledge your car as collateral and the guy defaults on his loan, you may lose your car. If you pledge your home as collateral, you may lose your home. Solomon warned of this in Prov. 22:27 where he wrote, *If you have nothing with which to pay, why should he take your bed from under you?* So then, it is true that a loan company could literally *take your bed from under you* if the loan goes into default. Son, let me ask you, "Why should you jeopardize your whole financial future by signing such a contract?" It simply doesn't make good sense. Value my warning, and don't be so foolish as to step into such a trap. You can be sure that if the person defaults on his loan, whoever loaned the money will certainly come after you for the balance. Be careful because Prov. 11:15 warns us that *He who is guarantor (co-signs) for a stranger will surely suffer for it, but he who hates being a guarantor is secure.* (Grayed text added for clarity). Heed the warning.

Solomon wrote in Prov. 17:18 that *A man lacking in sense pledges and becomes guarantor in the presence of his neighbor.* There are two types of men who are lacking sense. They are the fool and the naïve man. A fool is ignorant but doesn't know it. He makes decisions because he thinks he knows better than anyone else. A naïve man makes decisions based upon the emotions of the moment. As we mentioned earlier, the naïve man is not necessarily a bad man, but he seldom seriously evaluates the cost or consequences of his decisions. Therefore, he makes poor decision with costly and/or hurtful consequences. Regardless of whether a fool or a naïve man chooses to co-sign for another, the results are the same. Solomon warned his sons in Prov. 22:26 where he wrote, *Do not be among those who give pledges, among those who become guarantors for debts.* He was saying in no uncertain terms that we should not co-sign for anyone, especially someone we don't know really, really well.

As you can see in the text layout below, once you have signed a contract agreeing to be responsible for another's debt, if he defaults on his loan, you have been *caught* or *snared* in a trap. A snare is simply a type of trap used to catch animals or birds. In other words, you have been lured into a trap, and you agreed not only to step into it, but you also agreed to be bound by your word. Simply stated, you are stuck! Like it or not, you have become the man *lacking sense*. See the text layout on the following page.

¹ My son,				
	If you	have become	SURETY	for your neighbor,
		have given a	PLEDGE	for a stranger,
² If you	have been		SNARED	with the words of your mouth,
	have been		CAUGHT	with the words of your mouth,

OK, let's say you have already co-signed for someone, and you realize that it was a bad decision. What can you do to rectify the situation? Although verse three is the key verse for this passage, both verses three and four specifically say **DELIVER YOURSELF**. You might say, "Yeah, it isn't that easy since I signed a contract?" Here is the problem: Prov. 22:7b says that *the borrower is servant to the lender*. This is what verse three of our text tells us. It says that *you have come into the hand of your neighbor*. As long as the loan is in effect, you are in an undesirable condition, and you stand a chance to lose a great deal of money. It is your responsibility, then, to do your best to get your name removed from the loan. Verse three in its entirety states, *do this then, my son, and deliver yourself; since you have come into the hand of your neighbor, go, humble yourself, and importune your neighbor*. This is the NASB rendering of the verse. The ESV renders the verse as, *go, hasten, and plead urgently with your neighbor*. The KJV states, *go, humble thyself, and make sure thy friend*. So then, the thing to do is *importune, plead urgently, or make sure* that your "neighbor" releases you from the contract. Let's examine this verse.

First, it says to *go*. That's right, you need to go directly to the one who supplied the loan. Don't talk to a secretary or a representative because they can put you off without allowing you to deal with the right person. No. Go to the actual person who made the loan and work directly with him.

Second, our text says that you need to *humble yourself*. When you talk to the one who made the loan, you have no grounds to demand anything. He is in the driver's seat, and you don't have any rights except for those stated in the contract. It is in your best interest to approach him with a humble spirit begging him to release you from the contract. He may or may not be willing to work with you, but you must at least try.

Third, you must *importune* or *plead urgently* with your neighbor. That's right, you need to plead with him as if you were pleading for your very life. Keep going back again and again and again until he releases you from the contract. Christ himself gave a good illustration of this process in Luke 18:1-5 where he is quoted as saying,

¹ Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart, ² saying, "In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man. ³ "There was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, 'Give me legal protection from my opponent.' ⁴ For a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, 'Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, ⁵ yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out.'"

See the text layout of verse three.

³ Do this	then, my son	
		and DELIVER YOURSELF;
		since you have come into the hand of
		your neighbor.
	GO,	
		HUMBLE YOURSELF, and
		IMPORTUNE YOUR NEIGHBOR.

I am sure you see the importance of going to you creditor to be released from the contract, but as verse four states, don't put it off. Do it right now and keep doing it. Our text says don't sleep on it, and don't even stop to take a nap. This is too important to wait another moment. No, no!!!! Do it, and get it done. Verse five says, **DELIVER YOURSELF**. Be like the animal or the bird that recognizes a trap for what it is and then runs for its life. That's right, escape from the trap that caught you. Exert whatever effort it takes, but get out of the contract. Better yet,

determine that you will never co-sign for anyone, and you will never get caught in this trap. Now you know, son. Choose wisely.

See the completed text layout of this passage below.

Proverbs 6:1-5

¹ My son,
If you have become **SURETY** for your neighbor,
have given a **PLEDGE** for a stranger,

² If you have been **SNARED** with the words of your mouth,
have been **CAUGHT** with the words of your mouth,

³ Do this then, my son
and **DELIVER YOURSELF;**
since you have come into the hand of your neighbor.
GO,
HUMBLE YOURSELF, and
IMPORTUNE YOUR NEIGHBOR.

⁴ DO NOT give **sleep** to your eyes,
nor **slumber** to your eyelids;

⁵ **DELIVER YOURSELF**
like a gazelle from the **hunter's hand,** and
like a bird from the **hand of the fowler.**

Proverbs 6:6-11

Laziness and the work ethic

There is much that can be said about work and a man's attitude toward it. I would like to begin this discussion by looking at Solomon's view of work. He wrote in Ecclesiastes 3:9-13,

⁹ *What profit is there to the worker from that in which he toils?* ¹⁰ *I have seen the task which God has given the sons of men with which to occupy themselves.* ¹¹ *He has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also set eternity in their heart, yet so that man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end.* ¹² *I know that there is nothing better for them than to rejoice and to do good in one's lifetime;* ¹³ *moreover, that every man who eats and drinks sees good in all his labor--it is the gift of God.*

Please understand here that Solomon was writing from a standpoint of a discouraged, depressed old man. God had told him that all he possessed was going to be taken away from him and given to another because he had turned his back on God. Even so, he was still very much a teacher and wanted to share the truth. He wrote that God designed work so that men could have something to *occupy themselves*. He also said that work was *the gift of God*. Prov. 14:23 says, *"In all labor there is profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty."* Could you imagine a life where there was nothing to do? Life would certainly become boring. Even the first man Adam was given the task of keeping the garden of Eden. Let me ask you, "Since there was no sin, what did Adam do to "keep" the garden? Consider the Genesis account.

Gen 2:4-9 states,

⁴ *This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made earth and heaven.* ⁵ *Now no shrub of the field was yet in the earth, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the LORD God had not sent rain upon the earth, and there was no man to cultivate the ground.* ⁶ *But a mist used to rise from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground.* ⁷ *Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.* ⁸ *The LORD God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed.* ⁹ *Out of the ground the LORD God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.*

After the fall God said in Gen 3:17-19,

¹⁷ *Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it all the days of your life.* ¹⁸ *Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; and you will eat the plants of the field;* ¹⁹ *by the sweat of your face you will eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."*

Notice in verse 5 above that the LORD did not cause plants to sprout until there was a man available to cultivate the ground. Once man arrived on the scene, God *caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food*. So then, Adam's job was to *cultivate* the garden, but what did it mean to cultivate? If plants didn't die and replenish nutrients to the ground before the fall, then all Adam would have been required to do was to till the soil to provide more oxygen for the plants. Oh, but if plants did die before the fall and replenish nutrients to the soil, then Adam would have needed to prune the plants and till the soil. Either way, it would seem logical to assume that

cultivating the garden of Eden could have taken a major part of his day. As such, then, he would not have had time to become bored. Besides, I suppose the LORD had given him a thorough knowledge of botany and a love for his work. Of course, after the fall, God cursed the ground, and Adam had to spend much more time and effort to grow food. So, work is a good thing, and God ordained that we should be satisfied with the work He provides for us to do.

What does Proverbs say about work in general?

We have already seen how God assigned work to man in order to occupy himself and that all work has some benefit. So then, let's take a look at what Proverbs teaches about work and the worker, and then we will examine the benefits that come from labor.

First, Work and the worker

1. We should work as unto the LORD and not to please men.

When we get down to it, we must admit that the LORD is the One who gives us the strength to work. We must always remember this because He can take away our health and/or our finances in an instant if He wishes. Since He is such an integral part of who we are and what we do, it is in our best interest to do what Prov. 16:3 teaches. It says, *Commit your works to the LORD and your plans will be established.* Do you want to be successful in your work? Then turn the reins of your life over to the LORD and watch Him guide you well. As you have seen throughout this commentary, a biblical fear of the LORD is and should always be the driving force in our lives to cause us to do good and do a good job. It is only right. Therefore, we should follow Paul's advice in 1 Corinthians 10:31 where he wrote, *Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.* Then Colossians 3:17 repeats the principle with, *Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the LORD Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.* Yes, we work to make a living, but we are also to work with God's glory and approval in mind. Unfortunately, many who claim Christ in salvation don't give the LORD a minute of their thoughts during the day. It is no wonder that they do not live a good and godly testimony before those in his company. Prov. 29:25 tells us, *The fear of man brings a snare, but he who trusts in the LORD will be exalted.* A sure way to excel in any endeavor is to fear the LORD and serve Him through your work.

2. We should be honest

Every employer wants his employees to be honest, hard workers. These are men and women he can trust. God hates those who would steal from their employer or cheat a customer out of what he rightfully purchased.

A) Be honest with your employer.

Ephesians 4:28 reminds us that *He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need.* This is important because doing so will not only prolong your tenure at work, but it will also guarantee that you will never have a need that the LORD will not provide at the right time, in the right manner, and in the right proportion. In addition, you will have enough to share with those in need. Prov. 28:27 tells us, *He who gives to the poor will never want, but he who shuts his eyes will have many curses.* Do you want all of your needs met by the LORD? Then give some of your possessions to those in need. Prov. 19:17 says, *He who is gracious to a poor man lends to the LORD, and He will repay him for his good deed.* The LORD wants to bless you when you help those in need, and He will not be in debt to any man. So, determine in your heart and mind that you will not steal from your employer. Instead, work in order to have something to give to those in need.

B) Be honest with the customer.

No one likes or appreciates a man who will cheat in his work. The LORD hates it when a man takes unfair advantage of another. Prov. 20:10 tells us, *Differing weights and differing measures, both of them are abominable to the LORD.* Then Prov. 20:23 says, *Differing weights are an abomination to the LORD, and a false scale is not good.* One more verse supports this truth. Prov. 16:11 teaches, *A just balance and scales belong to the LORD; all the weights of the bag are His concern.* Any man who will purposely cheat another out of what he paid for will most

likely be discovered and punished. It is just a matter of time. The better way to live and work is to follow Solomon's advice in Prov. 3:3-4 where we are reminded that we should never let *kindness and truth* leave us. Being truthful and honest always pays dividends. It may not happen immediately, but it will pay off in time. That's why Solomon wrote Prov. 12:14. It reads, *A man will be satisfied with good by the fruit of his words, and the deeds of a man's hands will return to him.* Sowing and reaping always work this way. When you are honest and do good to both your employer or the customer, good will come back to you in some form or another. You can bank on it.

3. We should be diligent

A) Do your job.

When you go to work, do your job. Don't worry about what the next guy is doing or not doing. Instead, do the best job you can do. Prov. 12:24 reminds us that, *The hand of the diligent will rule, but the slack hand will be put to forced labor.* To be diligent is to be conscientious in your approach to work. See what needs to be done, understand how it should be done, and do it in the right amount of time. Then when you are done, ask your supervisor what else he needs done. Don't take shortcuts in your work or spend time finding ways to get out of work. Prov. 21:5 teaches, *The plans of the diligent lead surely to advantage, but everyone who is hasty comes surely to poverty.* Don't take shortcuts in your work or try to get out of work. If you do, it could end up costing you your job. Rather, try to do the best job you can and do it in the best way you can. An added benefit of diligent work is that it pays big dividends. We will touch on this later in our discussion, but Prov. 10:4 makes an excellent point. It reads, *Poor is he who works with a negligent hand, but the hand of the diligent makes rich.* A diligent worker will excel in his company and enjoy higher pay over time, but the man who is lazy or takes shortcuts will end up holding jobs that are the least desirable and pay the least.

B) Work when the work needs to be done.

Most of the verses contained in Proverbs 10:1 through 29:27 are a collection of random verses. Solomon started this section by writing, *A wise son makes a father glad, but a foolish son is a grief to his mother.* Part of being a wise son is working when work needs to be done. Prov. 10:5 teaches this principle when it says, *He who gathers in summer is a son who acts wisely, but he who sleeps in harvest is a son who acts shamefully.* It saddens me that too many children these days are not being taught how to work. I still remember when I was a child how my sisters, brother, and I had to do the dishes after supper every night. We would rotate each successive day. One of us would rinse and stack the dishes, the next would wash and rinse them, and the third would dry them and put them away. The fourth would have the day off. The next day the one who had the day off would rinse and stack the dishes, the one who rinsed and stacked the day before would now wash and rinse the dishes, and the one who washed the day before would now dry and put the dishes away. The one who dried the dishes the day before would have the day off. I can still remember doing dishes as soon as I could reach over the edge of the sink. It was our job, and we were given an allowance because we worked for it. Many children these days aren't privileged to learn such lessons because their parents simply give the kids money without requiring them to work for it.

When you marry and have children, start your children on chores while they are still young. Our "grandson", Ryan, was doing the laundry when he only 5 years old. He separated the colored stuff from the white and dark loads. He knew that putting red things with white would cause the whites to come out pink. The best part is that he enjoyed helping mommy. Jen started him while he was young, and it is quite likely that he will grow up to be a man who knows how to work and will do a good job in any work that he performs. I have seen other young people who wouldn't lift a finger to help unless the parents stood over them and demanded that they do a certain job. It reminds me of Prov. 29:19 where we read, *A slave will not be instructed by words alone; for though he understands, there will be no response.* Unless a good work ethic is instilled in a child while he is young, he may never develop a good work ethic. It is no wonder so many young adults have to settle for menial jobs with minimum pay.

While we are talking about being diligent in work, it is important to teach a child to keep his room neat and clean. This develops an organized and disciplined young person. A child who is allowed to trash his room with toys and clothes strewn all over the place is being groomed to become a lazy man in adulthood. A parent who won't go to the effort of disciplining his child in this area while he is young will have to endure the mess, clutter, and undisciplined lifestyle of their child when he grows into adulthood. The old saying still holds true. "Pay now or pay later." Go to the effort of disciplining your child while he is young, and you will not have to pay later with regrets and

heartaches. The choice is yours. Teach him good work ethics and how to work hard, and you will have set safeguards in place that will serve him well for the rest of his life.

4. Learn a skill or trade

In every company there is always someone who is better, faster, more knowledgeable, or more skilled than the rest of the employees. That employee is always favored by the employer, and for good reason. Prov. 22:29, *Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before obscure men.* I saw this firsthand when I was welding for General Electric at their gas turbine plant here in Greenville. I am a good welder. I tried hard to do a good job and get as much done in a day as possible. One day, I wandered into another section of the plant where every weld is x-rayed for quality. As I looked at the welds these guys made, I realized that although I was a good welder, I couldn't hold a candle to these guys. They were the best I have ever seen. It was obvious to me that because of their skill, they had job security for years to come. I was and still am amazed at the skill of these guys. I used to say I was a pretty good welder, but the LORD had to help me see that I was not as good as I perceived myself to be. This is where Prov. 27:2 comes into play. It says, *Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.* If you are good at something, let others tell others how good you are. Don't toot your own horn. People will appreciate the praise much more if it comes from someone other than you.

It is good to be able to master a skill, but it has to start somewhere. I like to advise young people to train for a skill while they are in their early teens so that they will be able to get a better job with better pay before adulthood, even if it is only to get them through until they get the job they want to do for life. When you have kids, encourage them to learn **a sellable skill**. There is nothing wrong with working at a fast-food restaurant for \$8.00 per hour, but there is real benefit in being able to work fewer hours at twice the pay when they have a sellable skill. It only makes sense. Unfortunately, most young people don't understand this truth and won't go to the effort to learn a skill.

5. We should use the tools necessary

There is nothing wrong with manual labor, but there is also nothing wrong with using machinery to get a lot more done in a lot less time. In Prov. 14:4 Solomon wrote, *Where no oxen are, the manger is clean, but much revenue comes by the strength of the ox.* The picture here is of a man digging up his garden with a shovel compared to a man who hooks a plow behind an ox, and lets the ox do the work. One man may dig with a shovel or hoe for a week while a man with the ox can do the same work in one day. Son, tools are valuable. Take the time to learn what tools are available to you and how to use them properly. They will aid you well.

One other thing before we leave our discussion of tools. Be sure to keep them in good condition. Solomon summed up this truth in Ecclesiastes 10:10 where he wrote, *If the axe is dull and he does not sharpen its edge, then he must exert more strength. Wisdom has the advantage of giving success.* I have tried to use a dull axe, and it is a waste of time. Learn to keep your tools in proper working order, because it will save you a lot of time and money over the years.

6. We should prepare well

Any project worth doing is worth going to the effort of thorough planning. An architect makes detailed drawings and material lists before a house is built. It is good to have financial and business experts evaluate a business venture before attempting to open the business. Solomon knew these truths. That's why he wrote in Prov. 24:3-4, *By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; and by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches.* Then later in verse 24 of the same chapter he wrote, *Prepare your work outside and make it ready for yourself in the field; afterwards, then, build your house.* He believed in planning and preparation. He showed it when he built the temple and his own palace. Son, plan well, and then follow the plan. If you find that the project doesn't go as planned, seek good and godly counsel in order to determine how you should change your plans in order to find good resolution.

The Benefits from Work

The law of "sow and reap" states that you will receive something back when you sow, you will reap in kind what you sow, you will reap more than you sow, and you will reap after you sow. In Solomon's day, to sow meant to plant

seeds with the expectation of reaping a harvest. In our day, we can equate sow with working hard and diligently, helping others in need, living a good and godly life, etc. Let's examine how sow and reap relates to work.

1. Hard work pays off

Prov. 12:11 tells us that *He who tills his land will have plenty of bread, but he who pursues worthless things lacks sense*. Later in Prov. 28:19, Solomon wrote, *He who tills his land will have plenty of food, but he who follows empty pursuits will have poverty in plenty*. In both cases, it is clear that a man who will go to work and work hard will have plenty to feed his family. Of course, this is assuming the man does his job well and stays at it until the job is done. In the first verse, it says that a man who spends his time doing things that in themselves have no value is fulfilling the old saying, "he doesn't have the sense he was born with." Our second verse says that a man who will spend his time doing things that in themselves have no value will become and remain a poor man. Oh, but the man who will work hard and smart will have all his needs met and have some left over to give to those in need. Prov. 13:25 says, *The righteous has enough to satisfy his appetite, but the stomach of the wicked is in need*. Righteous men and women live a good, godly, and satisfying life. They believe in doing what is right. They work when and how a job needs to be done. This is a part of their makeup. It is no wonder they have enough to satisfy their hunger.

Part of doing a good job is looking out for the welfare of your employer. Prov. 27:18 states, *He who tends the fig tree will eat its fruit, and he who cares for his master will be honored*. It is easy to see that a man who labors will be partaker of the profit in the form of wages, but there is more to working for an employer. You should be looking out for his good. You are working for him, and the more he benefits from your work, the more he will appreciate your diligence and hard work. In the end, he will honor you either with a higher wage or possibly recognition in the company. In either case, both you and he win. The virtuous woman in Proverbs wasn't working for an employer, but she set an example of hard and diligent work that people of generations to come would do well to follow. Prov. 31:13 tells us, *She looks for wool and flax and works with her hands in delight*. Even though it wasn't written during her lifetime, she understood the essence of Colossians 3:17 where we read, *Whatever you do in word or deed, do all to the glory of God*. You see, she lived First Timothy 6:6 which reads, *But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment*. She understood her station in life and gladly performed her tasks with satisfaction. Son, what about you? Are you doing your job with diligence and satisfaction? This is the way it should be done.

2. Hard work produces sufficient income

God never promised that you or I will become rich, but He did promise that He would supply all of our needs. Even so, Solomon firmly believed that the righteous man will end up being a rich man. He didn't say what those riches are, but he was confident that it would happen. It is interesting to see how he approaches the subject in Proverbs. We will look at these verses, and you be the judge.

a) Solomon said that a wise/righteous man will become rich.

The verse that first comes to mind when I think of riches is Prov. 21:20. It reads, *There is precious treasure and oil in the dwelling of the wise, but a foolish man swallows it up*. A wise man will save for the future and spend wisely. In the end, he will have much to show for his years of work. On the other hand, the foolish man spends all he gains on the pleasures of today, so he has nothing set aside for the future. That is why Solomon wrote Prov. 21:17. It says, *He who loves pleasure will become a poor man; he who loves wine and oil will not become rich*. You and I cannot live like that. We need to set aside some of what we make every week and save it for the future. If we will do this, in time, we may not become rich, but we will become well-to-do. Solomon said that diligence in our work will pay big dividends. Prov. 10:4 reminds us that *Poor is he who works with a negligent hand, but the hand of the diligent makes rich*. Diligence always pays good dividends in the long run. We understand that diligence is working carefully and staying at it until the job is done. That's why Prov. 14:24 teaches that *The crown of the wise is their riches, but the folly of fools is foolishness*. This is good incentive to pursue godly wisdom. In addition, Prov. 17:2 tell us that, *A servant who acts wisely will rule over a son who acts shamefully, and will share in the inheritance among brothers*. Hard work makes the boss appreciate you and what you do, and I have heard of situations where an employee was actually included in a dying employer's will. On the other hand, no one who has worked hard to amass a sizeable inheritance wants to leave it for a son or daughter who doesn't appreciate the value of that

inheritance. Wise men know that *an inheritance gained hurriedly at the beginning will not be blessed in the end* (Pro 20:21). This is why the majority of people who win the lottery are penniless in five years. They spend and spend and end up with nothing to show for it in the end.

b) Solomon said, “Don’t waste your time chasing riches.”

It is obvious from some of his writings in Proverbs that Solomon firmly believed that a wise/righteous man will become rich, yet in other verses he said that we should not pursue riches. It almost sounds like a contradiction in Scripture, but when we take a closer look, we will see that there is no contradiction at all. As I see it, there are three ways in which a man can become rich (or well-to-do). The first is when the LORD chooses to give riches to a man. Job was an example of such a man. God blessed everything he did and possessed. The key to understanding God’s blessing of riches is Prov. 10:22. It says, *It is the blessing of the LORD that makes rich, and He adds no sorrow to it.* Simply put, the LORD will give riches to men of His choosing when and where He feels He can trust them to handle wealth biblically. This is wonderful and is totally up to His discretion.

The second way a man can become rich is to pour all of his energies into making money. This is a sure way to experience many hurts and heartaches. Pro 28:20 tells us, *A faithful man will abound with blessings, but he who makes haste to be rich will not go unpunished.* I have seen men lose their wife, their children, and their relationship with the LORD all because they had no time for anything except work. So then, our approach to riches should be consistent with what Solomon wrote in Prov. 23:4-5, *Do not weary yourself to gain wealth, cease from your consideration of it. When you set your eyes on it, it is gone. For wealth certainly makes itself wings like an eagle that flies toward the heavens.* The LORD has promised to supply all of our needs, and all of the things the LORD allows us to acquire beyond our needs are simply icing on the cake. Receive them with grace and thank the LORD. If the LORD blesses you with riches, that will be wonderful, but if He sees fit for you to simply be well-to-do, this has its own set of blessings. Thank the LORD for whichever one He chooses for you.

The third way a man can become rich is to be a good and godly man, work diligently and faithfully, save some of everything you make, and spend wisely. A man who will do this will, in time, be out of debt, will have all of his bills paid, and will not only have money invested for the future but will have some to give to those in need. I am reminded of Christ’s admonition in Matthew 6:19-21 where he told us, *Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.* Followers of Christ should avoid a quest for riches and instead follow Matthew 6:33-34 which says, *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.* If you and I seek to live a good and godly life and try our best to further the kingdom of God, then we will find contentment and fulfillment. After all, First Timothy 6:6 reminds us that *godliness with contentment is great gain.* Seeking God’s best will produce this contentment. Verse 34 above tells us not to worry about tomorrow because God will take care of it. Besides, Prov. 27:1 tells us, *Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth.* Simply take one day at a time and don’t worry about what might transpire tomorrow. It is the right thing to do because the LORD knows what each day will bring your way. In fact, He has each day planned out for you from eternity past.

Before we leave this topic, it is important to take a look at saving and investing some of the pay you acquire from your work. It is obvious that a tithe and taxes are deducted from your gross income every time you get a paycheck. These are necessary, but you and your future are important too. Therefore, it is in your best interest to save some of every dollar you make. When you get a paycheck, immediately set aside a tithe, and then set aside 10% to be put into savings. You won’t save a lot at a time, but if you practice this over the years, you will be in good shape for retirement in your golden years. When a financial emergency arises, it will merely become a financial inconvenience instead of an emergency. When you invest what you save, be sure to follow Solomon’s advice in Prov. 27:23-26. It says, *Know well the condition of your flocks, and pay attention to your herds; for riches are not forever, nor does a crown endure to all generations. When the grass disappears, the new growth is seen, and the herbs of the mountains are gathered in, the lambs will be for your clothing, and the goats will bring the price of a field, and there will be goats’ milk enough for your food, for the food of your household, and sustenance for your maidens.* The essence of this passage is saying that you need to invest well, invest in several different options, and monitor your investments, moving them as needed in order to gain the maximum growth. Don’t simply put it in a fund and forget it until you retire. Over the years you may lose much of what you could have gained by wise investing. Son, be wise in this area, and it will pay big dividends (no pun intended).

3. A little accompanied by contentment is better than a lot of money accompanied by strife

When it comes to money and possessions, how much is enough? I imagine that if you asked ten people how much is enough, you would get ten different answers. I have been told that when John Rockefeller was asked, "How much money is enough?" he replied by saying, "Just a little bit more." This is nothing more than pure greed. Son, the LORD has blessed your mother and me with enough. I say this because all of our needs are met, and all of the bills have been paid. We don't owe anybody anything. We have been privileged to give to those in need, and whatever is left over is enough to enjoy life even though we don't have an abundance to spare. I still remember one day when a friend at church came up to me after a morning service. He said, "You're content with your home and what you have, aren't you?" I answered, "Yes." He then said, "I wish I was content with what I have." You see, he had owned a rather large home, but as the LORD had allowed him to gain more income, he felt compelled to sell that house and purchase a larger, nicer home. I am merely guessing, but I assume that he is probably carrying a large mortgage to boot. Our house is paid for, and that was part of the reason he approached me about our finances. Son, it is in your best interest to learn to be satisfied with enough.

Son, I realize that you previously had a job that barely paid enough to get along and that you needed to find a job that pays more. Thankfully, you have trained for a new skill that will enable you to get a better paying job. That's good, but if you can find peace and contentment right now, you will be much better off than having lots of money accompanied by arguing and fighting. Solomon included four verses in Proverbs to support this truth. Prov. 15:16 reads, *Better is a little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and turmoil with it.* As we have said numbers of times in this commentary, the fear of the LORD is the main thing we need to acquire and maintain if we are live a good and godly life and enjoy living. Life is much more enjoyable and satisfying when the LORD is the center of your life and you are at peace with your station in life and with those around you. Prov. 16:8 teaches that, *Better is a little with righteousness than great income with injustice.* Living in a good, right, and lawful manner ^{<righteousness>} is always the right way to live, and it is the best way to live even when finances are tight. Don't forget that the LORD promised to meet all of our needs, not all of our wants. Then too, Prov. 16:19 tells us that *It is better to be humble in spirit with the lowly than to divide the spoil with the proud.* Wicked men are generally proud men, and many of them gain money by illegal or unethical activities. They may not be able to keep it long, but nonetheless, they will gain some spoil. Humble men understand the hurts, heartaches, and troubles such men will experience as a result of their illegal activities, so they will keep their distance from them. A truly humble man will live in a good and godly manner producing peace and contentment on a personal level. So, as you can see from the three verses above, living in the fear of the LORD, living in a good, right, and legal manner ^{<righteousness>}, and being humble are all better than having vast riches only to experience the stress and turmoil a rich man endures. One last verse on this topic is Prov. 15:17. It tells us, *Better is a dish of vegetables where love is than a fattened ox served with hatred.* Vegetables are good for us. Daniel and his three friends proved that. A fillet minion steak is wonderful, but it is a terrible experience to have someone continually deride you while you try to eat the steak. It will almost make you want to vomit it back up. Truly it is better to eat some good vegetables in peace and quiet than to enjoy a banquet where arguing, fighting, and backbiting occur throughout the meal. I'll take the vegetables every time over the steak under these conditions.

Conclusion on work

This is a short chapter, but it is "rich" in knowledge and understanding about the proper approach to work and work ethics. Son, learn these truths, and live them. You will be better off for years to come, and you will look back with pleasure when you see how the LORD has worked on your behalf as a result of your diligence, hard work, wise saving, and careful spending habits. To sum up, Solomon said to work when work needs to be done, do your job well, work hard and smart, look out for your employer's interest, and have a good attitude about your work. Working in this manner will produce big dividends in the long run, but what about the guy who doesn't want to work. We call him the lazy man. Solomon has some choice remarks about the matter. Let's see what he had to say.

The Lazy Man

You and I work. We work in order to provide for our families. It is our responsibility, and it is our privilege. Unfortunately, some people are lazy and would rather do nothing more than lie around and watch TV. There are two passages in Proverbs that deal with laziness in particular. I would like to examine each of these in turn. The

first is Prov. 6:6-11. This passage teaches **how to overcome being** a lazy man. The second passage is Prov. 24:30-34. It teaches **how to avoid becoming** a lazy man. After we discuss these two passages, we will discuss work in general. Follow along as we look at them.

How to “overcome” being a lazy man (Prov. 6:6-11)

⁶ *Go to the ant, O sluggard, observe her ways and be wise,* ⁷ *which, having no chief, officer or ruler,* ⁸ *prepares her food in the summer and gathers her provision in the harvest.* ⁹ *How long will you lie down, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep?* ¹⁰ *"A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest"--* ¹¹ *your poverty will come in like a vagabond and your need like an armed man.*

Ants are fascinating creatures. The “Leafcutter Ant” is a good example. I read somewhere that they chew tree leaves into pieces somewhat larger than their bodies, and then they carry them back to their den. The interesting part is that they don’t eat the leaves as a primary source of food. If I understand it right, they use them to grow fungus which is used primarily to feed the growing larva when they hatch. They open and close entrance tunnels in order to maintain both the temperature and the humidity the fungus needs to grow. They also haul the waste produced during the fungus growth process and deposit in their own sort of land fill. They are tireless, and work throughout the day as long as there is light. The *sluggard* (lazy man) is instructed to *observe her ways*.

What does it mean to *observe* the ant? Strong’s defines the word as *to take heed, perceive*. So then, when you observe the ant, you literally study her in order to learn how she is productive and prepares for the future. Our text says, *observe her ways and be wise*. I submit to you that ants are not wise. They work hard, smart, and as a team because that is the way God programmed them to operate. Oh, but if we learn her ways and adopt them, then we will be wise because it is not our nature to conduct ourselves in this manner. OK, what is there about the ant that we should observe. As our text explains in verses 7-8, it is that *having no chief, officer or ruler,* ⁸ *prepares her food in the summer and gathers her provision in the harvest*. So then, she works without requiring supervision. She has self-discipline and works when the work needs to be done. She will never put it off until a later date. She knows that winter is coming, so she gathers provisions in the summer to be used when she can’t work in the winter. Solomon summed up this principle when he said in Prov. 10:5, *He who gathers in summer is a son who acts wisely, but he who sleeps in harvest is a son who acts shamefully*. The reason he wrote this is because Prov. 20:4 tells us that *The sluggard does not plow after the autumn, so he begs during the harvest and has nothing*. That’s right. If he does not work, then he should rightfully go hungry. Only a fool would do this. Prov. 21:20 reads, *There is precious treasure and oil in the dwelling of the wise, but a foolish man swallows it up*. A wise man will learn from the ant, and then he will work hard and smart to provide for his family and save some for the future. The lazy man doesn’t understand the value of hard work because as Prov. 26:16 tells us, *The sluggard is wiser in his own eyes than seven men who can give a discreet answer*. He honestly thinks it is perfectly acceptable for him to be lazy, but as Prov. 14:12 warns, *There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death*. His conviction that laziness is OK will be his ruin. Let’s look at a few things Proverbs has to say about the lazy man and the detrimental consequences of his laziness.

1. He has creative excuses as to why he shouldn’t work.

Many of his excuses are ridiculous to those of us who maintain a good and productive work ethic, but the lazy man feels they are good reasons to get out of work. Prov. 22:13 tells us that *The sluggard says, "There is a lion outside; I will be killed in the streets!"* Then Prov. 26:13 says, *The sluggard says, "There is a lion in the road! A lion is in the open square!"* Basically he is saying that he might get hurt or killed if he goes outside, so he’d better stay in bed where it is safe. It is unlikely that there is any truth to what he claims, but he thinks that such a statement will get him out of work. We know that he is merely deceived, but he is convinced.

2. He will sleep his life away.

Notice how verses 9-10 of our text state, *How long will you lie down, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep? "A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest."* Let’s look at some of the words. *A little sleep* is actually talking about sleep like one would get at night. *A little slumber* is like talking a nap during the day. *A little folding of the hands to rest* is like dozing off while sitting in a rocking chair. Solomon’s question to the lazy

man is *“When will you arise from your sleep?”* Let’s face it, a truly lazy man loves to sleep. Prov. 19:15a says, *Laziness casts into a deep sleep.* When a man has no interests or aspirations, it is easy to sleep the day away. In fact, Prov. 26:14 tells us that *As the door turns on its hinges, so does the sluggard on his bed.* The only work he is willing to undertake is whatever effort it takes to face one side of his bed, and then turn to face the other side. This is enough work for him. Solomon warned us in Prov. 20:13, *Do not love sleep, or you will become poor; open your eyes, and you will be satisfied with food.* We understand this truth, but a lazy man with a welfare mentality seems incapable of comprehending the value in going to work.

3. He craves the things working people possess.

This might surprise you, but Proverbs says that a lazy man desires to possess the same things a working man possesses, but he is too lazy to work for them. This is why Prov. 13:4 tells us, *The soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing, but the soul of the diligent is made fat.* Working people are pleased when they are rewarded with the fruits of their labor, but the only thing a truly lazy man can do is to wish he had the same things. Prov. 21:25-26 tells us, *The desire of the sluggard puts him to death, for his hands refuse to work; all day long he is craving, while the righteous gives and does not hold back.* The essence of a lazy man is that he wants to get things without any effort while the righteous man is more concerned about giving to those in need. The Old Testament patriarch Job was an excellent example of one who was always willing to share his possessions with others.

4. He will go hungry.

Prov. 19:15b says, *an idle man will suffer hunger.* There are two reasons why he will go hungry. First, since he won’t work, he won’t have the funds to purchase what he needs. This is quite obvious. The other reason is that when he does acquire something to eat, he is too lazy to even cook it. Prov. 12:27 says, *A lazy man does not roast his prey, but the precious possession of a man is diligence.* A diligent worker is glad to cook his food, but the lazy man is stupid. Even when he acquires food that is ready to eat he is too lazy to go to the work of feeding himself. Two verses illustrate this truth. Prov. 19:24 says, *The sluggard buries his hand in the dish, but will not even bring it back to his mouth.* Then Prov. 26:15 reads, *The sluggard buries his hand in the dish; he is weary of bringing it to his mouth again.* A man can’t be any more lazy than this. It is hard to imagine a man being that lazy, but I am sure there are some men out there who fit this picture.

5. Life for him will be hard.

A working man constantly faces challenges and difficulties, but he is normally able to work his way through them to a satisfactory conclusion. Not so for the lazy man. Because he is unwilling to do anything to better himself, Prov. 15:19 warns, *The way of the lazy is as a hedge of thorns, but the path of the upright is a highway.* Although this man will experience all sorts of hardships, the man who does what is right in the sight of the LORD^{<upright>} will experience a smooth life, free from the obstacles a lazy man must endure. This is why Prov. 13:18 says, *Poverty and shame will come to him who neglects discipline, but he who regards reproof will be honored.* A lazy man can expect nothing more than for good people to look down upon him with disgust. Prov. 18:9 warns that *He also who is slack in his work is brother to him who destroys.* In the end, the lazy man will end up a ruined man, but he is too ignorant to see his demise coming. He only lives for today.

6. He will be overpowered by the results of his laziness.

Verse 11 of our text states, *your poverty will come in like a vagabond and your need like an armed man.* So what is there about *a vagabond* and *an armed man* that we need to know? It is simply this. A *vagabond* is a wandering stranger. He has no home, and he wanders from place to place. Since he has no job, he has no means to acquire food and shelter, so he must beg for or steal what he needs to eat. *An armed man* is one who takes what he wants by brute force. When a man points a gun in your face and demands your valuables, you have no choice but to do what he says. You have no power at the moment to resist him. The results of a lazy man’s apathy are much the same. His need will overpower the lazy man as if it were an actual armed man. He will have no means or power to do anything about his lack of provisions. In essence, he will have made his bed, and now he must lie in it. Such is the principle of sow and reap.

So, what can we gain from Prov.. 6:6-11? It is simply this: A lazy man has an opportunity to learn from the passage and change his ways. The call to him is "Wake up and get to work." Who knows how many lazy men or women reading this commentary will actually respond positively to Solomon's admonition? Hopefully some will. Below you will find a layout of our text. Ponder it for a while before you move onto the next passage.

Proverbs 6:6-11

<p>⁶ GO to the Ant, O SLUGGARD, OBSERVE her ways and BE WISE,</p> <p>⁷ which having no chief, officer or ruler,</p> <p>⁸ PREPARES her food in the summer, and GATHERS her provision in the harvest.</p> <p>⁹ How long will you lie down, O SLUGGARD? When will you arise from your sleep?</p> <div style="border: 1px solid green; padding: 5px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p>¹⁰ "A little SLEEP, A little SLUMBER, A little FOLDING OF THE HANDS TO REST" ---</p> </div> <p>¹¹ And your POVERTY will come in like a VAGABOND, and your NEED like an ARMED MAN.</p>

How to "avoid becoming" a lazy man (Prov. 24:30-34)

We have learned a lot about the lazy man and his approach to life, but no one has to become a lazy man if he will follow Solomon's advice in Prov. 24:30-34. Instead, he can choose to be a good and productive member of society. This would be the best choice, so let's examine Solomon's advice in this passage. The text reads,

³⁰ *I passed by the field of the sluggard and by the vineyard of the man lacking sense, ³¹ and behold, it was completely overgrown with thistles; its surface was covered with nettles, and its stone wall was broken down. ³² When I saw, I reflected upon it; I looked, and received instruction. ³³ "A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest," ³⁴ then your poverty will come as a robber and your want like an armed man.*

Solomon taught this lesson in first person. Notice that he didn't purposely visit this dilapidated property. No, he merely *passed by the field*, that is, he happened upon it while he was out and about. As soon as he saw this property, he recognized that it belonged to a lazy man, and it didn't take more than a casual glance to perceive this. Exactly what did Solomon see when he witnessed the lazy man's property?

The owner is said to be both a *sluggard* (lazy man) and a *man lacking sense*. Because he was unwilling to work the ground, the *sluggard* (lazy man) allowed weeds and other unwanted plants to take over, choking out any good and productive plants. The field became totally useless until or unless it was plowed and reseeded. Because the *man lacking sense* was unwilling to maintain the integrity of the fences surrounding his vineyard, those fences fell apart causing breaches large enough for wild animals to get through and graze on the vines. As a result, the vineyard became useless as a source of grapes from which to make wine. Ecclesiastes 10:18 says, *"Through indolence the rafters sag, and through slackness the house leaks."* This is the normal result of a property that is not properly maintained.

After seeing these things, our text says that Solomon *reflected upon it*. What does it mean to reflect upon something? Well, when you look into a mirror, you see an exact replica of your face. To reflect upon something is to seriously ponder what you are really seeing. The process is quite simple. He *looked* seriously at the problem and meditated upon what he saw. He then tried to fully understand why this property had become so run down. He didn't settle for a casual glance, because dissecting what he saw was Solomon's normal approach to something he didn't understand. He was a learner, and he sought to learn at every opportunity. So, he asked himself pointed questions about why this property could become so run down. After seriously contemplating the scene, he *received instruction*. Because he was teachable, his deep pondering of the situation led him to a proper view of what caused the property's demise. Now, what was his conclusion?

He deduced that the property was owned by a lazy man, and the man didn't bother to work the farm. As we saw in the passage above, the lazy man is said to get *a little sleep*. That is, he would go to bed early and sleep late. He got enough sleep alright, but he was sleeping his life away. Next he is said to engage in *a little slumber*. That is, he would take numerous naps during the day. Finally, our text says that he practiced *a little folding of the hands to rest*. That is, he took numerous rest breaks during the day. In essence, he was sleeping his life away. It was too much effort for him to go out into the fields and work. As a result, this lazy man ended up with nothing and had to beg for his food. When this happened, his poverty overtook him as surprisingly as a robber when he shows up in the middle of the night. Soon afterwards, his hunger engulfed him as completely as if he were being held at gunpoint with no ability to stop the robber. This is a tragic end, but it will happen to a truly lazy man. The sad part about this whole situation is that no man has to go down this road. If he will recognize the demise that awaits a lazy man and go to work, he can avoid all of this difficulty. So, this passage does indeed teach **how to avoid becoming a lazy man**. See the text layout below.

Prov. 24:30-34

³⁰ I **passed by** the field of the **SLUGGARD**,
and by the vineyard of the **MAN LACKING SENSE**;
³¹ and behold,

it was **COMPLETELY OVERGROWN** with thistles,
its surface was **COVERED** with nettles, and
its stone wall was **BROKEN DOWN**.

³² When *I saw*, I **REFLECTED UPON IT**;
I looked, and **RECEIVED INSTRUCTION**.

³³ "A little **SLEEP**,
A little **SLUMBER**,
A little **FOLDING OF THE HANDS TO REST**,"

³⁴ Then your **POVERTY** will come as a **ROBBER**,
and
your **WANT** like an **ARMED MAN**.

Proverbs 8: 1-36

Wisdom's testimony about herself

This chapter is wisdom's testimony about who she is, what she is, who she helps, and how she helps them. It is written in first person and in poetic form. We have already discussed <02451> wisdom in chapter 4 of this commentary, but I believe this chapter of Proverbs deserves a separate discussion. There are four sections of the chapter. They are

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------------|
| 1) Wisdom's Call | (verses 1-11) |
| 2) Wisdom's Conduct | (verses 12-21) |
| 3) Wisdom's Credentials | (verses 22-31) |
| 4) Wisdom's Conclusion | (verses 32-36) |

1) Wisdom's Call (verses 1-11)

¹ Does not wisdom <02451> call, and understanding lift up her voice? ² On top of the heights beside the way, where the paths meet, she takes her stand; ³ beside the gates, at the opening to the city, at the entrance of the doors, she cries out:

⁴ "To you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men. ⁵ O naive ones, understand prudence; and, O fools, understand wisdom <03820> .

⁶ Listen, for I will speak noble things; and the opening of my lips will reveal right things. ⁷ For my mouth will utter truth; and wickedness is an abomination to my lips. ⁸ All the utterances of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing crooked or perverted in them. ⁹ They are all straightforward to him who understands, and right to those who find knowledge. ¹⁰ Take my instruction and not silver, and knowledge rather than choicest gold. ¹¹ For wisdom <02451> is better than jewels; and all desirable things cannot compare with her."

A) Where she calls (vs. 1-3)

Psalms 19 tells us that even though the heavens don't have an audible voice, they communicate volumes about the God who made them. In similar fashion, wisdom doesn't have an audible voice, yet she speaks volumes about the God who made her and about what she has to offer those who will pursue her. Solomon was so convinced of this truth that he wrote in Prov. 2:20-22,

Wisdom shouts in the street, she lifts her voice in the square; at the head of the noisy streets she cries out; at the entrance of the gates in the city she utters her sayings: "How long, O naive ones, will you love being simple-minded? and scoffers delight themselves in scoffing and fools hate knowledge?"

Then in Prov. 8:1 he wrote,

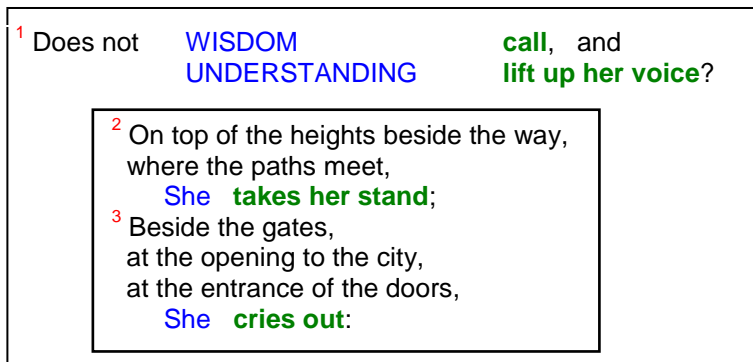
Does not wisdom <02451> call, and understanding lift up her voice? On top of the heights beside the way, where the paths meet, she takes her stand; beside the gates, at the opening to the city, at the entrance of the doors, she cries out.

Finally, in Prov. 9:1-5 he wrote,

Wisdom has built her house, she has hewn out her seven pillars; she has prepared her food, she has mixed her wine; she has also set her table; she has sent out her maidens, she calls from the tops of the heights of the city: "Whoever is naive, let him turn in here!" To him who lacks understanding she says, "Come, eat of my food and drink of the wine I have mixed." (Underlining in the above verses added for clarity).

The idea that wisdom actually calls men to come to her is a Hebrew poetic word picture teaching that the LORD wants every man and woman to become wise. Let me explain why I say this. When we discussed wisdom in chapter four of this commentary, I showed you **the wisdom pyramid**. As you saw there, the foundation of wisdom is the fear of the LORD. Therefore, no one can acquire and maintain a genuine, biblical fear of the LORD until he or she trusts Jesus Christ as personal savior by faith alone. After all, God wants every man and woman to be saved. This is evident by First Timothy 2:1-4 where we read, *First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.* Once someone is truly born again, he should have a healthy appetite for the Word of God, and his search of the Scriptures will lead him to figure out the fear of the LORD. (See my commentary on Proverbs chapter 2). It is clear from Prov. 8:2-3 above that wisdom is not hidden in some hard-to-find place, and she does not require some great feat in order to find her. Anyone who genuinely desires to have godly, biblical wisdom can find "her" in all of the most obvious and well-travelled places. Notice in verse 2 how she stations herself on the hilltops and at the crossroads. It is easy to see her on the hilltops, and it is not difficult to find her at the crossroads crowded with people. Verse 3 shows that wisdom offers herself from the places where people enter the city. Simply put, she makes herself available to anyone who is looking for her. I mentioned above how Proverbs chapter nine repeats wisdom's call. There Solomon told us, once again, that wisdom *calls from the tops of the heights of the city*. The point I want to emphasize here is that wisdom is readily available to anyone who will pursue her the way Solomon taught in Proverbs chapter two.

Below is a layout of this portion of text.



B) Who she calls (vs. 4-5)

⁴ *"To you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men. ⁵ O naive ones, understand prudence; and, O fools, understand wisdom* <03820>.

As we saw above, God wants all men to be saved and acquire a genuine, biblical fear of the LORD that leads to wisdom. Who then does wisdom target? There are two general categories of people. The first is the *naïve* man. As you learned in our discussion of Prov. 1:1-6, a naïve man seldom considers the consequences of his choices in life. Consequently, he makes many poor choices that result in hurts, heartaches, and/or losses in abundance. Wisdom wants these people to gain and use prudence. When we discussed the four steps to learning and living the book of Proverbs, we learned in step four that we are to *give* (teach) *prudence to the naïve*. As we saw in the wisdom pyramid, insight and discretion together are the essence of prudence, and when a man gains these, he has progressed to the point where God is ready to give him wisdom.

Fools are the second category of people wisdom calls. She (wisdom) genuinely wants them to understand wisdom even though she knows they will reject her offer. *Wisdom* in verse five of our text is different from wisdom in verse one. In other portions of Scripture, this particular Hebrew word is translated “heart”. It is your inner being, the seat of your emotions—who you are on the inside. Therefore, *wisdom*^{<02451>} offers *wisdom*^{<03820>}. In essence, *wisdom*^{<02451>} offers to enable men to “*be of an understanding heart*^{<03820>}.” There is a problem here though. As you will remember, Prov. 1:7b states that *fools despise wisdom and instruction*. Since the fool literally hates wisdom, hates to be corrected, and hates to be called down about anything he says or does, it is highly unlikely that a fool will ever comprehend what it means to have an understanding heart. I say this because rarely does anyone seek to acquire the thing he hates. Nonetheless, wisdom still invites even the fool to answer her call and espouse her.

C) How she calls (vs. 6-9)

⁶ Listen, for I will speak noble things; and the opening of my lips will reveal right things. ⁷ For my mouth will utter truth; and wickedness is an abomination to my lips. ⁸ All the utterances of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing crooked or perverted in them. ⁹ They are all straightforward to him who understands, and right to those who find knowledge.

There are several things about wisdom’s words that we need to understand. Consider the following:

1. She (wisdom) says things that are exceptional (Verse 6a)

Listen, for I will speak noble things;

Wisdom will not say anything flippant or trivial. In fact, her words are *noble*. The word noble is commonly understood to mean *excellent, noteworthy, speech that shows thorough knowledge and understanding*. This kind of speech is what you would normally expect to hear when a genuine orator gives a talk. Wisdom’s words are not only appropriate for the occasion, but they are always of benefit to the listener whether or not the listener realizes it. Are you wise, and is what you say always excellent and beneficial for the occasion?

2. She (wisdom) says things that are right in every way (Verse 6b)

and the opening of my lips will reveal right things.

Wisdom always says *right things*. Yes, whatever she says is correct and accurate. Wisdom can speak this way because she is continually learning and drawing from a broad storehouse of knowledge, understanding, insight, and discretion. This knowledge base gives her the understanding she needs to speak knowledgeably and accurately on a given subject. Gregory, are you seeking the knowledge, understanding, insight, and discernment you will need to say *right things* in all of your communications? I hope so.

3. She (wisdom) says things that are true (Verse 7a)

For my mouth will utter truth;

Wisdom always speaks the *truth*. Since a genuine, biblical fear of the LORD is the foundation upon which wisdom is gained and maintained, she cannot speak anything that is *wicked*. She hates *wickedness* and simply will not distort the truth no matter what the cost or consequences. Son, do you hate wickedness like wisdom hates it, and do you always strive to tell the truth no matter what it will cost you?

4. She (wisdom) hates lying and deceit (Verse 7b)

and wickedness is an abomination to my lips.

Once again, the fear of the LORD comes into play. As you will remember from our discussion in chapter four of this commentary, a genuine, biblical fear of the LORD drives a child of God to avoid or abandon every form of sin

and evil. Master the content of Proverbs chapter two, and it will solidify your fear of the LORD. As you study and meditate upon it, you will gain an implicit trust in your LORD. Since a wise man has and maintains such a fear of the LORD, he will always say things that are good and will avoid saying anything that is deceitful, destructive, or untrue. Gregory, acquire and maintain a genuine fear of the LORD, and you will always speak the truth. Let sinners be deceitful and lie if they must, but let your words be true and without deceit.

5. She (wisdom) says things that are morally pure (Verse 8)

All the utterances of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing crooked or perverted in them.

Whereas verse 7 addresses speech that is true versus lying and deceit, verse 8 addresses speech that emanates from a heart filled with pure, biblical morals. A wise man will not tell dirty jokes, use foul language, or try to embellish the sinful things wicked men say or do. There is no doubt that some of the world's jokes are funny, but that does not make laughing at them appropriate. It is totally out of order for a wise man to repeat them since they are either off-color or downright immoral. Gregory, don't go there.

6. She (wisdom) says things that are easy to understand (Verse 9)

They are all straightforward to him who understands, and right to those who find knowledge.

Knowledge and understanding are wonderful tools. Knowledge helps us know how to do something, and understanding helps us know why we should do it. Knowledge tells us how something works, and understanding tells us why it works. It is interesting to note that knowledge precedes understanding. When you have knowledge in a certain area, it is easy to recognize when new knowledge on the subject is right and accurate. Prov. 14:6b substantiates this truth when it says, "*knowledge is easy to one who has understanding.*" When you understand the function and reasoning of a subject, then new truth in that area makes perfect sense. That is what it means for wisdom's words to be *straightforward*. In essence, when you see or hear wisdom, you will say without a moment's hesitation, "I get it!" It will be that clear.

D) Why she calls (vs. 10-11)

¹⁰ *Take my instruction and not silver, and knowledge rather than choicest gold.* ¹¹ *For wisdom^{<02451>} is better than jewels; and all desirable things cannot compare with her.*

Our text says that *instruction*, *knowledge*, and *wisdom* are more valuable than any amount of precious metals or precious stones. We who know Christ in salvation know *their* (these three things) value because we study and meditation upon the Scriptures. Solomon knew this truth personally. This is why he wrote in Prov. 16:16, which says, "*How much better it is to get wisdom than gold! and to get understanding is to be chosen above silver.*" Silver and gold are fine for the man who has enough wealth to afford them, but these possessions will not help a man when severe sickness or hard times come upon him. Ecclesiastes 7:12 reminds us of this fact when it says, "*For wisdom is protection just as money is protection, but the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the lives of its possessors.*" Gregory, no amount of money or wealth can do this for you. Prov. 24:13-14 reminds us, "*My son, eat honey, for it is good, yes, the honey from the comb is sweet to your taste; know that wisdom is thus for your soul; If you find it, then there will be a future, and your hope will not be cut off.*" All of these are good reasons to choose wisdom.

Since wisdom is this valuable, she invites men to "*Take my instruction.*" As you will remember from earlier discussions in this commentary, Strong's defines *instruction* as *discipline, chastening, correction*. Therefore, the goal of instruction is 1) to train young men so that they will have more self-control and character ^{correction}, 2) to punish them so that they will become better people ^{chastening}, and/or 3) to correct them so that they will abandon wrong practices and do good instead ^{correction}. It is obvious that all three aspects of *instruction* are designed to be of benefit even though it may be painful when they are applied. This is what wisdom's instruction will do for anyone who will submit to wisdom's control. This is wisdom's call, and as you have seen, wisdom's call is most valuable.

Below you will find a text layout of the first paragraph of Proverbs chapter eight.

Proverbs 8:1-11 (Wisdom's Call)

¹ Does not **WISDOM** **UNDERSTANDING** **call**, and **lift up her voice**?

² On top of the heights beside the way,
where the paths meet,
She takes her stand;

³ Beside the gates,
at the opening to the city,
at the entrance of the doors,
She cries out:

⁴ "To you, O men, I **CALL**,
and **MY VOICE** is to the sons of men.

⁵ O naive ones, **DISCERN** **prudence**, and
O fools, **DISCERN** **wisdom**.

⁶ **LISTEN**, for I shall **SPEAK** **NOBLE THINGS**;
and the **OPENING OF MY MOUTH** will produce **RIGHT THINGS**.
⁷ for **MY MOUTH** will utter **TRUTH**;
and wickedness is an abomination to **MY LIPS**.

⁸ **ALL** the **UTTERANCES OF MY MOUTH**

are in righteousness;
there is nothing crooked or perverted in them.
⁹ They are all straightforward to him who understands,
and right to those who find knowledge.

¹⁰ **TAKE MY INSTRUCTION**, and not **silver**, and
KNOWLEDGE rather than **choicest gold**.

¹¹ For **WISDOM** is better than **jewels**;
and

**ALL DESIRABLE THINGS
CAN NOT COMPARE WITH HER.**

2) Wisdom's Conduct (verses 12-21)

¹² "I, wisdom ^{<02451>}, dwell with prudence, and I find knowledge and discretion. ¹³ The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverted mouth, I hate. ¹⁴ Counsel is mine and sound wisdom ^{<08454>}; I am understanding, power is mine. ¹⁵ By me kings reign, and rulers decree justice. ¹⁶ By me princes rule, and nobles, all who judge rightly. ¹⁷ I love

those who love me; and those who diligently seek me will find me. ¹⁸ *Riches and honor are with me, enduring wealth and righteousness.* ¹⁹ *My fruit is better than gold, even pure gold, and my yield better than choicest silver.* ²⁰ *I walk in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of justice,* ²¹ *to endow those who love me with wealth, that I may fill their treasuries.”*

Wisdom has close companions, but the average person will never be successful at finding her or becoming her friend. I say this because the LORD is very particular about who He endows with wisdom. Read on and find out why. I must remind you that the teachings of Proverbs are general truths. They are not hard and fast rules that will always work out as stated. As an example, verse 21 above states that wisdom wants to endow those who love her with wealth. I know men who are good, godly, and wise, but they are not wealthy or rich in the eyes of the world. They do, however, have all that they need. More importantly, they are exceedingly rich in blessings, peace, and joy. These things are wealth that lasts. This does not invalidate the teachings of the book, but it does give us a proper perspective when studying Proverbs.

A) Where wisdom lives (verse 12)

¹² *"I, wisdom^{<02451>}, dwell with prudence, and I find knowledge and discretion.*

I love this verse because it presents a very interesting concept. It is simply this: *wisdom* lives in the same house with *prudence*. In essence, they are members of the same family. They are brother and sister so to speak. When we review the wisdom pyramid, we see that the foundation of wisdom is the fear of the LORD. It is the filter through which you and I can judge *knowledge* to be trustworthy. Armed with trustworthy knowledge, we can then gain sound understanding. With a solid base of trustworthy knowledge and sound understanding, we will start to gain valuable insight. As I said earlier in this commentary, insight is *the ability to see a problem or opportunity for what it really is and not what it might appear on the surface*. When we have knowledge, understanding, and insight, we have the tools necessary to gain *discretion*. Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament says of *discretion* that "The singular form of (*m^e zimmot*), however, receives the consistently positive meaning of 'discretion' the five times it appears. This use occurs in Prov. 1:4; 5:2; 8:12, where it is linked with 'knowledge' and 'prudence.' In Prov 2:11; 3:21 'discretion,' like her sisters, "understanding" and "sound wisdom," guards one's life from harm. Hence, within Proverbs 1-8 'discretion' ranks as one of the key terms for wisdom employed by the author."⁴⁰ Throughout this commentary, I have defined *discretion* as *the ability to figure out all of the different options that will solve a difficulty or gain an opportunity and is based upon reliable insight*. Notice I said "**options**" (plural) and not "**option**" (singular). Once discretion has determined the possible solutions, *wisdom* will step in and make the best choice that will produce the best result in every area of life and practice.

Now, I have rehearsed all of this in order to say that prudence is, in essence, insight coupled with discretion. Throughout this commentary, I have defined *prudence* as *someone who carefully evaluates the consequences of each decision. If the results will be good and beneficial, then he will proceed, but if the results will be hurtful or costly, he will refrain*. Therefore, prudence must be guided by good insight and end with discretion. Gregory, it is important for you to understand this concept because you and I must have a correct understanding of a problem or opportunity in order to figure out the best way to resolve it. If you do not have an accurate picture of a problem or opportunity, then you have no hope of making a wise decision as to how to proceed. So then, *wisdom* uses *prudence* and is constantly finding new *knowledge* and *discretion*. Wisdom simply cannot and will not function without *them* nor can we if we want to be wise and use wisdom.

⁴⁰ TWOT, vol. 1, pg. 244

B) What wisdom hates (verse 13)

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

We thoroughly discussed the fear of the LORD in chapter four of this commentary, so I won't repeat the same thing here. What I want you to understand here, though, is that a follower of Christ should detest sin and evil in any form. Unfortunately, too many Christians either tolerate or engage in sinful practices. This is because they don't

have a biblical fear of the LORD no matter what they claim. Verse 13 above shows us that there are four general areas of practice that born again believers in Christ should detest. Consider the following:

1) Pride

In Proverbs chapter thirty, two young men named Ithiel and Ucal who were being rebuked by their father, a man named Agur. Verse thirteen is the key verse for that chapter, and it presents the root cause that generated their rebellion, their disrespect for authority, and their critical spirit. Verse thirteen states, *“There is a kind (of man)--oh how lofty are his eyes! And his eyelids are raised in arrogance.”* (Grayed text added for clarity). Pride will make a man think he is better, more able, more knowledgeable, and/or more deserving than those around him. It will cause him to feel he is upright and respectable when in reality, he is a guilty sinner like all of the rest of us. Galatians 6:3 tells us, *“For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.”* Proud men are deceived, but they normally cannot see their deficiencies as others see them. Pride was a problem in Agur’s day, and it is a problem in our day as well. A good portion of men’s problems stem from pride, and it is one of the biggest reasons why men will not bow the knee to Jesus Christ and be saved. It is unfortunate that so many men and women are caught in this trap, but I am reminded of Prov. 26:12 which says, *“Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.”* Until or unless the LORD changes a proud man’s heart, there is no hope of him becoming humble, and he cannot be saved until he is humble enough to admit that he is a sinner. Only then can he genuinely trust Christ in salvation. One of the major problems with pride is that the proud person is usually the last one to recognize that he is proud. God won’t tolerate a proud man nor would king David. He wrote in Psalm 101:5, *“Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor, him I (David) will destroy; no one who has a haughty look and an arrogant heart will I (David) endure.”*

Being normal men with a sinful nature, you and I are often tempted to be proud in one area or another. Consider some examples where believers can be proud.

“This is my seat in the church auditorium. I’ve been sitting here for years. You’ll have to find another place to sit.”

“Man, look at that guy. He is dressed like a bum. I’m not going to go out of my way to greet him when he comes into church. If he would get cleaned up then I would befriend him.”

“I ought to be a Sunday School teacher, but leadership hasn’t given me a chance. I am a good teacher, and I deserve to be given this place of authority.”

“I’m not going to witness to that guy. He’ll think I am stupid or something. I don’t want to appear odd or stupid in front of other people even if they are lost and going to hell.”

“I’m not going to lower myself to go and unstop a widow’s toilet. That is beneath my dignity. Call a plumber.”

“I’m not going to be nice and gentle in response to a guy who has just spoken harshly or mean to me. I’ll just give him what he deserves and be mean in return.”

“I know what needs to be done in the church. I have told church leadership what they need to do, and they won’t do it. I’m leaving this church, and I’ll find one where people will listen to what I have to say.”

“Man, I’m the best soloist in the church. I hope everyone knows it. They should.”

“I want to be a deacon so everyone in the church will look up to me.”

Son, there are many other ways in which a child of God can be proud, but be assured that you cannot be proud and wise at the same time. Solomon made this crystal clear when he wrote Prov. 11:2 where he said, *“When pride comes, then comes dishonor, but with the humble is wisdom.”* Gregory, honestly evaluate your approach to life, and eliminate anything that propagates a proud action or arrogant attitude.

2) Arrogance

Pride is bad enough, but arrogance is worse because it goes beyond simple pride. Yes, arrogance will cause a man to assert his perceived superiority (pride) over others in an overbearing manner. In essence, arrogance is a proud man on steroids when he flaunts his pride and contempt for those he feels are inferior to him. Agur's sons Ithiel and Ucal were examples of this kind of men. Prov. 30:13 says that *"There is a kind--oh how lofty are his eyes! and his eyelids are raised in arrogance."* They looked down their noses at those around them while at the same time demanding that others look up to them as being better, more able, more deserving, and/or more knowledgeable than they. I am reminded of a time when your mom and I stopped by a fairly ritzy bed and breakfast. When we walked up the steps to inquire about staying there, I saw a young woman sitting on the porch by herself. Without apology, she raised her nose giving us the distinct impression that she was looking down upon us. She really thought she was somebody important, but my first thought was that I felt sorry for her. She certainly did not realize the hurts she was generating for herself. We who know Christ should never act like her. So what is the essence of why the LORD hates an arrogant attitude?

An arrogant man is a fool

Prov. 14:16 tells us, *A wise man is cautious and turns away from evil, but a fool is arrogant and careless.* Like the proud man, an arrogant man cannot see his own sin, so he goes through life being obstinate and careless. He does this because he will not carefully evaluate the consequences of his choices in life. As a result, he causes all kinds of arguments and disagreements. Prov. 28:25 says, *An arrogant man stirs up strife, but he who trusts in the LORD will prosper.* Sooner or later, his careless and obstinate manner of living will cause his life to come crashing down in ruins. Jer. 50:32a warns that *The arrogant one will stumble and fall with no one to raise him up...* Isaiah 13:11 warns, *Thus I will punish the world for its evil and the wicked for their iniquity; I will also put an end to the arrogance of the proud and abase the haughtiness of the ruthless.* These are the normal and natural results of a proud and arrogant approach to life. My own brother-in-law was like this some years ago, and we considered him unapproachable at the time. Thankfully the LORD has changed his heart to where he is a sweet and loving child of God now.

An arrogant man is critical and destructive

Agur told us in Prov. 30:14 that *"There is a kind of man whose teeth are like swords and his jaw teeth like knives, to devour the afflicted from the earth and the needy from among men."* Ithiel and Ucal certainly demonstrated this kind of destructive and critical attitude. Arrogant men don't see anything wrong with their degrading and destructive behavior, but it hurts other people, nonetheless.

An arrogant man is headed for disaster

The principle of sow and reap is true for any situation. An arrogant man will reap the consequences of his attitude and actions as surely as the good and godly man will reap blessings. Prov. 16:5 states, *Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD; assuredly, he will not be unpunished.* The arrogant man cannot see the end result of his actions, but the LORD will see that it happens regardless. Prov. 15:25 reads, *The LORD will tear down the house of the proud, but He will establish the boundary of the widow.* This is the punishment the arrogant man must endure. It is as certain as the sun coming up tomorrow. An arrogant man demonstrates a proud and a haughty spirit. Prov. 16:18 tells us that *Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling.* And then Prov. 29:23 states, *A man's pride will bring him low, but a humble spirit will obtain honor.* These are the things that will generate the arrogant man's punishment.

An arrogant man has a bad reputation

All of us have a reputation. We may not be well known in our community, our state, or our country, but people we know understand the kind of person we are. If we are good and godly, they see it and praise the LORD for it. Ah, but if we are proud and arrogant, they see that about us too. Prov. 21:24 clarifies this when it says, *Proud, Haughty, Scoffer, are his names, who acts with insolent pride.* Yes, he has a reputation, but not a good one. These

names for an arrogant man are used by those who look down at the man as being selfish, greedy, and demanding. Anyone who knows Christ in salvation would not want to be called any of these names. It is better to be a humble man who is good and godly than to be a proud and arrogant man. Listen to Prov. 27:2. It tells us, *Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.*

An arrogant man doesn't need God

Ezekiel 16:49 says, *Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had arrogance, abundant food and careless ease, but she did not help the poor and needy.* They were self-sufficient and didn't think about anything except their own ease and pleasure. Jeremiah 48:29 tells us, *We have heard of the pride of Moab--he is very proud-- of his haughtiness, his pride, his arrogance and his self-exaltation.* These people, like those in Ezekiel's day, were totally absorbed with themselves thinking they were someone special. Paul warned New Testament believers that in the last days men would be absorbed with their own importance. Second Timothy 3:1-5 read,

¹ *But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come.* ² *For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, ⁴ treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵ holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; avoid such men as these.*

Paul also wrote in Romans 1:28-32,

²⁸ *And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, ²⁹ being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹ without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; ³² and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.*

Since you and I want to be wise men, we must guard against becoming proud and arrogant. Wisdom simply will not go there. A genuine, biblical fear of the LORD is the one thing above all else that will keep us from becoming proud. We must not presume upon God thinking we can do a certain thing if He is not in it. James 4:13-16 warns us about presuming upon God about tomorrow. It reads,

¹³ *Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit." ¹⁴ Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. ¹⁵ Instead, you ought to say, "If the LORD wills, we will live and also do this or that." ¹⁶ But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil.*

Even believers can become arrogant in trying to do something good. Consider First Corinthians 4:5 where Paul warned the Corinthians not to favor one preacher over another. This verse states, *Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, so that in us you may learn not to exceed what is written, so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other.* (Boasting about Paul or Apollos being the best) Gregory, be careful that you don't fall into this trap.

There are three verses that come to mind that show us what we should be for Christ. Romans 12:1-3 states, *"Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. ³ For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith."* Arrogance is just the opposite. It is looking at self as being all-important while looking down upon others as being inferior and unworthy. Philippians 2:3-4 tells us, *"Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with*

humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.” Simply put, we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. Finally, Second Corinthians 10:12 reads, *“For we are not bold to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves; but when they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding.”* An arrogant man or woman does not understand the damage he is doing to himself and others. The only thing that can change a proud or arrogant man is for him to trust Christ by faith and be born again. Then the Holy Spirit and the Word of God will do the changing in him to make him into a humble man.

Gregory, study and meditate upon the Scriptures in order to acquire and maintain a genuine, biblical fear of the LORD. Then demonstrate that fear of the LORD by avoiding or abandoning every form of sin and evil. In doing so, you will have set safeguards in place that will keep you from becoming proud or arrogant. Son, this is important, so make it a priority in your life.

3) The evil way

Since wisdom hates *the evil way*, we should too. OK, we understand that we should hate it, but what exactly is it? I believe that it is the manner of thinking and acting where a man leaves God out, espouses perverted morals, cares primarily for number one, and/or takes unfair advantage of a neighbor if he feels it will be to his own benefit. Solomon spelled out as much in Prov. 6:12-19. We discussed these paragraphs in chapter 4, part 2 of this commentary, but we would do well to look briefly at them again here. As I said there, Prov. 6:12-15 describes a wicked man from man’s perspective, and Prov. 6:16-19 describes a wicked man from God’s perspective. When we take a close look at these passages, it soon becomes clear that man sees the outward (that is—the wicked things he sees men do) while God sees the inward (that is—the wicked things that are resident in a man’s heart that drive his thoughts and actions). Take a moment to examine the verses below and compare them with Job’s testimony in Job chapter thirty-one.

Pro 6:12-14 (Man’s view of wicked men)	Pro 6:16-19 (God’s view of wicked men)
<p><i>A worthless person, a wicked man, is the one</i></p> <p><i>who walks with a perverse mouth, who winks with his eyes, who signals with his feet, who points with his fingers;</i></p> <p><i>who with perversity in his heart continually devises evil,</i></p> <p><i>who spreads strife.</i></p>	<p><i>There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him:</i></p> <p><i>haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,</i></p> <p><i>a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil,</i></p> <p><i>a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.</i></p>

Do you want to be a man after God’s own heart like Job? Do you remember how God bragged about him to Satan? The LORD could boast about him because Job was both blameless and upright. As you will remember, **upright** is **doing what is right in the sight of the LORD**, and **blameless** is **living such a good life that no one can rightfully accuse you of wrongdoing**. So then, upright is how God sees us, and blameless is how men see us. I have mentioned these things before, but they are worth repeating. When we read Job’s testimony about his manner of living, we find that it was diametrically opposed to the manner of living practiced by a wicked man. Let’s examine this idea.

When we discussed Proverbs chapter three, I showed you a table comprised of the first twelve verses of the chapter. The two things in particular that I want you to see from the table is that we are to be *kind* and *truthful* (verses 3-4), and we are to *turn away from evil* (verses 7-8). Since this is true, wickedness is being unkind to and/or untruthful with your neighbor, and it is choosing to engage in sinful practices instead of turning away from them. In Job 31:1 Job said, *“I have made a covenant with my eyes; How then could I gaze at a virgin?”* In today’s

vernacular, Job was saying that he would not look upon a young woman with lustful sexual thoughts. This is important because Christ said in Matt. 5:27-28, "*You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY'; but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*" So then, one way to be upright and blameless is to hate the evil way enough to put safeguards in place so that we don't look with lust at any woman other than our own wife. There are many other temptations that face us, and we should put safeguards in place before the temptations present themselves. If you always strive to tell the truth and be kind to your neighbor, then you will be living in a good and godly manner, but if you choose to lie to your neighbor or be unkind to him you are following "*the evil way.*"

4) The perverted mouth

When we studied Proverbs 3:3-4, we learned a valuable truth. These verses read, *Do not let kindness and truth leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favor and good repute in the sight of God and man.* As sons and daughters of Christ, we are obligated and privileged to always speak the truth in a kind way. In fact, Matt. 7:12 tells us, "*In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.*" Then too, Paul taught in Colossians 4:5-6, *Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.* In keeping with Proverbs 3:3-4, Ephesians 4:32 reminds us to *Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.* Therefore, a follower of Christ is obligated to speak the truth in a kind way and should never utter perverted speech.

What is perverted speech? www.dictionary.com states that *perverted* is

1. willfully determined or disposed to go counter to what is expected or desired; contrary.
2. characterized by or proceeding from such a determination or disposition: a perverse mood.
3. wayward or cantankerous.
4. persistent or obstinate in what is wrong.
5. turned away from or rejecting what is right, good, or proper; wicked or corrupt.

From this definition we can conclude that perverse speech is corrupt, it is wicked, and it is contrary to what is moral, right, and good. Who would use language like this? Obviously, it is the wicked man. Prov. 10:32 tells us, *The lips of the righteous bring forth what is acceptable, but the mouth of the wicked what is perverted.* As you can see, the wicked man is merely saying the kind of things that reside in his heart. Christ himself said in Mark 7:18-23,

*¹⁸ And He *said to them, "Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him, ¹⁹ because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?" ²⁰ And He was saying, "That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. ²¹ For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, ²² deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. ²³ All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man."*

Because evil proceeds from the wicked man, Prov. 11:20 tells us that, *The perverse in heart are an abomination to the LORD, but the blameless in their walk are His delight.* Since God hates perverted speech, we should hate it too. Prov. 6:12-15 is man's view of wicked men, and this passage reads, *¹² A worthless person, a wicked man, is the one who walks with a perverse mouth, ¹³ who winks with his eyes, who signals with his feet, who points with his fingers; ¹⁴ who with perversity in his heart continually devises evil, who spreads strife. ¹⁵ Therefore his calamity will come suddenly; instantly he will be broken and there will be no healing.* It is obvious, then, that perverse language should never be spoken by a child of God. We are not even to share a funny joke if it is a filthy or perverted joke.

In Proverbs chapter two, we learned that if we will engage in a passive, active, and continual search for wisdom, we will figure out and acquire a genuine, biblical fear of the LORD. Once we possess it and are living the fear of the LORD, we will start to discover wonderful and amazing things about the great God we serve. Next we will discover how to live in a good and godly manner. These things collectively will keep us from getting involved with and hurt by evil men and immoral women. Prov. 2:12-19 tells us that obtaining and maintaining a genuine, biblical fear of the LORD will do this for us: *¹² To deliver you from the way of evil, from the man who speaks perverse things; ¹³ from*

those who leave the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness; ¹⁴ who delight in doing evil and rejoice in the perversity of evil; ¹⁵ whose paths are crooked, and who are devious in their ways; ¹⁶ to deliver you from the strange woman, from the adulteress who flatters with her words; ¹⁷ that leaves the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God; ¹⁸ for her house sinks down to death and her tracks lead to the dead; ¹⁹ none who go to her return again, nor do they reach the paths of life. The Word of God is **our guide** to keep us from getting involved with wicked people, and the Holy Spirit is **our pilot** who not only steers us away from such people but also guides us into a closer and closer walk with the God we love. Always remember what Christ said in Matthew 7:17-20. There he taught, ¹⁷ "So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ So then, you will know them by their fruits." Therefore, be known for doing good. Don't be known for practicing evil or talking with perverted speech.

Son, we can sum up this discussion of why wisdom hates perverted speech by looking at James 3:1-12. It says, ¹ Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment. ² For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well. ³ Now if we put the bits into the horses' mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well. ⁴ Look at the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot desires. ⁵ So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! ⁶ And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell. ⁷ For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. ⁸ But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison. ⁹ With it we bless our LORD and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; ¹⁰ from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way. ¹¹ Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water? ¹² Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor can salt water produce fresh. Since we know what God expects of us, we must be careful to speak the truth in a kind way and never say anything that is wicked, perverted, off color, or untrue. If wisdom hates perverted speech, then we should hate it too. We will hate it if we acquire and maintain a genuine, biblical fear of the LORD.

C) What wisdom knows (verse 14)

¹⁴ Counsel is mine and sound wisdom ^{<08454>}; I am understanding, power is mine.

Wisdom gives *counsel* to the wise, and then the wise will give godly counsel to those who need it. Daniel in the Old Testament is a good example of this principle. In Daniel 2:19-23 we read,

Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven; Daniel said,

"Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, for wisdom and power belong to Him. It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men and knowledge to men of understanding. It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with Him. To You, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for You have given me wisdom and power; Even now You have made known to me what we requested of You, for You have made known to us the king's matter."

After this Daniel described the king's vision to him and explained the interpretation of the dream. Since a wise man is always learning more knowledge and understanding, he is always gaining more insight and discretion by which he can evaluate a given opportunity or problem accurately and come up with a workable and effective solution. Everyone needs counsel and guidance from time to time, and what better advice and counsel can you receive than that which is given to you by a wise man or from the Scriptures themselves? There is simply nothing better or even equivalent.

Counsel is beneficial, but it is even more beneficial when coupled with *sound wisdom*. You may remember in chapter 4, part 5 of this commentary where we said that *sound wisdom* is the practical, efficient things a godly man

does day after day that bring good success. These are the things anyone can do if they possess and use godly understanding and discernment. This can be something as simple as showing kindness to your neighbor, telling the truth, giving to others in need, befriending one who needs a friend, paying attention in school, and a host of other practical things. These are the kinds of things grandma said we should do, and doing them makes life better and smoother. *Sound wisdom* coupled with *wise counsel* makes for good success in every area of life and practice. This is what wisdom will do for you if you will espouse her.

When a man is receptive to wisdom's counsel and practices sound wisdom, he is endowed with *power* the average man cannot know. That is why Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 7:19 that "*Wisdom strengthens a wise man more than ten rulers* (mighty men KJV) *who are in a city.*" (NASB). Strong's defines *rulers* or *mighty* as *to govern, be mighty, to have power*. Keep in mind that power is not referring only to physical power. Knowing how to wage war, defend a city, and present an effective defense in court are all areas where wisdom gives the *power* to come out on top. These are but a few examples of how wisdom can give power to the wise man, but I think you get the idea. Remember, though, that *understanding* is what fuels the *power* to accomplish these things. *Understanding* stems from trustworthy knowledge, so I encourage you to study and meditate upon the scriptures until you gain enough trustworthy knowledge to have the understanding you will need to succeed in your walk with the LORD.

Therefore, as you can see, *counsel*, *sound wisdom*, and *power* are all tools wisdom will give to the man who will be receptive to the guidance and correction wisdom wants to give him. Without them, a man cannot experience verse fifteen.

D) What wisdom offers leaders (verses 15-16)

¹⁵ *By me kings reign, and rulers decree justice* ^{H6664}. ¹⁶ *By me princes rule, and nobles, all who judge rightly* ^{H6664}.

In any country, either the king or the president is the one who calls the shots, and his upper ministers are the princes or the congressmen. As seen in verse 15a, the king reigns, and in verse 15b, his princes aid in running the kingdom. In verse 16a, having established the laws of the land, the princes also oversee law enforcement in the realm, and in verse 16b, noblemen judge lawbreakers in a just and fair manner. It is interesting to note that *justice* in verse 15 is the same Hebrew word as *rightly* in verse 16. Therefore, the just, right, and good laws the rulers legislate are used to judge lawbreakers in a just, right, and good manner. In our country, the president would be equivalent to the king, the congress would be equivalent to those who decree justice, law enforcement would be equivalent to the princes that rule, and the judicial branch would be equivalent to those who judge rightly. In summary form, the structure would look like this:

- 15a - the king/president leading the people,
- 15b - the rulers/congress doing the legislating
- 16a - the princes/law enforcement upholding the law, and
- 16b - the nobles/judges conducting court proceedings and punishing lawbreakers

These two words *justice* and *rightly* are translated as *accurate* in Job 31:5-6, "*If I have walked with falsehood, and my foot has hastened after deceit, let Him weigh me with accurate* ^{H6664} *scales, and let God know my integrity*". In Leviticus 19:36 the same Hebrew word is translated as *just*. There it says, "*You shall have just* ^{H6664} *balances, just* ^{H6664} *weights, a just* ^{H6664} *ephah, and a just* ^{H6664} *hin; I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from the land of Egypt.*" Then in Ezekiel 45:10, "*You shall have just* ^{H6664} *balances, a just* ^{H6664} *ephah and a just* ^{H6664} *bath.*" In Psalm 52:3, these two words are translated as *what is right*. This verse reads, "*You love evil more than good, falsehood more than speaking what is right* ^{H6664}". Finally, Prov. 12:17 says, "*He who speaks truth tells what is right* ^{H6664}, *but a false witness, deceit.*" These verses make it clear that all of the legislation in verse 15b, the law enforcement in verse 16a, and the court rulings in verse 16b should be accurate, just and right in every way. It is important for a leader to be a man or woman of integrity. If he is, his subordinates will follow his example. That's why Ecclesiastes 10:17-18 tell us, "*Blessed are you, O land, whose king is of nobility and whose princes eat at the appropriate time--for strength and not for drunkenness. Through indolence the rafters sag, and through slackness the house leaks.*" Then in Ecclesiastes 5:8-9 we read, "*If you see oppression of the poor and denial of justice and righteousness in the province, do not be shocked at the sight; for one official watches over another official, and there are higher officials over them. After all, a king who cultivates the field is an advantage to the land.*" To

cultivate the field in this sense is to find the lawbreakers, try them in court, punish them as severely as needed, and do it without delay.

This is all fine and good, but how do any or all of these people accomplish these things and do them correctly and well? The answer is simple. Those who do it correctly have acquired and use wisdom. As we saw in verse 14 of our text, wisdom gives them excellent *counsel*, sound *understanding*, *sound wisdom*, and *power*. Wisdom does it all. God gives wisdom to the wise, and they in turn counsel and lead others with wisdom. We saw an example of this in Daniel 2:19-23 above.

In order for a government to function well, there must be a leader of integrity and justice, and there must be faithful ministers doing his bidding. Moses learned this truth while he was out in the desert leading the people of Israel. Read the text below and see how his father-in-law advised him.

Exodus 18:13-27

It came about the next day that Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood about Moses from the morning until the evening. Now when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, "What is this thing that you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge and all the people stand about you from morning until evening?" Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God. When they have a dispute, it comes to me, and I judge between a man and his neighbor and make known the statutes of God and His laws."

Moses' father-in-law said to him, "The thing that you are doing is not good. You will surely wear out, both yourself and these people who are with you, for the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone. Now listen to me: I will give you counsel, and God be with you. You be the people's representative before God, and you bring the disputes to God, then teach them the statutes and the laws, and make known to them the way in which they are to walk and the work they are to do. Furthermore, you shall select out of all the people able men who fear God, men of truth, those who hate dishonest gain; and you shall place these over them as leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens. Let them judge the people at all times; and let it be that every major dispute they will bring to you, but every minor dispute they themselves will judge. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you. If you do this thing and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all these people also will go to their place in peace." So Moses listened to his father-in-law and did all that he had said. Moses chose able men out of all Israel and made them heads over the people, leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens. They judged the people at all times; the difficult dispute they would bring to Moses, but every minor dispute they themselves would judge. Then Moses bade his father-in-law farewell, and he went his way into his own land.

Noticed how he delegated the responsibilities of the people to others who would serve well. In this case he was assigning judges, but in an active government there needs to be faithful people at all levels of government. Even so, every one of a leader's subordinates needs to be a man or woman of integrity who will fulfill his duties well and honestly.

E) Who wisdom helps (verse 17)

¹⁷ *I love those who love me; and those who diligently seek me will find me.*

In the last paragraph of Proverbs chapter one (1:20-33), we saw what happens to the one who rejects wisdom. For those who are tempted to reject her, there she offers herself one more time before explaining the adverse effects of shunning her. Just before explaining the downward path of those who reject her, she offers herself again and says, *How long, O naive ones, will you love being simple-minded? and scoffers delight themselves in scoffing and fools hate knowledge? Turn to my reproof, Behold, I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you.* (Prov. 1:22-23). She then graphically explains the hurts and heartaches that will result from rejecting wisdom. At the end of the paragraph she concludes with, *But he who listens to me shall live securely and will be at ease from the dread of evil.* (Prov. 1:33) She offers herself again because she really wants men and women to

accept her and become wise. Here in Proverbs chapter 8, it is clear that she wants more than mere acceptance. She wants a relationship, an intimate relationship.

I love your mom, and she loves me. We don't merely cohabit, but we have an intimate relationship. We enjoy many of the same things, we share intimate details of our life with each other, and we look forward to doing things for each other that will make the other pleased and grateful. There is also a physical intimacy in our relationship that no one other than the two of us can share. This is the kind of relationship wisdom wants to have with every man or woman who will acquire and maintain a relationship with her. She wants to be there for you and guide you through every opportunity or problem you encounter. If you will espouse her, she will guide you to the kind of trustworthy knowledge, sound understanding, clear insight, and dependable discernment you will need to make wise decisions that will produce the best outcome in every situation of life. Gregory, if you practice the four steps to learning and living the book of Proverbs, and search for her by engaging in a passive, active, and a continual search for wisdom, then you will find her. As a result, you will experience the most wonderful life one could ever imagine.

F) What wisdom does for those who love her (verses 18-21)

¹⁸ Riches and honor are with me, enduring wealth and righteousness. ¹⁹ My fruit is better than gold, even pure gold, and my yield better than choicest silver. ²⁰ I walk in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of justice, ²¹ to endow those who love me with wealth, that I may fill their treasuries."

1. What she offers (verse 18)

¹⁸ Riches and honor are with me, enduring wealth and righteousness.

Solomon was an extremely wise and wealthy man, and throughout Proverbs, he presented what he believed to be a truth. It was that a wise man will be a wealthy man. I have a problem with this statement because I know truly wise men who are definitely not wealthy with respect to physical possessions. They are well-to-do, but not rich. Verse 19 of our text clarifies this truth because it says that the riches and wealth we will gain from living in a wise and godly manner are better than physical gold or silver. Now, I do not want to contradict what Solomon taught, but I would like to explain what I believe on the subject.

Prov. 21:17 teaches that, *He who loves pleasure will become a poor man; He who loves wine and oil will not become rich.* Ecclesiastes 7:4 tells us that *The mind of the wise is in the house of mourning, while the mind of fools is in the house of pleasure.* So then, a man who will make the pursuit of pleasure his main focus in life is a fool. On the contrary, a wise man will take life seriously, be a responsible person, plan for the future, and pursue good and godly living. Any man or woman who lives wisdom like this will find Proverbs 21:20 to be true. It says, *There is precious treasure and oil in the dwelling of the wise, but a foolish man swallows it up.* This verse doesn't say that the wise man will be rich, but it does say that the house of the wise man will contain nice things that are of value. You see, the wise man realizes that in order to have enough to get along in the future, he must save and invest some of each paycheck. That way when there is an emergency or it is time to retire, there will be enough funds to meet his needs. This is what I mean by well-to-do.

Please understand that there are riches and wealth that are beyond physical possessions. When we put our money in an investment, we hope it will produce a good return. In a similar manner, as we live for the LORD, we invest our lives, our energies, and our time in the bank of eternity expecting to receive gain in return. Like someone once said, "Serving the LORD doesn't pay a lot, but the benefits are out of this world."

2. Why she makes the offer (verse 19)

¹⁹ My fruit is better than gold, even pure gold, and my yield better than choicest silver.

Christ Himself gave the best explanation of this when he said in Matthew 6:19-20, *"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal.* He said further in Luke 12:33, *"Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves money belts which do*

not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near nor moth destroys. So then, spiritual riches come from serving the LORD with all of our heart while at the same time we store up treasures in the bank of heaven. Serving the LORD and giving to others is a joy, and it is even more rewarding when we know that the rewards of our efforts will be waiting for us when we get to glory.

3. How her reward is acquired (verses 20-21)

²⁰ I walk in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of justice, ²¹ to endow those who love me with wealth, that I may fill their treasuries."

As we have seen, a genuine, biblical fear of the LORD is loving the LORD enough to do good and obey the Scriptures. It is also avoiding or abandoning ever sinful practice. This is living in a righteousness manner. Prov. 3:3-4 told us that being kind and truthful with everyone will cause us to treat each person in the way that they deserve. This is justice in practice. Wisdom, in poetic form, has told us that she will always act and respond this way. So then, when we do these things, we show wisdom in action. Now, according to our verse, when we live like this, certain rewards are promised. It says that she will endow us with wealth and riches. The wealth here would certainly be the wonderful relationships we have with other people, the love of family, the honor bestowed upon us by those who know and love the LORD, and the knowledge that the LORD is pleased with our love for Him and our good and godly manner of living. A man or woman who will live like this has found real meaning and purpose in life and is satisfied with how and where God has led him. The average rich man will never experience any of these blessings because he depends upon his money for security, and there is no room for God in his life. He simply does not need Him.

In the realm of physical possessions, our verse says that wisdom will *fill their treasuries*. As such, a wise man can expect to accumulate enough riches to meet his needs in the future. He will save and invest for the future while at the same time, he will be generous with those in need. There may be a few men the LORD can trust with an abundance of riches, but most of us will be in more or less the average category of wise men who are well-to-do. We must always remember that physical wealth can be taken from us in a moment. Life takes interesting twists at times. Prov. 23:4-5 reminds us, *"Do not weary yourself to gain wealth, cease from your consideration of it. When you set your eyes on it, it is gone. for wealth certainly makes itself wings like an eagle that flies toward the heavens."* Christ himself said in Luke 12:29-34 concerning greed and the desire for wealth, *"And do not seek what you will eat and what you will drink, and do not keep worrying. For all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek; but your Father knows that you need these things. But seek His kingdom, and these things will be added to you. Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves money belts which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near nor moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."*

Living wisdom is well worth all of the effort, and those who acquire and maintain her will be glad that they did. Gregory, as you faithfully follow the formula Solomon taught in Proverbs chapter two, in time you will find true wisdom. When you do, you will be thrilled with life and with your walk with the LORD. Always remember the promise taught in Psalm 25:12-14. It states, *"Who is the man who fears the LORD? He will instruct him in the way he should choose. His soul will abide in prosperity, and his descendants will inherit the land. The secret of the LORD is for those who fear Him, and He will make them know His covenant."*

Son, pursue wisdom. You will be glad you did. On the following page you will find a text layout of this paragraph of Proverbs chapter eight.

Proverbs 8:12-21 (Wisdom's Companions)

¹² "I **WISDOM**, dwell with **prudence**, and
I find **knowledge** and **discretion**.

¹³ **The FEAR OF THE LORD**
is to hate evil;

pride and
arrogance and
the evil way, and
the perverted mouth, I HATE.

¹⁴ **Counsel** IS MINE, and
I AM **understanding,**
Sound Wisdom;
Power IS MINE.

¹⁵ By Me kings *reign*, and
¹⁶ By Me princes *rule*, and nobles,
rulers *decree justice*.
all who *judge rightly*.

¹⁷ I love **those who love Me;**
and **those who diligently seek Me** will find Me.

¹⁸ **Riches** and
Honor are with Me,
Enduring Wealth and
Righteousness.

¹⁹ MY **FRUIT** is better than **gold**,
even **pure gold**, and
MY **YEILD** than **choicest silver**.

²⁰ I WALK in the **way of righteousness**,
in the midst of the **paths of justice**,

²¹ to endow **those who love Me** with **wealth**,
that I may fill their **treasuries**.

3) Wisdom's Credentials (verses 22-31)

What is there about wisdom that makes her worth pursuing? What has she already accomplished that would convince you that she can and will do what she claims? What must she prove before you will be willing to give up the pleasures of this world in order to gain her and all she has to offer? How would you answer these questions, and where are you in your search to find and use her? These are questions only you can answer, but I hope that this particular discussion will help you see that she is ready to give herself to you and is capable of performing all that she has promised in the Bible. Follow along as we look at what Wisdom has done in the past. This should give you the assurance that she will help you in the future if you pursue her with all of your being.

Before creation

²² "The LORD possessed me at the beginning of His way, before His works of old. ²³ From everlasting I was established, from the beginning, from the earliest times of the earth. ²⁴ When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water. ²⁵ Before the mountains were settled, before the hills I was brought forth; ²⁶ while He had not yet made the earth and the fields, nor the first dust of the world.

Notice that verse 22 does not say that wisdom was **created** at the beginning of His way. Instead, it says that the LORD **possessed** wisdom at the beginning of the beginning. In fact, verse 23 says that wisdom was **established** from everlasting. The beginning of the beginning is so far in the distant past that the very concept of eternity with reference to the past is completely beyond my comprehension.

During creation

²⁷ When He established the heavens, I was there, when He inscribed a circle on the face of the deep, ²⁸ when He made firm the skies above, when the springs of the deep became fixed, ²⁹ when He set for the sea its boundary so that the water would not transgress His command, when He marked out the foundations of the earth; ³⁰ then I was beside Him, as a master workman; and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him, ³¹ rejoicing in the world, His earth, and having my delight in the sons of men.

We know that the LORD, Jesus Christ by name, created everything in the universe out of nothing by merely speaking it into existence. I don't understand how He did it, but it is enough to know that the Scriptures say he did. During the whole of creation, wisdom was an integral part of the process. She was the LORD's *master workman* who directed all of His decisions as to how the created things should be designed, constructed, and enabled to function. It is fascinating to me that while physicists during the 20th century thought they had discovered all there was to know and felt they had derived formulas for everything, along came the theory of relativity and quantum physics which left physicists feeling like they didn't know anything for certain. The wisdom and genius of the creator is so far beyond the ability of the human mind to comprehend that man will always be in the dark about some of the things He created. What a wonderful LORD we serve.

One of the things that fascinates me is that wisdom can be delighted with the world and the people living on planet earth. I can somewhat understand how wisdom can be thrilled with the beauty and complexity of the earth itself as the LORD created it, but I'm sure that wisdom is not thrilled with the way mankind has corrupted this planet. It seems obvious that wisdom was pleased with the first man and woman, but she wasn't as pleased when they sinned and were separated from God. I am sure, though, that she is pleased when men and women come to Christ in salvation and are restored to fellowship with God. She is even more pleased when these saved men and women choose to pursue wisdom and then practice good and godly living. Son, you can be one of the men wisdom loves and appreciates if you will acquire her and practice living wisdom.

See a text layout of this paragraph on the following page.

²² The LORD **possessed** me

At the beginning of His way,
Before His works of old.

²³ From everlasting ***I was established,***
From the beginning,

From the **earliest times of the earth.**

²⁴ When there were no depths ***I was brought forth,***
When there were no springs abounding with water.

²⁵ Before the mountains were settled,
Before the hills ***I was brought forth;***

²⁶ While He had not yet made the earth and
the fields, nor
the first dust of the world.

²⁷ When He **established** the heavens, ***I was there,***
When He inscribed a circle on the face of the deep,

²⁸ When He made firm the skies above,
When the springs of the deep became fixed,

²⁹ When He set for the sea its boundary,
so that the water
should not transgress His command,
When He marked out the foundations of the earth;

³⁰ **THEN *I was beside Him,*** as a master craftsman;

and

I was daily His delight,

³¹ ***rejoicing always before Him,***
rejoicing in the world, His earth,
and having my ***delight in the sons of men.***

4) Wisdom's Conclusion (verses 32-36)

A. Practice living wisdom (verses 32-33)

³² *"Now therefore, O sons, listen to me, for blessed are they who keep my ways.* ³³ *Heed instruction and be wise, and do not neglect it.*

Now, after all you have seen about what wisdom is and does, listen to her (*me*). If you will consider wisdom important enough to acquire and maintain (*keep my ways*), you will experience unnumbered blessings. The choice is yours. Therefore, Gregory, I urge you to pay attention and follow (*heed*) the instruction she offers, and in time, you will become wise. Please, please, don't *neglect* the help and strength she wants to give you. It would be a shame for you to hear wisdom's instruction and correction and then walk away from it because you don't care. I

believe you are wiser and more conscientious than that. Son, I hope I'm right about you. Live what you learn and see how sweet and rewarding it can be.

B. Practice looking for more wisdom (verses 34-35)

³⁴ *Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at my doorposts.*
³⁵ *For he who finds me finds life and obtains favor from the LORD.* ³⁶ *But he who sins against me injures himself; all those who hate me love death."*

Two verses earlier Wisdom stated that anyone who espouses her will experience unnumbered blessings. You will continue to receive those blessings if you are teachable and are eagerly looking for more and more trustworthy knowledge, sound understanding, and good judgment. You need to constantly be listening for wisdom to be spoken, watching for wisdom to be put before your eyes, and eagerly waiting for another opportunity to add more wisdom to the knowledge and understanding base you have already acquired. Maintaining this approach to learning and living will produce life at its best, and it will cause the LORD to look upon you with favor and delight. I hope you will choose to pursue wisdom and live it every day. Life will be good if you do, but if you choose not to pursue wisdom, you will do yourself harm (*sins*). You will make choices that will be costly, hurtful, and hard to bear. You can avoid those hurts by pursuing wisdom God's way. As we saw in the commentary on the last paragraph of Proverbs chapter one, anyone who aggressively rejects wisdom can expect to experience a premature death. The principle of sow and reap normally works that way. Below you will find a text layout of this paragraph of text.

Proverbs 8:32-36 (Wisdom's Conclusion)

³² Now therefore, O sons,

LISTEN TO ME,

for **blessed** are they who **keep my ways**.

³³ **HEED INSTRUCTION** and

BE WISE, and

DO NOT NEGLECT IT.

³⁴ **Blessed is the man** who

LISTENS TO ME,

WATCHING DAILY AT MY GATES,

WAITING AT MY DOORPOSTS.

³⁵ For he who **finds** me

finds *life*, and
obtains *favor from the LORD*.

³⁶ **But** he who sins against me injures himself;

all who hate me love death.

Application

It is fine to talk about what wisdom is and how to acquire it, but how will wisdom look in the real world? Here are a few examples of wisdom being put into practice.

- 1) Wisdom teaches that a born-again believer is to marry another born-again believer, not an unbeliever.

2 Corinthians 6:14 states

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? (KJV). The NASB reads more clearly when it says, Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?

Therefore, any believer who has been warned about this principle has two choices. Choice one: he can avoid or end a relationship with an unbeliever who would otherwise become a marriage partner. As hard as the decision may be, this choice shows that he has chosen to follow wisdom rather than the unbridled passions of the heart. Choice two: he can choose to continue or start a relationship with an unbeliever and end up marrying the unsaved person. This choice shows that he has chosen to flatly reject wisdom (Prov. 1:20-33), and he must endure the adverse consequences that inevitably follow. It is as simple as that.

- 2) Wisdom instructs us to save for the future and invest those savings in several investment options instead of putting all of our investments into one source.

Ecclesiastes 11:1-6

¹ Cast your bread on the surface of the waters, for you will find it after many days. ² Divide your portion to seven, or even to eight, for you do not know what misfortune may occur on the earth. ³ If the clouds are full, they pour out rain upon the earth; and whether a tree falls toward the south or toward the north, wherever the tree falls, there it lies. ⁴ He who watches the wind will not sow and he who looks at the clouds will not reap. ⁵ Just as you do not know the path of the wind and how bones are formed in the womb of the pregnant woman, so you do not know the activity of God who makes all things. ⁶ Sow your seed in the morning and do not be idle in the evening, for you do not know whether morning or evening sowing will succeed, or whether both of them alike will be good.

Therefore, to invest your money in several different funds or a mutual fund is a safe and productive way to invest. It shows a choice to follow wisdom. To put all of your investments into one fund is to put your future and your retirement at risk. This is because if the one fund takes a serious downfall or fails, you will lose much or all that you have invested. Choosing this manner of investing shows that you have rejected wisdom in favor of following an emotional decision. Please remember that if an investment seems too good to be true, it most likely is. Too many people have been hurt by investing in such an attractive opportunity.

- 3) Wisdom instructs us to avoid ingesting alcoholic beverages.

Proverbs 20:1 states,

Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is intoxicated by it is not wise.

The whole of Proverbs teaches young men how to find and practice wisdom. Verse 1 above clearly states that to become drunk is not wise. Once a person has taken his first drink, he cannot be sure that he will not become a drunk in time. Most people won't, but some will not be able to control their desire. The problem is that we don't know who will be unable to control the desire. Therefore, a safe rule of thumb it is to abstain. Anyone who is seeking to be wise will heed Solomon's warning, even with regard to something as simple as social drinking. To indulge is to show the world that you have rejected wisdom and are not wise. It is as simple as that.

4) Wisdom instructs us to teach our children to be good and godly.

Deuteronomy 6:6-7 teaches,

These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.

Proverbs 22:6 says,

Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

Consider something with me. Sending a young person to a Christian school or university where he or she can be nurtured in the things of the LORD is a wise decision. On the other hand, sending your older child to a prestigious school where the professors are determined to destroy a student's faith in God is definitely not wise. Doing this often results in a young person abandoning the faith. Choosing this option shows that the parent is either ignorant of the consequences or has rejected wisdom. Whether the parent does this purposely or unknowingly, the disastrous results are the same.

5) Wisdom instructs us to study the Word of God and practice what we learn.

Second Timothy 2:15 also says,

Study (the Scriptures) to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (KJV, grayed text added for clarity)

In addition, Solomon told us in Proverbs 3:1-2,

My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments; for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you.

Therefore, the man or woman who will engage in a serious and continued study of the Scriptures intending to do what he or she learns is making a wise choice. Anyone who will consistently do this will certainly become a wise person in time. On the contrary, anyone who feels there is no need to study the Bible has rejected wisdom and is playing the part of a fool.

6) Wisdom instructs us to work hard and smart.

Proverbs 10:4b says, *the hand of the diligent makes rich.*

Proverbs 12:24a says, *the hand of the diligent will rule.*

Proverbs 10:4a says, *poor is he who works with a negligent hand,* and

Proverbs 12:24a says, *but the slack hand will be put to forced labor.*

Therefore, anyone who will work hard and smart, show up on time, and look out for his employer's interests will get the good jobs and have enough income to get along comfortably. He will also have enough excess to give to those in need. This kind of attitude and conduct shows wisdom. On the contrary, anyone who will do the minimum required for the job, show up late, and/or take advantage of the company will lose his job or end up working menial jobs with minimum pay throughout his life. He will certainly end up a poor man. This kind of attitude and conduct shows that he has rejected wisdom.

- 7) Wisdom teaches us that initiating some sort of church security is necessary these days.

With all of the church shootings, fires, and sexual misconduct taking place these days, it only makes good sense to establish and maintain effective security during church services. Doing so provides safety for attendees and discourages would-be perpetrators from choosing your church to carry out their detrimental deeds. But it is foolish in this day and age for church leaders to flippantly say, "God will take care of us. We don't need any security." It is unfortunate that otherwise good men (leaders of a church) who know nothing about security are the ones who make the decisions about security. It is not wise to ask a baker how to buy diamonds, and it is equally as unwise to ask men who know virtually nothing about security to make the decisions about what security the church will put in place. They mean well, but they end up with a security program that looks good to the uninformed but is not real security at all. It just looks good to the uninformed.

- 8) Wisdom teaches us that it is wise to get a concealed weapon permit and train properly.

Those in security describe people as being in one of three categories. First, there are "sheep." These are people who either cannot or will not defend themselves. Next, there are "wolves." These are people who choose to hurt "sheep" or take what they want from "sheep." They are the bad guys. Third, there are "sheep dogs." These are people who will defend themselves and others against the "wolves." Many of us have said, "When seconds count, law enforcement is only minutes away." This is not to say law enforcement is not doing their job. They get to a scene as quickly as they can, but they are not usually close enough to help a victim in seconds. It is a fact. When a violent attack is made against you, you are the one who needs to protect yourself and your loved ones. To learn how to effectively handle a firearm in a combat situation and acquire a concealed carry permit (CWP) is wise. On the other hand, to get a CWP and not train in combat style shooting or not to get a CWP at all is foolish. For someone who does not have shooting experience, getting a CWP is like getting a learner's permit to drive a car. Without the right kind of experience, the novice driver is merely a danger to other drivers around him. The same is true regarding a CWP. Without some combat style training and experience, you are more likely to miss your target completely or shoot some innocent person. There is a good chance that an untrained person will be unable to even make an effective hit on the aggressor when an attack takes place. Be warned.

- 9) Wisdom teaches that we are to speak the truth in a kind way.

Proverbs 3:3-4 states, "*Do not let kindness and truth leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favor and good repute in the sight of God and man.*" We should always tell the truth and do it in a kind way. Sometimes it is hard to be kind. Nonetheless, a wise man will strive to be kind in every situation, even when he would rather lash out against another person. I once watched an officer severely verbally discipline one of the men under his command, but he did it firmly and in such a kind way that the man being disciplined almost wanted to thank him for the correction. Now that's kindness in action. On the other hand, to lash out at someone who has either offended or has lashed out at you is not wise. It is better to learn to control your temper.

- 10) Wisdom teaches that we must avoid or abandon sinful practices.

Proverbs teaches that we should acquire wisdom, and at the same time we should gain understanding. Job 28:28 stated as much when he said, *And to man He said, 'Behold, the fear of the LORD, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.* Solomon concurred with Job when he wrote Proverbs 8:13 which says, *The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverted mouth, I hate.* Again in Proverbs 16:6 he wrote, *By lovingkindness and truth iniquity is atoned for, and by the fear of the LORD one keeps away from evil.* So, we as believers in Jesus Christ should strive to be holy. Part of being holy is to avoid or abandon every sinful practice. This is wisdom in action. Anyone who indulges in sinful practices is definitely not wise. You choose. It all comes down to whether we really possess a genuine, biblical fear of the LORD.

11) Wisdom teaches that we should train for a profession

Proverbs does not tell us how to do a particular job, but it does tell us the kind of attitude we should acquire and maintain toward our work. I have often said that we get paid for our back or for our mind. It is true that a skilled worker usually gets paid more than an unskilled worker, but not always. It is unfortunate that modern Americans feel that they must have a college degree in order to get a good job. I know of many college graduates who can't get a job in the field for which they trained. I'm not saying that people shouldn't go to college, but many young people would do much better going to a trade school to learn a sellable skill or trade that will serve them well in the workforce. It is unfortunate to see people working at fast food places or as a security guard when they could make three times as much. Be sure to train in the kind of skill where businesses are seeking to hire.

12) Wisdom teaches that we should sharpen our tools for work

Manual labor is hard enough without having to go to the extra work of using a dull tool. Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 10:10, *"If the axe is dull and he does not sharpen its edge, then he must exert more strength. Wisdom has the advantage of giving success."* Basically he is saying that a wise person will sharpen the tool so that more work can be done with less effort. You will be much more successful at a given job if you keep your tools at peak operating condition. This is wisdom with boots on, and it makes good sense.

13) Wisdom teaches that we should change the oil in our car regularly

I once heard about an older woman who hired a mechanic to figure out why her car would not run. When he got there, he discovered that the engine had frozen because it was out of oil. Consequently, the engine was ruined and had to be replaced. When he told her what he had found, she responded by saying, "Well it had oil in it when I bought it several years ago!" This is an extreme case, I will admit, but one of the students in my aircraft mechanics class failed to change his oil, and the engine locked up on him. He, too, had to have a new engine put in the car. So you can see how changing the oil in your car on a regular basis will substantially lengthen the life of the engine, and there will be less likelihood of breaking down along the side of the road. It is simply wise to change the oil when recommended.

14) Wisdom teaches that we should love one woman for life.

Solomon, the wisest man in his day, had 700 wives and 300 playthings called concubines. His confession in the book of Ecclesiastes makes it clear that that unbridled sexual pleasure with multiple wives did not bring lasting satisfaction to his soul. Consider what he wrote in Eccl. 9:9 where he said, *Enjoy life with the woman whom you love all the days of your fleeting life which He has given to you under the sun; for this is your reward in life and in your toil in which you have labored under the sun.* Unfortunately, Solomon never knew the joy of being committed to one woman and her to him for a lifetime. He realized too late what he had missed. Your vow to love your spouse until death is not only a promise to her, but it is a promise made in the sight of God. Keeping this vow shows wisdom, but breaking the vow shows a lack of wisdom.

15) Wisdom teaches that we should eat healthy food and lose weight.

Obesity in America has become a major health problem for a substantial portion of the population. Not only does it drive up medical costs, but in many cases it leads to diabetes, heart trouble, and/or a premature death. The foolish person will let his weight creep up to the point where he is actually fat, and then he bemoans the fact that he is fat. The wise person will change his lifestyle. He will start eating healthy food, establish and maintain a regular exercise program, and get enough sleep every night. As he loses the weight, he will feel better, have more energy, and feel better about himself. This is wisdom in practice.

16) Wisdom teaches that we should not live solely for what we can get out of this life.

Read my paraphrase of Ecclesiastes (you will find it at www.jlsparaphrase.org). I entitled it, "The confession of a fool." Let me ask you. Who is a bigger fool than the man who had everything any man could ever want and throw it away because he turned his back on the LORD who gave it to him? As you read Ecclesiastes, it will quickly become apparent that living solely for what you can get out of this life is a worthless venture. At the end of his life,

Solomon realized that the most important things in life are to love the LORD with all of your heart and keep His commandments. This is what will bring happiness and contentment. It is living wisdom.

These are but a few examples of making wise choices. Do you see yourself in any of these, or do you see some other area where you can make improvements as you pursue for wisdom? I hope you have gained insight from the discussion of wisdom in this chapter.

Chapter 14

[Return to Index](#)

Proverbs 9:1-18

God's best vs. Satan's imitation

Gregory,

In the first eight chapters of Proverbs, we have learned what **wisdom** is, what **wisdom** does, how we can acquire **her** as our own. We have also seen the blessings that come from using **her**, and the hurts and heartaches that result from rejecting **her**. Earlier in this study, we saw how in Prov. 1:7 Solomon taught that there are two choices in life. Simply put, you and I can choose wisdom and experience the blessings that result, or we can live for what the world has to offer and experience the hurts, heartaches, and losses that result. As we come to chapter nine, we are about to see Prov. 1:7 presented in an expanded form. The first half of chapter nine (like the first half of Prov. 1:7) shows that a pursuit of godly, biblical wisdom is **God's best**. We call this person a wise man. The second half of chapter nine (like the second half of Prov. 1:7) shows that attempting to find satisfaction and fulfillment through what this world has to offer is **Satan's imitation**. We call this person a fool.

As we progress through the study of this chapter, you will see that wisdom is something that will generate peace and satisfaction in this life and in the life to come. At the same time, it will give you a life filled with purpose and meaning. Pursuing a life of wisdom will indeed bring spiritual satisfaction, but it will also result in physical satisfaction as well. Possessing both of these is what makes life really fulfilling. You will also see that physical, worldly pursuits do satisfy for the moment, but they do nothing for the user in the long run. There is a valuable lesson in this chapter, and I hope you will not only understand its importance but take it to heart. Only Solomon could have painted such a beautiful poetic word picture about these truths. As you will see, Satan's imitation looks like the real thing to the natural, unsaved man, but those who possess at least some wisdom will see the error of leaving God out of their lives.

The combined layouts of this chapter are among my favorites (you will find them in the appendix), and I have enjoyed them ever since the second or third year of this study. The first paragraph of the chapter depicts wisdom (God best) and what she has to offer. Wisdom in this chapter is the same kind that God gave to Solomon when he asked God for it. It is the same kind of wisdom that you will find in Proverbs chapter eight. The third paragraph depicts the immoral woman (Satan's imitation). This woman is most likely a prostitute, but she could be an adulterous wife. Either way the results are the same. When we finish the discussion of these two paragraphs, you will see a parallel layout of both, and you too will see the beauty of Solomon's logic. After we finish with these two paragraphs, we will go back and look at paragraph two in order to see how it fits so neatly together with the logic of the chapter. Please print the two sheets on Proverbs chapter nine found in the appendix and refer to them as we proceed through the discussion of Proverbs chapter nine.

Part 1 – God’s best (Proverbs 9:1-6)

¹ *Wisdom has built her house, she has hewn out her seven pillars;* ² *she has prepared her food, she has mixed her wine; she has also set her table;* ³ *she has sent out her maidens, she calls from the tops of the heights of the city:* ⁴ *"Whoever is naive, let him turn in here!" To him who lacks understanding she says,* ⁵ *"Come, eat of my food and drink of the wine I have mixed.* ⁶ *"Forsake your folly and live, and proceed in the way of understanding."*

1) Wisdom’s preparation (verses 1-2)

¹ *Wisdom has built her house, she has hewn out her seven pillars;* ² *she has prepared her food, she has mixed her wine; she has also set her table*

Verse 1 tells us that Wisdom has built a magnificent structure. Why do I say magnificent? Because it is adorned with seven pillars that undoubtedly give it stability, integrity, and beauty. There is conjecture among commentators as to what these seven pillars represent, but since these pillars are not critical to the lesson Solomon was teaching in this passage, I will let other men debate their purpose. Wisdom in this chapter is consistent with Proverbs 24:3-4 where Solomon wrote, *"By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; and by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches."* Wisdom’s house is not a physical house but rather a court into which men and women can enter to find all they need to successfully navigate the challenges of life and find the best solution for any problem or opportunity that might come their way.

In poetic form she has not only prepared a structure (or a frame of reference), but she has prepared a literal banquet of trustworthy knowledge and sound understanding with which to feed all who come to her table. She has plenty of food and beverages, and she has set a lavish table fit for a king. Those who sit at her table can feast upon all of the knowledge, understanding, insight, discretion, and instruction they will need to make wise decisions with excellent results. They can also drink deeply of the blessings and benefits that come with the use of wisdom. So then, when you come to wisdom’s house, you will find everything you will ever need to make the best decisions that will produce the best results in every area of life and practice. This kind of feast results in a totally satisfying and fulfilling life. What more could you ever want? Consider Wisdom’s menu:

Appetizer = the fear of the Lord and a knowledge of God

Main course = knowledge
understanding
insight
discretion
prudence

Dessert = Peace and a long life.

2) Wisdom’s messengers (verse 3)

³ *she has sent out her maidens, she calls from the tops of the heights of the city:*

Once her preparations were completed, she sent her servant girls to invite people to her banquet. They went to all of those places where people can most easily find her if they are searching for her. This passage closely parallels Proverbs 8:1-4 where we read,

¹ *Does not wisdom call, and understanding lift up her voice?* ² *On top of the heights beside the way, where the paths meet, she takes her stand;* ³ *beside the gates, at the opening to the city, at the entrance of the doors, she cries out:* ⁴ *"To you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men."*

In both cases, wisdom waits in places where anyone can easily find her if they are engaged in a passive, an active, and a continual search for wisdom as taught in Proverbs 2:1-4. The thing to remember here is that wisdom is already there waiting for you to find her if you will but search for her in the right way.

3) Wisdom's call (verses 4-6)

⁴ *"Whoever is naive, let him turn in here!" To him who lacks understanding she says, ⁵ "Come, eat of my food and drink of the wine I have mixed. ⁶ "Forsake your folly and live, and proceed in the way of understanding.*

Wisdom invites two types of people to come unto her. First, she invites *naïve* men and women to *turn in here*. Where is *here*? It is the house that contains wisdom's banquet hall, of course. As I said before, *naïve* people are not necessarily bad people. It is just that *they seldom evaluate the consequences of their choices in life. As a result, they make many foolish and costly decisions.* The opposite of naïve is prudent. This is what wisdom wants to enable a naïve man to become. The second type of person wisdom invites to her banquet is those who *lack understanding*. What then do they not understand? They simply don't know who God is or how to properly relate to Him. An example is the man who asserts that he'll take his chances about going to heaven. He is certain that if his good outweighs his bad when he stands before God in the judgment, then God will certainly accept him. He is definitely a fool, but the choice is his. Both types of people have a need that wisdom can satisfy in full if they will but come to her.

When Solomon wrote "*Come, eat of my food and drink of the wine I have mixed,*" he was not referring to physical food. This is a word picture of someone coming to wisdom to find knowledge, understanding, insight, discretion, and instruction which together will ultimately lead to wisdom. Of course, it must be understood that the fear of the LORD is the foundation upon which both wisdom and all of her components are built. Having and using wisdom will fully satisfy your spiritual needs, and in the end, she will satisfy your physical needs as well. I'll explain more about this aspect later.

It is not enough for a man or woman to sit at wisdom's table and be fed knowledge and understanding. He or she must also acquire and maintain a biblical fear of the LORD and practice it by abandoning every form of sin and evil (*Forsake your folly and live*), and they must allow their new knowledge and understanding to guide them so that they will live in a good and godly manner (*proceed in the way of understanding*). Wisdom will only benefit those who are prudent and those who understand the consequences of their actions. As you will remember from earlier discussions, *a prudent man is one who carefully evaluates his choices in life. If a choice will produce hurtful or costly consequences, he will abstain. If, on the other hand, his choice will be good and beneficial, he may proceed.* This is the way of understanding, and it is why wisdom tells the naïve and the ignorant man to change his ways. Below is a brief visual of the relationship between the phrases in verses 4-6 above.

Whoever is naive —————> *forsake your folly and live*

To him who lacks understanding —————> *proceed in the way of understanding*

As you can see, those who lack understanding need to start learning about wisdom, while naïve men and women need to start forsaking their foolish manner of living and turn to the LORD. In reality, both need to do both. Naïve men and ignorant men alike need to abandon their foolish thoughts and deeds, and they need to learn the way of understanding so that they can know the LORD and live a good and godly life. Basically, they need to learn the fear of the LORD which will enable them to avoid or abandon every sinful practice and do good instead. On the following page, you will find a layout of paragraph 1 (verses 1-6). The lines on the right side of the text layout of paragraph one correspond to the lines on the left side of the text layout of paragraph three. Later on we will place them side by side and see a beautiful representation of Proverbs 1:7. The sheet you printed from the appendix for paragraph one is the same as the one found on the next page. It is a real help to have the physical sheets and hold them side by side.

Proverbs 9:1-6 (God's Best)

¹WISDOM

she
²she
she
she

has built her house,
has hewn out her seven pillars;
has PREPARED her food,
has mixed her wine;
has also set her table;

³she
she

has sent out her maidens,
CALLS from the
TOPS OF THE HEIGHTS OF THE CITY:

⁴"Whoever is NAIVE, let him turn in here !"

To him who lacks UNDERSTANDING she says,

⁵ "Come, eat my food, and
drink of the wine I have mixed.

⁶ Forsake your folly and LIVE, and
proceed in the way of understanding."

Part 2 – Satan’s imitation (Proverbs 9:13-18)

¹³ *The woman of folly is boisterous, she is naive and knows nothing.* ¹⁴ *She sits at the doorway of her house, on a seat by the high places of the city,* ¹⁵ *calling to those who pass by, who are making their paths straight:* ¹⁶ *"Whoever is naive, let him turn in here," and to him who lacks understanding she says,* ¹⁷ *"Stolen water is sweet; and bread eaten in secret is pleasant."* ¹⁸ *But he does not know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol.*

1) Her lack of preparation (verse 13)

¹³ *The woman of folly is boisterous, she is naive and knows nothing.*

In context, *the woman of folly* is most likely a prostitute, but this could include any woman who will willingly engage in illicit sexual intercourse with a man other than her husband. It appears that this woman is doing it for hire since verses 14-15 show how she boldly displays herself in public for any willing man to see and enjoy sexually. Those of us who know Christ as savior understand that engaging in sex with someone outside of marriage is wrong, it is foolish, and it is stupid. What kind of woman would engage in illicit sexual relations? Verse 13 shows us three attributes of a woman like her. First, she is *boisterous*—that is, she is loud and pushy. We discussed this characteristic in the commentary on Proverbs chapter seven. She is not intimidated in the least, and she will be as forward and as brash as necessary to get a man to join her in bed. Second, she is *naive*—that is, she does not consider the consequences of her choices in life. Consequently she makes a lot of poor choices with hurtful and costly consequences. Third, she *knows nothing*—that is, she is totally ignorant of the consequences that will come back upon those who commit adultery. She simply doesn't think things through. No, she merely does what comes natural regardless of what the Bible and society consider good and moral conduct. After you have had sexual intercourse with a woman, her husband could very easily try to get even with you for violating his wife. When it happens, it is usually rather ugly. The woman can also turn on you when she is tired of you. This is reason enough for those with some understanding to avoid becoming involved in an adulterous relationship.

2) Her search (verses 14-15)

¹⁴ *She sits at the doorway of her house, on a seat by the high places of the city,* ¹⁵ *calling to those who pass by, who are making their paths straight:*

Notice the boldness of this woman. She literally *sits at the doorway of her house*. More correctly, she sits just outside the door of her house so that interested men can easily see what she has to offer. There is no sense of shame or embarrassment in her actions because she apparently feels like there is nothing wrong with her profession. This reminds me of Prov. 30:20 which says, *"This is the way of an adulterous woman: she eats and wipes her mouth, and says, 'I have done no wrong.'"* Notice how verse 14 above says that she sits on the porch of her house *on a seat by the high places of the city*. She has not chosen a house in an obscure place where she will be more likely to avoid being apprehended by law enforcement. No, she is in a place where lots and lots of men pass by, and in such a busy place she is more likely to snag some unsuspecting man to join her in bed. Did you notice that *the woman of folly* has chosen the same calling locations as Wisdom? There is a glaring difference though. Wisdom calls all men, the good and the not so good to come to her, whereas the woman of folly calls men *who are making their paths straight*. What does this mean? It means that she is calling to men who are relatively good men, hard workers, faithful to their wives, etc. She wants to seduce them into joining her in her sinful trade. Satan always has a desire to entice good men to fall into sin. I have heard that every year a numbers of ministers end up getting involved in an adulterous relationship. Our own former pastor is one of them.

3) Her call (verses 16-18)

¹⁶ *"Whoever is naive, let him turn in here," and to him who lacks understanding she says,* ¹⁷ *"Stolen water is sweet; and bread eaten in secret is pleasant."* ¹⁸ *But he does not know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol.*

Alright, we know what kind of woman she is, but what does she do? Well, she has acquired a house in the most visible place in town (*the high places of the city*). She sits on the porch by the door of her house parading the merchandise (her body) waiting for some naive man to come along and offer to pay to have sex with her. She doesn't sit there quietly either. She is obviously a prostitute because verse 15 tells us that she is actively *calling to those who pass by*. She isn't saying a greeting like, "How are you. I hope you have a good day." No, it is more like, "I'm available. Do you want to come in and join me for some sexual pleasures?" The biggest problem here is not that she is calling immoral men to join her. No, as we said above she is calling those *who are making their paths straight*. In other words, she is enticing good, moral men to abandon their moral manner of living and join her in forbidden sexual pleasures. Her goal, although she doesn't realize it, is to take good men down into the depths of sin with her.

Now, what does she say in her attempt to persuade good men to abandon their morals and jump in bed with her? She says to *naïve* men, *"turn in here."* In other words, "This is a really pleasurable opportunity for you. Come with me, and we will enjoy some good sex. Don't worry about anything else right now. Just enjoy yourself because I really want you." She also tells men who *lack understanding* that *"Stolen water is sweet; and bread eaten in secret is pleasant."* In other words, stealing sex with a prostitute or another man's wife is an exhilarating experience (*is sweet*), and doing it in secret increases the passion and excitement of the event (*is pleasant*).

Now, from a purely physical standpoint, enjoying sexual relations with another man's wife would be a thrilling experience at the moment. It is exhilarating and exciting, otherwise men would not do it. But when the deed is done and the emotions of guilt and remorse are added to the mix, it isn't so good after all. Why is it not so good? Because a man who joins her in sexual pleasures is already a dead man. He just doesn't know it yet. Verse 18 tells us, *"But he does not know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol."* Do they really die? You betcha. I saw firsthand how an adulterous relationship takes its toll on a man. I watched my dad become a ruined man. His relationship with the LORD died, his relationship to his wife died, his relationship to my sisters, my brother and me was irreversibly damaged, and his peace and contentment vanished. All that was left for him was loneliness and regret until he went to the grave. Prov. 7:24-27 sums it up pretty well when it says, ²⁴ *Now therefore, my sons, listen to me, and pay attention to the words of my mouth.* ²⁵ *Do not let your heart turn aside to her* (the adulterous woman) *ways, do not stray into her paths.* ²⁶ *For many are the victims she has cast down, and numerous are all her slain.* ²⁷ *Her house is the way to Sheol, descending to the chambers of death.*" (Grayed text added for clarity). This is the principle of sow and reap in action. On the following page you will find a text layout of this paragraph.

¹³ The **WOMAN OF FOLLY**

is BOISTEROUS,
she is NAIVE,
and KNOWS NOTHING.

¹⁴ She sits at the doorway of her house,
on a seat by **THE HIGH PLACES OF THE CITY**,
¹⁵ **CALLING** to those who pass by,
who are making their paths straight:

¹⁶ "Whoever is **NAIVE**, let him turn in here,"

¹⁷ And to him who lacks **UNDERSTANDING** she says,

¹⁷ **STOLEN** water is sweet; and
bread eaten in **SECRET** is pleasant."

¹⁸ But he **DOES NOT KNOW**
that the **DEAD** are there,
that her **GUESTS** are in the depths of Sheol.

At this point, I invite you to locate the two sheets you printed at the beginning of this chapter of the commentary. Place them side-by-side where the horizontal lines mate with the other page. It should look something like the illustration below.

Notice in paragraph one, (9:1-6), wisdom offers herself to anyone who will search for her. If you engage in a search for her you **will** find her. When you do, you will find that she is fully prepared to help you gain all of the trustworthy knowledge, sound understanding, accurate insight, and good discernment you will need to successfully navigate all of life's trials and opportunities. She has already made the necessary preparations for you to succeed. All you have to do is come to Christ in salvation, practice the fear of the LORD by abandoning every sinful practice, and then feast at wisdom's table (the Word of God) where you will gain all of the guidance you will need to make the best decisions that will produce the best results in every area of life and practice.

In paragraph three, (9:13-18), physical pleasures await the man who chooses to live for this world and all of the pleasures it has to offer. It is all that the worldly man understands. He certainly cannot understand spiritual things until or unless he is born again by faith in Jesus Christ. Since wisdom is spiritual in nature, it doesn't make sense for a worldly man to base his life on anything other than what he can see, hear, touch, or sense in some physical form. It is not uncommon for worldly people to adopt the attitude that "If it feels good, do it!" This is the way a man of the world sees life.

It is interesting to note how a typical unsaved man sees pursuing the things the world as the best option. His eyes are blinded to the truth. Since that is the case, Satan flaunts the world and all it has to offer as a much better option than pursuing the Lord and spiritual things.

How to live Proverbs chapter nine

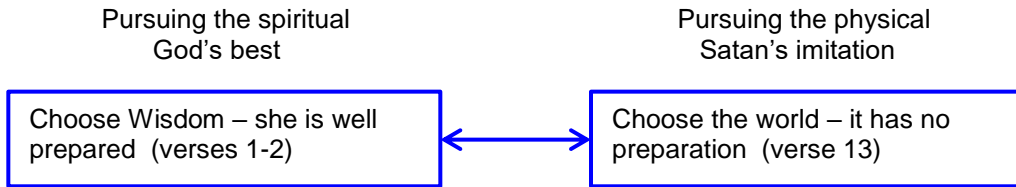
Step three of the four steps to learning and living the book of Proverbs is to "receive" instruction in wise behavior, righteousness, justice and equity. As we saw in our discussion of Prov. 1:1-6 (chapter three of this commentary), to "receive" is to put what we have learned into practice by living it. As we do, we will enjoy the blessings that result, and we will not have to experience the hurts and heartaches sinners endure as a result of their sinful practices. With these thoughts in mind, let's see how these two paragraphs of chapter nine compare and how we can live what they teach.

As we said, paragraphs one and three present two choices that are diametrically opposed to each other. Obviously, one is a better choice than the other, and we need to choose which one we will follow. These are not merely choices based upon what we will do or avoid, but they are approaches to life as a whole. We can choose to live for this life and leave God out (paragraph 3—Satan's imitation), or we can pursue the LORD and the spiritual things that will benefit us in this life and the life to come (paragraph 1—God's best). If we don't consciously choose God's best, then by default, we have chosen Satan's imitation. In chapters 1-8 of Proverbs, we learned what wisdom is and how we can obtain her. Now Solomon concludes this section of Proverbs (chapters 1-9) by giving us one more opportunity to decide which we will pursue. I hope, based upon all that I have taught you up until now, that you will choose to pursue wisdom and leave the world behind. It is indeed the best, most productive, and most satisfying approach to life, and it is certainly the best way to prepare for the life to come.

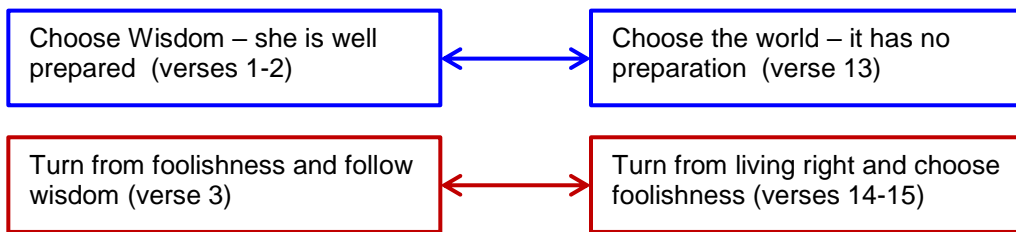
Assuming you choose God's best and pursue wisdom, you will be blessed, and you will avoid the hurts and losses ungodly men experience as a result of their sinful practices. Take a few moments and study the combined text layout on the following page, and you will see how much "Satan's Imitation" looks like "God's Best." A born-again child of God who has a biblical fear of the LORD will see right away how choosing God's Best is indeed the best choice.

At this point, I invite you to locate the two sheets you printed at the beginning of this chapter of the commentary. Place them side-by-side where the horizontal lines mate with the other page. The chart I am going to build will be the same structure as the two pages you are holding in your hands. Consider the following:

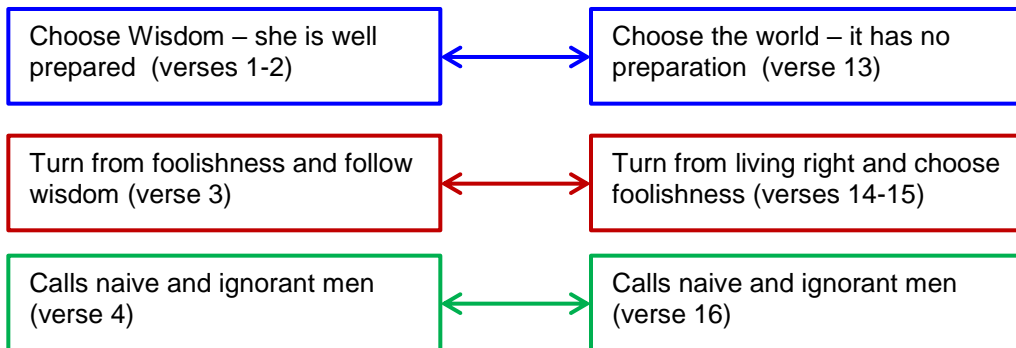
Wisdom (verses 1-2) is fully prepared and ready to provide good decisions in life. This is the best decision. Worldly pleasures (verse 13) let whatever happens happen with no planning or reasoning. This is the worst decision.



Wisdom calls (verse 3) all people to choose her and abandon the foolish things they do. This is a good decision. Worldly pleasures and possessions (verses 14-15) call good people to engage in perversion. This is a disastrous decision.

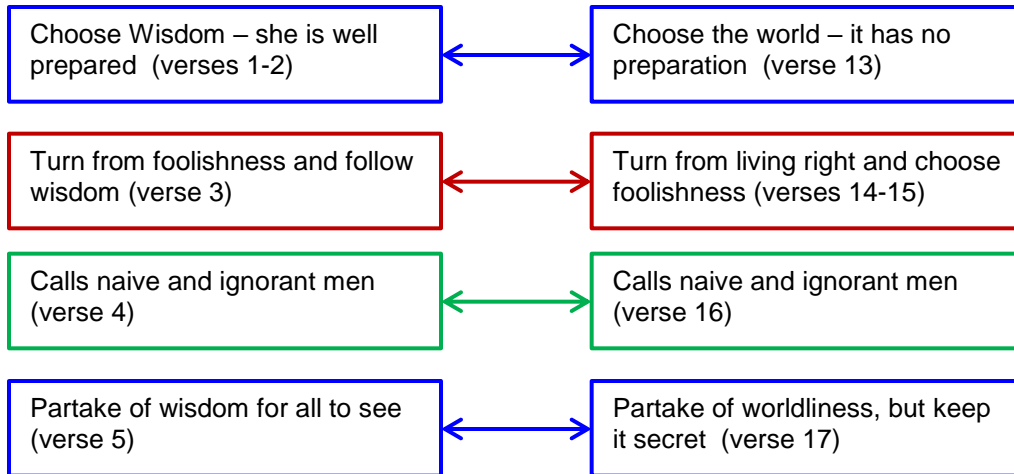


Wisdom (verse 4) calls naive and ignorant people to come unto her. The world system (verses 16 and 17a) calls the same people.

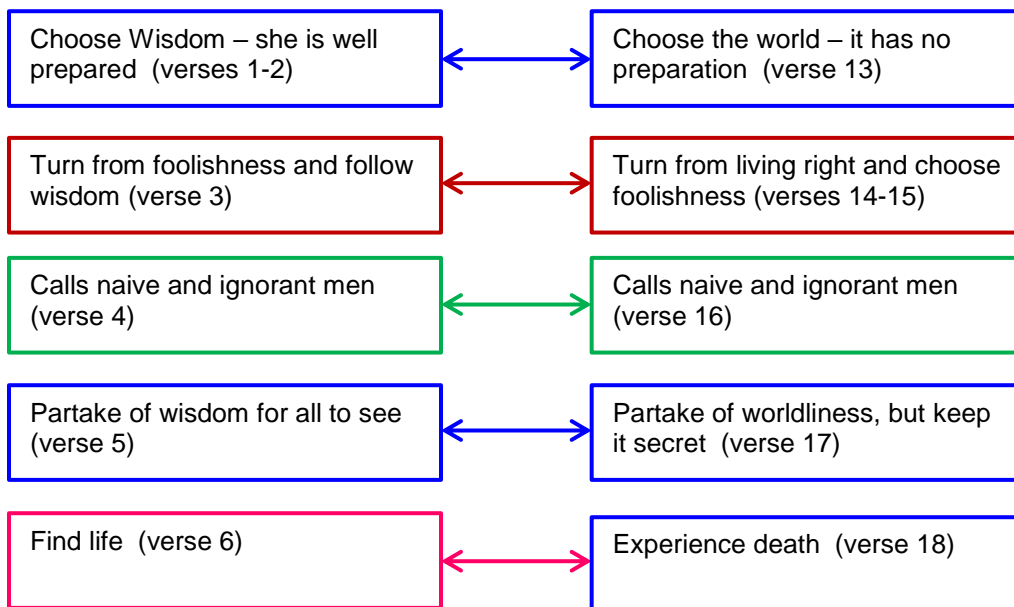


See the following page.

Wisdom (verse 5) offers good discretion and understanding for all to see. The world (verse 17b) offers illicit pleasures that must be kept secret. They must be kept in secret because they are perverted.



Choosing wisdom (verse 6) generates real life. Choosing to follow the world (verse 18) generates a premature death.



Having examined both paragraphs, let's see how much they are the same and how much they are different.

1) In verses 1 and 2, Wisdom is fully prepared to help those who come to her, while in verse 13, the woman of folly has no preparation whatsoever. She is merely following the natural passions of this world.

2) In verse 3, wisdom is calling men and women from the high places of the city where anyone can find her if they are searching for her as explained in Proverbs chapter two. In verses 14 and 15, the woman of folly is offering herself in the same locations as Wisdom, but whereas Wisdom is calling all men to sit at her table, the woman of folly is seeking otherwise moral men to join her in bed.

3) In verse 4, Wisdom is looking for naive men who are lacking understanding. She wants to help them become good and godly people. Notice in verse 16 that the woman of folly also seeks naive men who are lacking understanding. Her offer is to satisfy their fleshly desires whereas Wisdom's offer will satisfy the flesh as a result of satisfying the spirit.

4) Now we come to the meat of each offer. In verse 5, Wisdom offers a banquet of trustworthy knowledge, sound understanding, accurate insight, and good discretion, all of which are waiting for the one who desires to eat her food. In verse 6, Wisdom guarantees that if you will feast at her banquet, the result will be a long, full, and blessed life. On the contrary, in verse 17, the woman of folly offers stolen property knowing that there is indeed pleasure in sexual intercourse. The reason their episode must be kept secret is because going to bed with her is literally stealing the woman from her husband. Now in verse 18, we see her ignorance of the fact that she and her partner are destined for hurts, heartaches, and losses in abundance followed by a premature death.

OK. We have examined both paragraphs and compared their preparation, their location, their call, and their offer. What can we deduce from all of this? It is simply this: seeking the world and all it has to offer is a cheap imitation compared to the blessings and security found in pursuing God and the wisdom He wants to give us. The wise man, Solomon, was an otherwise good man, but he found out too late that following Satan's imitation does not satisfy in the end. In fact, he was totally devastated. Now, if a wise man like Solomon can fall for the imitation, how much more careful must we be that we don't follow in his footsteps? Guard yourself by regularly searching the Scriptures. Meditate upon what you learn, and then put it into practice in your life. Recognize the world's allure and reject it. This is the way to find peace and live a good and godly life.

Ezekiel 22 gives a vivid picture of the results of following the world. The people were engaged in physical and spiritual adultery. They worshipped pagan gods. Ezekiel painted an accurate picture of what the people of his day were doing and said that punishment was coming to cleanse the land of such pollution. In time, that is exactly what happened. God incited a pagan nation to come in and destroy Jerusalem.

I would like to give you several examples. There are many more, but these few should be enough to paint an accurate picture of the problems that result from following the world and the blessings that result from seeking the LORD and wisdom. In these examples I am going to assume that you are willing to study and meditate upon the Scriptures so that you can acquire wisdom—God's best.

Examples

1) Spiritual things

God's best

A wise man will approach life with a view toward the hereafter. Therefore, he will do and say things that are consistent with his profession of faith and will choose those things that will be of benefit later in life instead of merely enjoying the pleasures of today without regard for the future. This is a good decision with excellent results.

Satan's imitation

Most men and women are only concerned about what they can get out of life today. They chase after money or pleasures instead of doing things that are eternally productive. Many are immoral and/or dishonest. They may simply let what happens happen without trying to make good and productive choices happen in their life. This is a poor decision with potentially disastrous results.

2) Morals and purity

God's best

A wise man knows that moral purity and striving to avoid or abandon every sinful practice is the only way to enjoy sweet fellowship with the Father and experience a life free from the hurts and heartaches sinners must endure as a result of their sinful practices. He will stay a virgin until he marries, and when he marries, he will be faithful to his wife as long as he lives. This is a good decision with excellent results.

Satan's imitation

Many worldly men are engrossed in pornography or watching immoral movies. As a result, they will be adversely affected by the worldly values these things teach. Many men will commit adultery thinking they can get away with it. Since they do not have biblical morals, many men and women today choose to live together to find out if they are compatible. Of course, this is nothing more than sexual immorality. These are poor decisions with potentially disastrous results.

3) Possessions

God's best

A wise man will be content with what the LORD has given him and come to deeply believe that the LORD will indeed provide all that he will need in life. This does not mean that he should not strive to better himself or acquire a better paying job if one becomes available, but he will not pour all of his energies into becoming wealthy. In fact, a wise, godly man will be generous with those in need instead of hoarding money for himself. These are good decisions with excellent results.

Satan's imitation

Many worldly men will make getting rich their driving goal in life. Some will pour all of their energies into this pursuit, and some will use and/or abuse others in order to get what they want. Unfortunately, once a man becomes rich, he discovers that his money, his bigger house, and his elevated position do not generate the happiness and contentment he hoped to find. This is a poor decision with potentially disastrous results.

4) The future

God's best

A wise man will plan for the future and sacrifice today in order to be better off later in life. He knows that hard work and diligence always pay off in the long run, and he realizes that short cuts don't generate long-term security. This is a good decision with excellent results.

Satan's imitation

Many worldly men and women simply want to enjoy life, so they adopt the attitude that life is one big party. They will spend all they have on pleasures today and will not save for the future. Even worse, many will walk into bondage by getting so heavily into debt that they cannot see their way out. Some will get involved with some get-rich-quick scheme only to find that it does not produce the riches they were promised. These are a poor decisions with potentially disastrous results.

5) Education

God's best

A wise parent will direct his son or daughter to a school that teaches biblical values instead of sending them to a school where the teachers belittle Christian students and try to destroy their faith. A good school will not only teach the student a trade, but it will also teach them how to live so that their life will count for eternity. This is a good decision with excellent results.

Satan's imitation

Worldly men and women as a whole are only concerned about learning a trade so that they can make a lot of money, but they do not learn how to live. They have swallowed the lie of evolution, and as a result, they live without regard to the Creator or where they will go after they die. This kind of approach will cause them to reject Christ because they do not see faith in the LORD as consistent with so-called science. These are poor decisions with potentially disastrous results.

6) Companions

God's best

A wise man will choose wise companions. Prov. 13:20 teaches that, *“He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.”* He will avoid close friendships with worldly or ungodly men because he does not want to be hindered in his spiritual walk by their detrimental influence. He will instead choose good and godly men as his closest companions. This is a good decision with excellent results.

Satan's imitation

A worldly man seeks friends like him and is more easily swayed by peer pressure than a wise man. This man is likely to avoid someone who tries to live godly. In fact, he is likely to ridicule the godly man. This is a poor decision with potentially disastrous results.

These are but a few examples of the mindset and actions of both the wise man and the worldly man. What Solomon was trying to get us to see is that we need to pursue wisdom by studying and meditating upon the Scriptures (Prov. 2). Once we discern a fear of the LORD, we will discover more and more about who God is, what He is, and how He works in the affairs of men. The more we learn about Him, the more confidence we will have in Him and the benefits of living a good and godly life. As we study and meditate upon the Scriptures, we will continue to gain more trustworthy knowledge which will generate more and more sound understanding which will result in more and more insight which will give us better and better discernment. At this point, the LORD will give us the wisdom to use our discernment to make the best decisions that will produce the best results in every area of life and practice. As we continue our search for wisdom, we will learn more and better ways to live a good and godly life while avoiding or abandoning ever sinful practice. In reality, the only choice worth pursuing is wisdom. This is the essence of what Solomon was trying to get across to his son in chapters 1-9 of Proverbs. Now let's look at paragraph two (verses 7-12).

Part 3 – Response to rebuke (Proverbs 9:7-12)

⁷ He who corrects a scoffer gets dishonor for himself, and he who reproveth a wicked man gets insults for himself. ⁸ Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you, reprove a wise man and he will love you. ⁹ Give instruction to a wise man and he will be still wiser, teach a righteous man and he will increase his learning. ¹⁰ The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. ¹¹ For by me your days will be multiplied, and years of life will be added to you. ¹² If you are wise, you are wise for yourself, and if you scoff, you alone will bear it.

Now we come to the middle paragraph of Proverbs chapter nine. For the longest time I could not understand why Solomon put this paragraph between two beautiful parallel passages. It simply didn't seem to fit. I wondered about this paragraph for years before its truth finally dawned on me. When I saw what it was teaching and how it so neatly fit into the overall logic of the chapter, it was like *apples of gold in settings of silver* (Prov. 25:11). In a nutshell, paragraph 2 (verses 7-12) is saying something like this: “I will know your attitude toward God and life by how you respond to rebuke or correction.” This is true because a wise man and a scoffer respond in a drastically different manner.

1) The response of a scoffer or a wicked man (verses 7-8a)

⁷ He who corrects a scoffer gets dishonor for himself, and he who reproveth a wicked man gets insults for himself. ^{8a} Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you.

As you study the chapter, it will soon become clear that a man who rejects or neglects God's Word in order to pursue worldly pleasures and/or possessions (Satan's imitation), is a scoffer of the Word of God. Many men who choose this worldly path are wicked men as well. Some worldly men try to be good and moral, but even at their best, they are sinners and engage in actions and attitudes that are opposed to what the Bible teaches. What is a *scoffer*? He is one who *ridicules and belittles the Bible and those who try to live godly*. He has no use for God, and he is convinced that his way is right. In verse 7, the word *corrects* is the same Hebrew word as *instruction* in Prov.

1:8. We will briefly review what we said in that chapter. Strong's defines *instruction* as [discipline](#), [chastening](#), [correction](#). The dictionary defines these three words. [Discipline](#) is training that develops self-control, character, or orderliness and efficiency; [Chastening](#) is to punish in order to correct or make better; and [correction](#) produces a change that corrects a mistake; change from wrong to right, or from abnormal to normal. So then, *correction's* goal is to 1) train young men so that they will have more self-control and character, 2) punish young men so that they will become better people, or 3) correct young men so that they will abandon sinful practices and choose to do good things instead. It is obvious that all three aspects of instruction are designed to benefit a son even though it may be painful when they are applied. So then, *correction* involves "teaching, correcting, or punishing someone for the purpose of correcting a fault or making him a better person."

As you will remember, when we discussed Prov. 1:20-33, we saw what happens when a man rejects wisdom. One of the things that stands out to me in that passage is verses 28-31. It states, "*Then they (a fool or a scoffer) will call on me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but they will not find me, because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD. They would not accept my counsel, they spurned all my reproof. So they shall eat of the fruit of their own way and be satiated with their own devices.*" (gray text added for clarity). You see, a worldly man who looks down on the Bible and those who try to live godly is not willing to accept rebuke whether it be from a wise man or from the Word of God. So then, if you try to *correct a scoffer* hoping he will see the error of his ways and choose wisdom, you will *dishonor yourself* in his eyes. Yes, he will look down upon you as some stupid fool trying to peddle "pie in the sky by and by." He will steadfastly refuse to have any part of what you try to tell him. In fact, verse 8a tells us that if you *reprove* him, *he will hate you* for trying to call him down. Reproving is like correcting, but it is more harsh than merely instructing him in the truth. If you were to reprove a wicked man (verse 7b), he will curse you to your face with all sorts of insults. It seems clear then that correcting or reproving such a man is not a good idea, but this is not the important element of these two verses. What is important is how such people respond. When someone tries to correct him, they become defensive and lash out at the one correcting them. They do this because they feel they have a right to do whatever they please, and no one is going to tell them differently.

2) The response of a wise man and a righteous man (verses 8b 9)

^{8b} *reprove a wise man and he will love you.* ⁹ *Give instruction to a wise man and he will be still wiser, teach a righteous man and he will increase his learning.*

If you will notice, the scoffer and the wicked man in the previous two verses were vocally defensive when approached about their undesirable or sinful actions and attitudes. This is not the case for a truly wise man. His normal manner of living is to do good and avoid evil, but even he may need to learn more that will help him recognize and avoid something he has done that needs to be corrected. In verse 8b, we see a wise man's good response after being called down (reproved) for something. Notice how he appreciates the other person's help and insight even though it may actually be painful and uncomfortable to be corrected. A wise man will appreciate the help, and he *will love* the person who helped him because he realizes that if this man failed to show him his deficiency, he may never know that he is doing something wrong. The key here is that a wise man appreciates being taught because as verse 9a tells us, *he will be still wiser* in the end. This is what a wise man always wants to do—gain more wisdom. Even a rebuke is instruction to a wise man because he takes it to heart and is ready to correct his deficiency. It is not surprising then that a wise man will respond this way because he is the exact opposite of a scoffer. We call this an inverse parallel.

Verse 9b now switches to a righteous man. As we said, he is the opposite of a wicked man. Whereas a wicked man does evil, a righteous man does what is good and right. This half of the verse closely parallels the first half, and in both cases, when he is taught he will gain more knowledge and understanding. It doesn't mention the righteous man's direct response, but he does take the teaching to heart and learns. So then, a wise man or a righteous man always responds positively when you confront him about something he needs to learn or needs to correct. He knows that even though being corrected can be unpleasant, the benefits of gaining more knowledge or wisdom far outweigh any discomfort that comes from being corrected.

3) The benefit or loss as a result of your approach to life (verses 10-12)

¹⁰ *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.* ¹¹ *For by me your days will be multiplied, and years of life will be added to you.* ¹² *If you are wise, you are wise for yourself, and if you scoff, you alone will bear it.*

All of the commentators I have read agree that Prov. 9:10 is the key verse for the book. It reads, *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom."* In Prov. 1:7a, we read, *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge."* Why does one verse use wisdom and the other knowledge? Prov. 1:7 is at the beginning of the book and sets the stage for the reader to learn wisdom. Prov. 9:10 is at the end of the sequential section and confirms what the reader should have already learned to that point. Hopefully, by now you should understand that a fear of the LORD is gained through a passive, an active, and a continual search of the Scriptures. Once you discern (figure out) what a fear of the LORD is and how to live it, you will start gaining more and more knowledge about who God is, what He is, and how He works in the affairs of men. This is *understanding* (verse 10b). The more you learn about Him, the more you will understand what He expects of you and what He wants to accomplish in and through you. Such knowledge and understanding are what fuel wisdom. That is why verse 11 says that wisdom (*by me*) will enable you to live a long and productive life.

In verse 12, Solomon clearly states the benefits and/or detriments of your choice, depending on whether you choose God's best or Satan's imitation. He simply wrote that if you are wise, *you are wise for yourself*. That's right. You are the primary beneficiary of the blessings that come from being wise. Others will receive secondary blessings from your wise behavior, but the best will go to you directly. The same is true for the scoffer. When he belittles and ridicules the Bible and those who try to live godly, he is the one who receives the punishment and shame. Our verse says of him that *you alone will bear it*. His family and close friends will be hurt incidentally along with him, but he is the primary recipient of the consequences of his sinful actions and attitude.

Conclusion

Gregory,

We saw in paragraph one that wisdom is accessible to anyone who will search for her through a passive, an active, and a continual search. When you do this, you will find wisdom. We also saw in paragraph three that sin makes itself available to you as well. In Genesis 4:6-7, Cain had offered an unacceptable sacrifice, and God confronted him about the sinful deed. That text reads, *Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it."* In fact, he was so angry that he killed his brother. Sin is indeed sitting at the door of her house in the high places of the city calling you and me to join in on the fun, but we must master our own passions and desires. Wisdom does exactly that.

It is evident from Proverbs chapter nine that you and I have two choices. One is to pursue wisdom by searching the Scriptures so that we will know the LORD and learn to live a good and godly life. The other is to follow the world and pursue the pleasures this world has to offer only to find hurts, heartaches, and losses as a result. You will choose one or the other, and if you do not make a conscious choice, then you have chosen the world by default. The thing to keep in mind here is that I will know which one you have chosen by your response when you are rebuked or called down for something. It will be obvious. If you appreciate the help from another person, it will be apparent that you are a wise man, but if you become defensive and lash out at one who tries to correct you, it will be obvious that you are a scoffer of the Word of God and have chosen to follow the world.

With all that you have learned thus far, how will you choose? Will you start and/or maintain an in-depth study of the Word of God so that you can become a wise man and live a good and godly life to the glory of God, or will you brush God aside and follow the desires and passions of your heart to your own detriment? The choice is yours. No one can make it for you. Remember that if you choose wisdom, you will benefit greatly. Others will be blessed as a result of your good and godly life, but you will be the one who receives the greatest blessings and benefits. Remember, too, that if you choose to follow the world with all of its lusts, passions, and selfish desires, you will be the one who will have to endure the adverse consequences of your sinful lifestyle. Others will be hurt as a result of your sinful deeds, but you are the one who will receive the direct punishment for your sin. Which one you choose will be obvious to men of understanding even if you yourself cannot discern how others have chosen.

So, Gregory, choose well. Seriously consider choosing wisdom. Start studying and meditating upon the Scriptures so that you will figure out the fear of the LORD and learn more and more about the great God we serve. The more you learn, the better you will know your LORD. The better you know the LORD, the sweeter will be your fellowship with Him. Truly, choosing wisdom is the wisest choice you can make in life. If you haven't already done it, I pray you will choose wisdom today.

Proverbs 30

Agur rebukes his two sons

Gregory,

You are about to learn about one of the most fascinating chapters in all of Proverbs. At a casual glance, it appears to be a collection of disjointed paragraphs, but such is not the case. It contains eleven sequential paragraphs, and all of them go together to form a complete rebuke of two young men, lthiel and Ucal, by a man named Agur. Since all of the paragraphs go together to form a unit, you would miss some of the context and application by studying any one of them as a stand-alone verse or paragraph. The structure of the chapter is very interesting and quite complex. The first nine paragraphs form a grid dealing with wrong actions, wrong attitudes, and how to correct them. The last two paragraphs form Agur's conclusion. The content of the first nine paragraphs is as follows: In the first four paragraphs (verses 1-10), Agur confronted the boys about detrimental things he saw them doing; in paragraph five (verses 11-14), he showed them the root causes that generated those detrimental actions; and in paragraphs six through nine (verses 15-31), he showed them what they needed to understand about themselves and their manner of living in order to correct their undesirable ways. Finally, the last two paragraphs (verses 32-33), form the conclusion and add a plea to repent.

Study the chapter carefully because once you understand the logic behind Agur's approach and recognize what he tried to accomplish, you can use a similar approach with your own older children if it ever becomes necessary. Hopefully, you will train your children to love and fear the LORD, and if you are successful in doing so, you will never need to discipline your children the way Agur did.

Being a good parent is a difficult job at best, but the task becomes even harder when a child shows signs of rebellion. Loving parents never want to see their children heading for a lifestyle that will generate hurts and heartaches in abundance, but if a child does show signs of rebellion, a caring parent must find a way to help him see the error of his ways before it completely ruins his life. When a child is young, he can be disciplined as a child, and spanking may be an appropriate method. As he grows older, another approach must be used. One such approach is what Agur demonstrated in Proverbs chapter thirty.

Do you know someone who has a rebellious son? If so, this chapter can be of help. Come along with me as we examine a gentle, but effective, rebuke of two sons by what I believe to be their father. Apparently these young men were too old to be spanked, so Agur's approach in chapter thirty is his best attempt at disciplining and encouraging them by the use of sound logic with the hope that they would repent of their wickedness. If they listened carefully and took to heart what Agur shared with them, they had a perfect opportunity to turn their lives back around. We can only hope they did, but we simply don't know. The text doesn't say.

The logic in this chapter is so sophisticated that it may take several readings in order to understand it all. That's OK. Just take your time and study the chapter thoroughly. If you are unable to grasp it all the first time (and you most likely won't), then read it again and again until you do. Don't feel badly if you don't get it right away. It took me a long time to see it too. Once you grasp the chapter's structure and logic you will understand what Agur tried to accomplish with his sons. This type of approach will work with friends and co-workers as well as your children. Once again, take the time necessary to comprehend the depth of Agur's rebuke. It is indeed a beautiful chapter. Once you see the big picture, I feel sure that you will agree.

As I said, all of the chapter is a cohesive unit. Understanding this truth is foundational for learning what is being taught there. To take one verse or paragraph out of the chapter without understanding the context of the rest of the chapter will cause you to miss some of the meaning and application. For example, consider two paragraphs in the chapter. First, verses 18-20 tell us, *"There are three things which are too wonderful for me, four which I do not understand: The way of an eagle in the sky, the way of a serpent on a rock, the way of a ship in the middle of the sea, and the way of a man with a maid. This is the way of an adulterous woman: She eats and wipes her mouth, and says, 'I have done no wrong.'*" Now, what application can you draw from this passage if it were a stand-alone paragraph? Most of the people I have asked tell me that they see no application at all. Such a deduction would be a good one if the paragraph really were a stand-alone, but that is not the case. As you will see later, verses 18-20 illustrate a truth taught back in verse twelve. Since this is the case, the application comes from verse 12 and not from verses 18-20. All of this will become more clear as we progress through the chapter. Second, consider verses

24-28, *“Four things are small on the earth, But they are exceedingly wise: The ants are not a strong folk, but they prepare their food in the summer; the badgers are not mighty folk, yet they make their houses in the rocks; the locusts have no king, yet all of them go out in ranks; the lizard you may grasp with the hands, yet it is in kings’ palaces.”* Once again, what application can be drawn from this passage if it actually were a stand-alone paragraph? As was the case with the previous paragraph, almost everyone I have asked has told me that they see no application at all. Again, such a deduction would be a good one if the paragraph really was a stand-alone, but that is not the case here either. Both paragraphs shed light on other verses of the chapter and are illustrations of those individual verses. You will understand more as we discuss those paragraphs, and when we do you will see how nicely they fit in the overall logic of the chapter. Believe me, you will see. I promise.

There are eleven paragraphs in this chapter. Below is an outline of the chapter.

The surface indicators of rebellion—what he saw them doing.

- Paragraph one (vv. 1-4) – sons who thought they were smarter than dad.
- Paragraph two (vv. 5-6) – sons who thought they were more spiritual than others.
- Paragraph three (vv. 7-9) – sons who thought they were more deserving than others.
- Paragraph four (v. 10) – sons who were extremely critical of other people.

The root causes of their rebellion—why they did those things.

- Paragraph five
 - Verse 11 – a kind of man who disrespects his parents.
 - Verse 12 – a kind of man who cannot see himself as a sinner.
 - Verse 13 – a kind of man who is extremely proud and arrogant.
 - Verse 14 – a kind of man who will destroy people with his words.

What they couldn’t see—what they needed to understand in order to correct their rebellious ways.

- Paragraph six (vv. 15-17) – an illustration pointing back to verse eleven.
- Paragraph seven (vv. 18-20) – an illustration pointing back to verse twelve.
- Paragraph eight (vv. 21-23) – an illustration pointing back verse thirteen.
- Paragraph nine (vv. 24-28) – an illustration pointing back verse fourteen.

Conclusion:

Agur pleaded with them to **repent**—what they needed to do to get back on the right path.

- Paragraph ten (vv. 29-31) – boys, “Some things are stately, but you are not one of them.”
- Paragraph eleven (vv. 32-33) – an invitation to repent.

Tell me Gregory, how should a parent discipline a rebellious child when he is too old to be spanked? Is there a right and a wrong way to confront him in order to produce genuine repentance with lasting results? These are really hard questions. Even when a child comes of age and has moved out of the home, a parent still feels the responsibility to help him see the error of his ways. Disciplining an older, rebellious child the way Agur did will provide a strong potential for good results. I will be reiterating over and over again throughout the commentary that this chapter is a unit that comprises a complete rebuke of Ithiel and Ucal. All of the paragraphs in the chapter go together to form a unit. Keep this truth in mind as we proceed through the discussion of the chapter. Also keep in mind that these two boys appear to be young adults or at least in their late teens. Agur’s rebuke was designed especially for them and their needs, and by studying his rebuke, we can see and appreciate the sound logic he used in trying to convince these wayward boys to recognize their sin and repent.

Parents definitely have a responsibility to approach their wayward children and try to persuade them to repent. Remember, though, that once a child reaches young adulthood, it is much more difficult to discipline him in a manner that produces repentance. After all, when he is rebuked, it is up to the child to recognize the error of his ways and repent. Many his age think they know all they will ever need to know in order to get along in life, and as a result, they will reject the advice and concern of parents. Without repeating what has been written earlier in this commentary about the naïve and wise man, let me briefly review the different types of people and their responses to rebuke. A **wise man** will listen to discipline and learn from it, thus bringing about the desired change. A **naïve man** will simply go his own way because he cannot see the value of what you are trying to tell him. A **fool** has absolutely no desire to listen to you because he thinks that his knowledge on a given matter is all that he will ever need. His own opinion is all that is important to him, so if you disagree with him, he will argue the point. In the end, though, he will not change his mind. With these descriptions in mind, you should be able to tell which one of the three your son or daughter is by how he responds when you discipline him.

Agur's approach to Ithiel and Ucal was a good one and was very, very logical. First, he confronted them face to face about what they were doing wrong; second, he showed them why they were doing those detrimental things; third, he showed them what they needed to understand in order to correct their undesirable ways; and fourth, he made a plea for them to repent and start doing good. In each of the first three steps, Agur addressed four areas of conduct or attitude, and he presented them in the same order each time. These topics were: 1) disrespect for parental authority, 2) a distorted view of sin, 3) an extreme pride and arrogance, and 4) a critical attitude accompanied by destructive ways. Follow along as we enter into an absolutely beautiful presentation by a really wise man. As we examine Agur's rebuke, notice that the Scriptures do not say how these two boys reacted to their father's urging. We can only hope they responded in a positive manner and that they got right with their father and with the LORD.

During this discussion, you will see layouts of the Scripture. We will build them as we proceed. When reading them, keep in mind that they are intended to be read from left to right and from top to bottom just like you would a book. Reading them this way will sound exactly as it would if you were to read it directly from the New American Standard Bible. You would do well at this point to print the two text layouts of Proverbs 30 and have them in front of you as you proceed through this discussion. You will find them in the appendix.

Meet the players of the rebuke.

Verse 1 *"The words of Agur the son of Jakeh, the oracle. The man declares to Ithiel, to Ithiel and Ucal:"*

Agur – the dad

Who was this man Agur? Well, after reading many commentaries, it is certain that no one knows for sure. For the purpose of our discussion, it really doesn't matter. Therefore, I'll leave his identity to much more capable men to determine. What is important is that he was a wise father, and he was deeply concerned about the future and welfare of his sons. The presentation he gave to his sons was an *oracle* and was loaded with wisdom and insight. The dictionary defines the word *oracle* as *a person giving wise or authoritative decisions or opinions*. Lemuel's mother in Proverbs 31 used the same Hebrew word. There the King James translates the word as *prophecy*. The idea here is that both Agur and Lemuel's mother were sharing a deep burden for their children. They didn't want their kids to ruin their lives.

As you study this chapter, you will certainly agree that Agur was very wise, and his insight into what his sons needed to know in order to correct their destructive ways was very good. If you are observant, by the end of this chapter, you will see what I saw several years ago. What did I see? It was that Agur is the actual father of both Ithiel and Ucal. You may disagree, and that's fine. I would not argue the point with you, but every time I examine the logic of this chapter, I am driven to the same conclusion all over again. For the sake of this discussion, please think of him that way. It will enable this discussion to make much more sense, and the pieces of the puzzle will fit together very nicely. Please be so kind as to reserve judgment on this until the end of the chapter because once you understand the logic of the chapter, I believe you will agree with me.

Ithiel and Ucal – the sons

Ithiel and Ucal were the two young men being rebuked in the chapter. According to Strong's Concordance, *Ithiel* means *God is with me*, and *Ucal* means *devoured*. I assume that Ithiel is the older brother since his name was

mentioned first. The circumstances surrounding his birth must have been good judging by the name Agur gave him. Oh, but something must have gone drastically wrong when Ucal was born because who would purposely name a son “devoured” unless he was going through some severe trial and was discouraged at the time?

Agur addressed his rebuke primarily to Ithiel. Apparently he was the son who was the rebel and well established in his defiance, but Ucal was also included in the rebuke. There are two possible scenarios here. First, it could be that Ucal, being the younger son, was still a good boy but was being adversely influenced by his older, rebellious brother. If such were the case, Agur would have wanted him to be there to hear what was being said to Ithiel. At least Ucal would have had the opportunity to recognize the value of Agur’s words, see the error of Ithiel’s ways, and decide not to follow his older brother’s destructive attitudes and actions. It is always easier to work at saving a child from becoming a rebel than to try to salvage him after he has become one.

The second possibility is that Ucal had already chosen to follow Ithiel and had become as much of a rebel as his older brother. If that were the case, Agur would certainly have wanted to include Ucal in his rebuke. Although Agur included Ucal, it is not generally a good idea to rebuke more than one child at a time. When you rebuke your son(s), or anyone else for that matter, be sure that the only ones included in the rebuke are those who are either part of the problem or part of the solution. It is unwise to involve anyone else because they have no business hearing or knowing about either the problem or the person. It does nothing to help solve the problem.

These three people, then, are the players in this short drama of life. This scenario could have happened to anyone, but God chose these three men. Read on now and see a beautiful presentation of wisdom and allow Agur’s insight to unfold before your eyes. Understand it well, because you just might need the same insight and wisdom with your children someday.

The key to understanding the chapter – verse 13

Agur had good reason to rebuke Ithiel and Ucal. They were proud, ungrateful, disrespectful, and critical young men. As you will see, the root cause of their rebellion was pride. We will examine verses 11-14 individually, but it is important to look at verse thirteen first because it is what drives the boys’ attitudes and actions throughout the chapter. The text of the verse states, *“There is a kind (of man) — oh how lofty are his eyes! and his eyelids are raised in arrogance”* (Grayed text added for clarity). The King James states it as, *“There is a generation, O how lofty are their eyes! and their eyelids are lifted up.”* The two versions are saying essentially the same thing. This type of man is proud and arrogant. He is one who would look down his nose at you when you come around him because he thinks he is so much better than you or anyone else for that matter. He sees himself as the “cat’s meow,” as we used to say. He really thinks he is something special. According to Strong’s, the word “lofty” means *to be high, be set on high, to exalt oneself, or to magnify oneself*. Son, I am sure you have met people like this. They walk around with their nose in the air because they think they are better than those around them. I suspect you have also experienced the feeling that they thought they were so much better than you and that you weren’t worthy to be in their presence. I know I have experienced such a display of pride. I couldn’t wait to get away from such a jerk. I suspect you have also seen someone whose *“eyelids are raised in arrogance.”* When you say something to them or try to explain yourself, they simply look at you like you were stupid for coming up with something like that. Not only is this person proud, but he thinks he is right all of the time. Have you ever been in a situation where someone looked at you and kind of cocked his head to the side and raised his eyebrows? In doing so, he was communicating to you something like this without saying a word: “Who do you think you are trying to explain something to me? Get lost! Don’t you know how important I am?” I used to see this on a regular basis because there was one guy at work who acted that way. I really felt sorry for the guy because not only was he proud, but he seemed so extremely distant from the people around him.

Let’s face it, there are proud people in this world, and we must interact with them in some way or another. What do we know about proud people? Proverbs tells us a lot about them. If you will remember, the introduction to this work discussed Prov. 26:12, *“Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.”* As I explained there, humanly speaking, there is no hope of the proud man becoming humble since there is no hope of a fool becoming wise. It takes a change of heart when a person is truly born again to transform such a hard, stony heart. The LORD can certainly do it, but it cannot be done any other way. At this point in our study of Proverbs chapter 30, let’s take a rabbit trail and look at all of the verses in Proverbs that talk about pride.

What does Proverbs have to say about pride and arrogance?

1) God hates pride. Prov. 6:16-19 state, *“¹⁶There are six things which the LORD hates, yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: ¹⁷Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, ¹⁸a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that run rapidly to evil, ¹⁹a false witness who utters lies, and one who spreads strife among brothers.”* Notice that pride (haughty eyes) is the first thing on His list, and as such, it is certainly the most severe in God’s eyes. Prov. 16:5 states, *“Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD; assuredly, he will not be unpunished.”* Since God always keeps His promises, the proud man can bank on being punished at some point during his life. One way or another it will happen. Prov. 8:13 tells us that *“The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverted mouth, I (wisdom) hate”* (Grayed text added for clarity). The fear of the LORD was discussed in depth in the commentary on Prov. 1:7, but if God and wisdom hate pride. We should too.

2) Pride is sin. Prov. 21:4 tells us that, *“Haughty eyes and a proud heart, the lamp of the wicked, is sin.”* There is simply no other way to put it than to say that God sees pride as sin. The problem with pride is that the proud person doesn’t realize his problem, and he cannot see the need to confess and forsake it. His life is indeed a downward spiral unless, by God’s mercy, he finds Christ as LORD and Savior and is truly born again.

3) Pride generates dishonor. Prov. 11:2 reads, *“When pride comes, then comes dishonor, but with the humble is wisdom.”* Men or women who do something notable rightfully deserve to receive honor for their achievements, but a proud man is just the opposite. He does things notable, but they are notably objectionable. No one likes or appreciates being in the company of one who is so proud that no one is good enough for him. As a result, others look down at the proud man since he has distanced himself from everyone else around him.

4) The proud man is insolent. The dictionary defines *“insolence”* as *to be insultingly contemptuous in speech or conduct.* This kind of guy is a real pain in the neck, and nobody wants to be around him for long. Prov. 13:10 states, *“Through insolence comes nothing but strife, but wisdom is with those who receive counsel.”* Prov. 28:25 also states, *“An arrogant man stirs up strife, but he who trusts in the LORD will prosper.”* The humble man can get along with almost anyone, but he cannot satisfy a proud man because the proud man must always have his own way. If he doesn’t get it, there will be arguing and fighting until he does. Prov. 21:24 states, *“Proud,” “Haughty,” “Scoffer,” are his names, who acts with insolent pride.”* Once the proud man treats enough people with insults and contempt, his reputation will become well-known in the community. Folks will know to avoid him, and they will recognize that he is belligerent and scoffs at those he feels are not worthy of his presence.

5) Disaster awaits him in the end. Prov. 16:18 states, *“Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling.”* Pride and arrogance are the stepping stones to disaster. I remember a time when I bragged about how well I could shoot a friend’s handgun. Then one day in competition, I did so poorly that I was embarrassed. It would have been one thing to shoot the competition and do poorly attributing my lack of skill to merely “having a bad day,” but having bragged about how well I could shoot only gave others a good reason to say something like this: “Look at that guy. He shot his mouth off telling us how good he was, and he didn’t do any better than the rest of us. What a jerk!” It hurts when we brag about something and then have to eat our words. Prov. 29:23 tells us, *“A man’s pride will bring him low, but a humble spirit will obtain honor.”* You see, if I had kept my mouth shut about how well I could shoot and then did poorly, no one would say anything about it. But bragging about it did indeed bring me low. I was so embarrassed. If a man persists in bragging about how good he is or how well he can do certain things, then at some point in time, the LORD will knock the props out from under him. Prov. 15:25 states, *“The LORD will tear down the house of the proud, but He will establish the boundary of the widow.”* The LORD will only let a man continue in pride for so long, and then He will lower the boom on him. Yes, at some point or other, the LORD will allow the consequences of an unrepentant man’s actions to come crashing down upon his own head. When it happens, the result is complete disaster.

6) It is best to avoid the proud man. Prov. 16:19 states, *“It is better to be humble in spirit with the lowly than to divide the spoil with the proud.”* It seems so right when we are in the presence of a truly humble man, but it seems so wrong when we are in the presence of a proud man. As far as he is concerned, you and I are simply not good enough for him, we are not as able as him, and we are not as knowledgeable as him. In short, we do not belong. We are simply not in his class, that is, as far as he sees it. Therefore, the best thing you and I can do is to simply avoid keeping company with proud men or women. Simply let them go their own way, and we will go ours. It is the

best course of action. Keep in mind, though, that you and I cannot change a proud man, because as I said before, Prov. 26:12 states, *“Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.”* Since there is no hope for a fool, there is no hope for the proud man to change. Only the saving grace of the LORD Jesus Christ can change a hard heart like his.

Having seen the key verse of the chapter, let's get into the meat of the discussion. When Agur rebuked Ithiel and Ucal, he first confronted them about what he saw them doing (the surface indicators). Next he showed them the heart attitude (the root causes) of why they acted and thought like they did. Then he showed them what they needed to understand in order to correct their undesirable ways. Finally, he invited them to repent. We will go through the chapter in the same order as he presented to his sons.

Section one—the surface indicators (paragraphs 1-4)

Throughout Proverbs chapter thirty, Agur attempted to show his sons the error of their ways and what the end result of their actions would be. In the first four paragraphs he confronted them about the surface indicators of rebellion—what he saw them doing wrong. These were the things that everyone else could see too. Since we have already discussed who Agur and the boys were, we won't repeat it again here.

Paragraph one – Parental disrespect: sons who grew up to think they were smarter than dad.

Verses 2-3 *“(Agur said) Surely I am more stupid than any man, and I do not have the understanding of a man. Neither have I learned wisdom, nor do I have the knowledge of the Holy One.”*

As we examine the text, it is important to understand that Ithiel and Ucal were not young children. They were young men, probably in their late teens or early twenties. They were at the stage in their lives where they thought they were much smarter than their dad, and they were very vocal about it. They thought they knew everything, and no one could tell them differently. Agur understood their attitude completely. He knew that as a result of their actions and attitudes, they were on a collision course with disaster and quite possibly a premature death. Since he knew this about his sons, he wanted to do what he could to salvage them for the LORD before their sin destroyed them. Thus, he offered this rebuke, and he started it with extreme sarcasm. There were two reasons why he used such severe sarcasm. First, the boys were sarcastic with him, and he wanted to give them a taste of what it was like to be on the receiving end of sarcasm. Second, his rebuke was intended to help them see that they didn't know everything after all. As you most likely saw in verse thirteen, his sons were very proud and arrogant young men, and their inflated pride was the root of all of their problems.

I am sure that you will come to agree that Agur was a very wise man. Son, I hope that someday both you and I can become as wise as him. Even though he was so wise, for the sake of the effectiveness of the rebuke, he admitted to these two know-it-all sons that they were right about how little he knew compared to their vast knowledge. I can almost hear him say, “Guys, you are so right. I have the IQ of an idiot. In fact, I am so stupid about life that I would probably take first place in competition among the most stupid men who ever lived. Not only that, I have so little understanding that I can't even find my way in out of the rain. I have no right to think I could ever compare myself favorably with you guys since you have such great knowledge and understanding and I have none at all. Let's face it – nobody should be as stupid as me. How do you guys put up with me?”

Please understand something here. Agur's intent was to be as sarcastic about himself as possible because he was setting these boys up for the moment when he would drop a bombshell right in their laps. In my mind, I can imagine how much these guys enjoyed the way Agur was agreeing with them that they were so smart and knowledgeable. As we discuss the text of verse two, notice how he proceeded. First he dealt with his lack of understanding in the physical realm, and then he dealt with his lack of understanding in the spiritual realm. Now let's look at both of them.

Physical knowledge and discernment (verse 2)

Proverbs 30:2-4

²Surely

I am more stupid than any man, and
I do not have the understanding of a man.

In the area of personal knowledge, Agur said that he was “*more stupid than any man.*” The word “*stupid*” is defined in Strong’s as *brutish or stupidity*. The King James actually translates this Hebrew word as brutish. The dictionary defines “brutish” as *showing little intelligence or sensibility, that is a lack of understanding*. The dictionary also defines “*stupid*” as *being slow of mind or lacking intelligence or reason*. These definitions give us a reasonable picture of just how stupid Agur was agreeing to be, but I think the Scriptures themselves give us a very good idea of the kind of person Agur was describing. Consider two verses in Psalms. First, Psalm 92:6-7 states, “*A senseless (brutish KJV) man has no knowledge, nor does a stupid man (a fool KJV) understand this: that when the wicked sprouted up like grass and all who did iniquity flourished, it was only that they might be destroyed forevermore.*” (Grayed text added for clarity). The idea here is that the stupid man has no concept of what will result from his evil actions. Secondly, Psalm 73:22 states, “*Then I was senseless (foolish KJV) and ignorant; I was like a beast before You.*” (Grayed text added for clarity). The idea here is that a stupid man has no more ability to make good decisions about what to do with himself than some wild animal in the woods. Now that’s about as stupid as a man can be.

In the area of decision-making, Agur stated that he did not “*have the understanding of a man.*” The word “*understanding*” is defined by Strong’s as *understanding or discernment*. The idea here is that Agur did not have the capacity to understand life’s situations and make discerning choices as to how he should deal with them. He simply didn’t know what to do when faced with a hard decision. In short, he had the decision-making ability of a moron. How much more stupid can a man get?

I can almost hear Agur sarcastically expounding the point by saying, “Guys, you think I’m stupid and you know it all, don’t you? 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.”

Spiritual knowledge and discernment (verse 3)

Proverbs 30:2-4

²Surely

I am more stupid than any man, and
I do not have the understanding of a man.

³Neither have I learned wisdom,
nor do I have the knowledge of the Holy One.

Agur now moved from the physical realm to the spiritual. I can almost hear him as he continued his sarcasm. “Guys, I wish I had the kind of wisdom you guys have. I must be a fool, because I don’t even understand what wisdom is, let alone how to use it. I don’t understand anything about God either. I simply cannot comprehend how He works in the affairs of men. If I knew as much about God as you, I would be the smartest man on earth, but alas, I know nothing. I must admit the fact that I am just plain stupid. You guys are right after all.”

In the text Agur stated, “*Neither have I learned wisdom.*” The word “*wisdom*” in verse three is Strong’s <02451>, the same kind of wisdom God gave Solomon. Prov. 9:10 states, “*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.*” Since Prov. 30:3 and Prov. 9:10 use the same Hebrew word for wisdom, we know that wisdom referred to here is wisdom from above and is a spiritual exercise. Simply put, Agur is saying that he does not have the knowledge and understanding base to draw upon in order to make discerning choices in spiritual areas.

He then stated, “*nor do I have the knowledge of the Holy One.*” Simply put, he didn’t have a clue as to who God is, what He is, or how He works in the affairs of men. Being a Jew, Agur should have been trained well before his

bar mitzvah, but for the benefit of the rebuke, he gave the impression that he didn't understand a single thing his teachers had tried to instill in him.

So, in verses 2-3, Agur was saying something like this to his boys: ²"Guys, you think I'm stupid and you know it all, don't you? 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 at all, and I don't know anything about who God is, what He is, or how He works in the affairs of men." Now you might be asking yourself why Agur would make such a statement to his sons. Be assured that there was good logic behind those statements. You see, he was getting ready to ask Ithiel and Ucal a series of questions he knew they could answer. Every Jew of his day knew the answers. Then he was going to follow with a question they had no way of knowing. Nobody in their day knew the answer to that question. He made himself appear to be some sort of ignoramus solely for the purpose of getting the point of his rebuke across. You see, he was baiting them for what magicians call a sucker trick. In this trick, the magician gets the audience conditioned to expect a certain outcome and then does something entirely different. In the trick, the magician does precisely what the audience does not expect. Follow along and watch Agur do the same thing with his boys. This is a beautiful approach, and I suspect the boys were totally shocked when he set them in their place.

Questions any man of his day could answer.

Verse 4 *"Who has ascended into heaven and descended? Who has gathered the wind in His fists? Who has wrapped the waters in His garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is His son's name?"*

⁴Who has ascended into heaven and descended?
Who has gathered the wind in His fists?
Who has wrapped the waters in His garment?
Who has established all the ends of the earth?

What is His name?

Once Agur had inflated their ego by telling them how stupid he was, he asked the boys four questions. All of them were designed to get the boys to answer "Jehovah." Consider what he asked: 1) *Who has ascended into heaven and descended?* The only one who has come from heaven and has gone back to heaven is Jehovah, the One we know today as Jesus Christ the LORD. 2) *Who has gathered the wind in His fists?* The only one who can control the wind is Jehovah, the One we know today as Jesus Christ the LORD. Do you remember how Christ calmed the waves when his disciples were in the storm? In certain instances the LORD may allow Satan to cause rains to fall or winds to blow, but even then Christ is in control. One example is when Job's children were killed by the wind, but keep in mind that Satan can only do so with the direct permission of the God of heaven. 3) *Who has wrapped the waters in His garment?* Again, the only one who controls the rains and global flooding as in the great flood is Jehovah, the One we know today as Jesus Christ the LORD. 4) *Who has established all the ends of the earth?* The one who made the earth and established the shorelines for the lakes and seas is Jehovah, the One John chapter one declares to be Jesus Christ the LORD. If Ithiel and Ucal had stopped to think about it, they would have realized that any Jewish young man of their day could have answered those questions correctly. In our day we know from the New Testament that the correct answer is Jesus Christ, but in their day they only knew the LORD as Jehovah. As Agur asked each question, I am sure the boys answered them easily, and having answered them so well, they were most likely beaming with pride. This is exactly the response Agur wanted, and he had them right where he wanted them. I can almost see the gleam in the boys' eyes. I'm sure they thought to themselves, "See, we told you we were much smarter than you." Ah, but the boys had no idea that this was exactly how he wanted them to respond.

Then he dropped the bombshell.

What is His name

or His Son's name?

SURELY YOU KNOW

Up to this point, Agur knew that the questions he asked were common knowledge in the Jewish community, but he was about to ask the boys a question he knew they couldn't answer. I can see in my mind's eye how the boys had willingly and unknowingly stepped right into the trap Agur had so carefully laid for them, and now he was ready to spring it on them. Having carefully worded his previous questions he then said, "Guys, you have answered well, but let me ask you one more question. You know about Jehovah, but *what is His son's name?*" In asking this question, Agur was not merely wanting to know who God's Son was, but he was asking for the actual name of the Messiah who was to come. Then he followed it up by saying, *Surely you know!* I can hear Agur saying something like, "Come on guys, as wise and knowledgeable as you are, surely you can tell me his name. Well, you can, can't you? OK. I'm ready, tell me. Wait a minute, am I to understand that you don't know everything after all? Well guys, maybe you're not as smart as you think, and maybe old dad isn't as stupid as you think."

He had set them up, and he knew they didn't have the answer. No one in their day had a clue as to who the Messiah was or when He would come. The prophets of his era searched diligently, but his name was not to be revealed until long after they were dead and gone. Agur had trapped his sons, and he was hoping it would shock them into the reality that they had been wrong in their critical and harsh defiance toward parental authority. As the logic of the chapter progresses, you will see that Agur supported this aspect of his rebuke two more times before he made a plea for them to repent of their sin. So, I will paraphrase this paragraph, and it goes something like this:

¹ Agur, the son of Jakeh, was a wise father, and this whole chapter records the logical sequence 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 rebuke. 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 so that he would repent. His younger son, Ucal, was also included in the admonition so that he would not follow in the footsteps of his older brother, Ithiel. 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.

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 at all, 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 ascended into heaven and has come back? Who controls the winds and has the power to use them as He wishes? Who controls all the waters and has the power to neatly tuck those waters away in the pocket of his garment? Who has established and continues to maintain all the laws of nature? What is His name? I am sure you know. You have answered well, but let me ask you one more question. Can you tell me the name of His Son? Why, you're so smart, surely you can tell me. Well, you can, can't you? Of course you can't. No man alive 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."

(JLSParaphrase)

Below you will find a complete layout of paragraph one. The key verse is number four and is bordered in red. The key phrase is *"Surely you know!"* and is in the solid red box.

Proverbs 30:1-4

¹The words of **Agur** the son of Jakeh,
 THE ORACLE.
The man declares to Ithiel

to **Ithiel** and **Ucal** :

²Surely
 I **am more stupid** than any man, and
 I **do not have the understanding** of a man.

³**Neither have I learned wisdom,**
 nor do I have the **knowledge** of the Holy One.

⁴Who has ascended into heaven and descended?
 Who has gathered the wind in His fists?
 Who has wrapped the waters in His garment?
 Who has established all the ends of the earth?

What is His name
 or His Son's name?

SURELY YOU KNOW !

I will now present a chart of the chapter. We will add the first piece of the puzzle to the chart. Now look at the sheets you printed before starting the discussion on this chapter. The correlation between this chart and the one you printed should be obvious.

Problem area	The surface indicators	The root causes	The wake-up call
Disrespect for parents	These boys felt they were smarter than old dad.		
Wrong view of sin			
Pride			
Critical spirit			

Paragraph two – a distorted view of sin: Sons who thought they were spiritual leaders.

Verse 5a *“Every word of God is tested;”*

⁵**EVERY WORD OF GOD** is **TESTED**;

He is a shield to those
 who take refuge in Him.

In paragraph one (verses 1-4), we saw how Agur confronted Ithiel and Ucal about the way they were treating their mom and dad with disrespect. Now in verses 5-6, we will see how he confronted them about the way they were masquerading as spiritual leaders even though they couldn't comprehend the fact that they themselves were wicked sinners.

Agur began this phase of his rebuke by reinforcing the truth that whatever God says is true, and anyone who trusts in His name will find safety and security there. Every Jew should have known this fact. These boys may not have actually experienced it in their life, but they should have at least known it intellectually. Agur wanted to nail down that fact that the only reliable source of truth is God's Word. What men have to say is only reliable when it is in complete agreement with His Word. Gregory, think about it – if someone could prove that anything about the Bible was not true or accurate, we could not be certain that anything else in the Bible was true or accurate? One error would make the whole Bible untrustworthy. One of the sweet things about faith in God and His Word is that we can still believe that it is true and accurate even if we don't understand all of it. This kind of faith can accomplish great things for God and will keep us from a number of hurts and heartaches.

The Word of God is the only source that brings hope to the soul of men. Without it we would have no way of knowing the future of our souls. When the Scriptures say that *“Every word of God is tested”* it means just that. Strong's defines the word *“tested”* as *to smelt or refine; to test and prove true; to go through the process of being purified like precious metals in a refinery*. Therefore, there are two things we must note here. First, every word in the Bible has been inspired of God and has been recorded accurately. If it were not so, there would be no sound checks and balances by which we can gauge the truth. This does not mean that every word in Scripture is true. That cannot be right because Satan said he would become like God and sit on God's throne one day. Be assured that he will never succeed in doing so, but the words Satan said were recorded accurately. Now that makes the Scriptures trustworthy. Second, the way God's consistently keeps His promises has been proven over and over again throughout history. When God makes a promise in the Bible, you can depend upon it with your very life because God always does what He says He will do.

Verse 5b *“He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him.”*

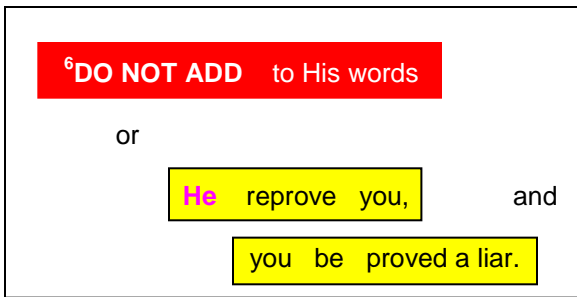
⁵EVERY WORD OF GOD is TESTED;

He is a shield to those
who take refuge in Him.

Throughout Proverbs and elsewhere in the Bible, God promises to bless the righteous and punish the wicked. I like to explain the principle like this: When we do good and forsake sin, God puts his hand of protection over us so that no evil can touch us without His permission. This is illustrated in Job chapter one where Satan demanded permission to hurt Job. God said to Satan, *“Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil?”* Satan recognized God's protection of Job when he answered, *“Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.”* Simply stated, Satan was saying, “Yeah, I have considered Your servant Job, and I have tried many times to destroy him. Each time I try, You have Your hand of protection over him so that I cannot even get to him let alone hurt him.” As long as we live a godly life, free from besetting sins, God protects us in this manner, but when we choose to sin, God simply takes His protecting hand away leaving us unprotected. He does not necessarily punish us directly, but He merely allows the normal and natural consequences of our sin to take their toll. I feel that sometimes that kind of punishment is far more severe than we would experience if God would punish us directly.

Although God promises to protect and bless the righteous, the exact opposite is true for those who choose to abandon God in order to enjoy their sin. Haman in the book of Esther is a prime example. He was a wicked man and tried to have innocent Mordecai executed. He built a tall gallows upon which he intended to hang Mordecai. It appeared to him to be a neat little plan, but in the end, his little plan backfired when he was hanged on his own gallows. The principle of sow and reap always works that way. God was not there to protect Haman because he did not believe in or follow the Scriptures. God is never obligated to put His hand of protection over an unsaved man even though at times He may choose to do so at His own discretion.

Verse 6 *“Do not add to His words or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar.”*

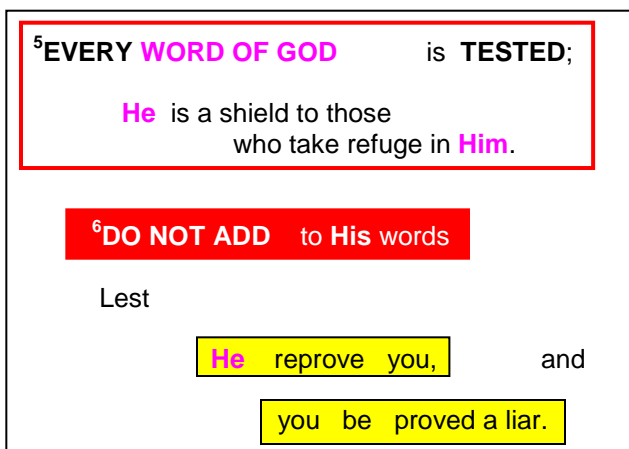


Having established and reinforced the validity of the Bible as the only reliable source of truth and having established the fact that there is safety and security for those who trust in the LORD, Agur now confronted the boys about what they had been saying. It appears that these two young men felt that they were called of God to be His spokesmen. Please keep in mind that according to Prov. 30:12, these boys did not see themselves as sinners. Since they saw themselves as good, upstanding men, they thought it was their duty before God to tell everyone else what they thought God had to say. Since these boys thought that what they were doing was right, their whole approach to things spiritual was based upon deception. They thought they knew the truth, but they didn't have a clue as to what the truth really was. Nevertheless, these boys must have been trying to teach their ideas as God's own words or Agur would not have brought it to their attention. Since their view of themselves and of God was warped, Agur wanted them to understand that if they continued with their impersonation as God's ambassadors God himself would rebuke them and call them a liar to their face. God never lets this kind of sin go unpunished for long, and Agur wanted desperately for them to see the error of their ways before it was too late.

I like Acts 17:11 which states, *“Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so.”* As I have seen over the years, Christians are among the most gullible people in the world. We who claim Jesus Christ as our Savior must be on our guard to verify that what we are being taught is true and trustworthy. We should go to the Scriptures regularly to see if what people are teaching us is correct before we accept the teaching as reliable. Like one man at our former church said years ago, “Pastor, when I come to church I refuse to leave my brain at home. I will examine what you preach in order to know whether it is right according to the Bible.” This man did not say this to be rude or boastful, but he didn't want to be fooled by any man into believing a lie.

The call to Ithiel and Ucal was simply this: Wake up and see yourselves as guilty sinners before the consequences of your sinful actions destroy you.

The following is a visual representation of the logic structure of this paragraph.



This paragraph can be paraphrased like this: *Every word God spoke or had recorded in the Bible is true, accurate, and trustworthy. It has been proven to be true and trustworthy over and over again in the past, so you can trust it in your day. The LORD provides complete protection and security for everyone who makes His name their place of refuge. Boys, you guys are sinners. Don't try to masquerade as spiritual leaders trying to tell others what God has said. If you continue doing so, God himself will confront you, and when He does, He will call you a liar to your face. When He does, He will prove to you beyond a shadow of a doubt that you are indeed guilty of sinning against Him.* (JLSParaphrase)

Now we will add another piece of the puzzle to the chart of the chapter.

Problem area	The surface indicators	The root causes	The wake-up call
Disrespect for parents	These boys felt they were smarter than old dad.		
Wrong view of sin	They saw themselves as spiritual leaders.		
Pride			
Critical spirit			

Paragraph Three – Pride and arrogance: The boys expected the best and the most of everything.

Verse 7-9 ⁷ *“Two things I asked of Thee, do not refuse me before I die: ⁸ Keep deception and lies far from me, give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is my portion, ⁹ lest I be full and deny Thee and say, “Who is the LORD?” or lest I be in want and steal, and profane the name of my God.”*

In paragraph one (verses 1-4), we saw how Agur confronted the boys about their distorted view of parental authority. In paragraph two (verses 5-6), we saw how he confronted them about their distorted view of sin. Now in paragraph three (verses 7-9), we will see how he confronted them about how their pride had generated in them a distorted view of money and possessions.

I must remind you again that chapter thirty in its entirety is a complete rebuke of Ithiel and Ucal by Agur. You might get tired of my repeating it so often, but it is a critical piece of information if you really want to understand Proverbs thirty. If paragraph three (vv. 7-9) is indeed a stand-alone paragraph, it would appear to be simply one man's well-centered view on materialism and money, nothing more, nothing less. On the other hand, since we know that paragraph three is merely another piece of a precision puzzle that comprises Agur's rebuke, this paragraph takes on a more far-reaching interpretation and application. Follow along as we examine these verses from Agur's perspective.

Before we dive into the meaning and application of these verses, let's take another look at verse thirteen. Remember, it is the key verse for the chapter. As has already been discussed, this verse explains the root cause of the boys' pride problem that generated the need for Agur to confront the boys in verses 7-9. Prov. 30:13 states, *“There is a kind (of man)—oh how lofty are his eyes! and his eyelids are raised in arrogance.”* (gray text added for clarity). If this verse were put into more modern-day vernacular, it would read something like this: “There are some people who are so proud they feel they must look down upon you, and there are some people who are so arrogant that when you approach them they raise their eyebrows in protest so as to say ‘I am better than you, and you don't deserve to talk with me.’” In other words, these boys were so proud that no one else was good enough for them. They looked down at others and yet they expected those same people to look up to them as being someone really important. Their pride had all but ruined these boys, and it was the root cause of all their problems. It is upon this backdrop that verses 7-9 are painted. Agur knew that these boys expected the best and the most of everything because they thought they were so good and so important. He also knew that sooner or later this kind of attitude was going to result in disaster for them.

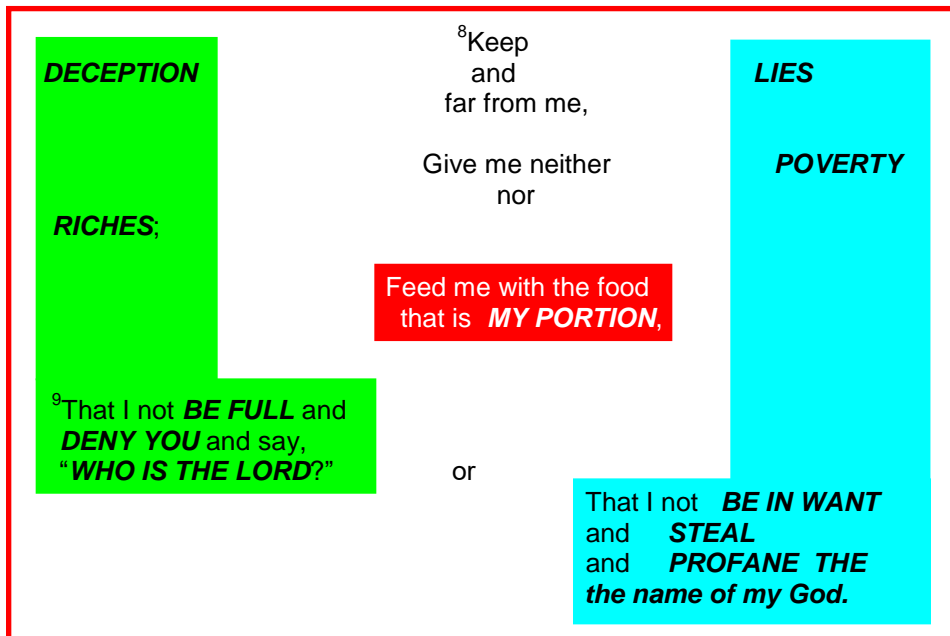
Verse 7 *“Two things I asked of Thee, do not refuse me before I die:*

⁷Two things I ask of Thee,
Do not refuse me before I die:

It is obvious from the text that Agur was praying. It appears that he was making his request to God Himself and not to the boys. He knew that all good things come from the LORD, and he knew that the best place to go for help is to the LORD. I also believe he was praying to the LORD in front of Ithiel and Ucal. Now, what did he ask in his prayer, and what did he want these two young men to learn? He was asking for two things, and verse eight explains what they were. In the illustration below, read it from left to right, from top to bottom, and it will read exactly as stated in the New American Standard version of the Bible.

A) Keep me from excess poverty and excess riches (verses 8-9)

Verse 8a *“Keep deception and lies far from me, give me neither poverty nor riches....”*



Note: Normally I like to build the layout as we progress, but I have shown the complete layout at the beginning so that you can more easily understand the relationship between the layout and the text being discussed.

1. The first request -- Don't let me be deceived by riches.

The first thing Agur asked in these two verses was that the LORD would keep him from being deceived. You might say, “Why would he ask something like that?” The answer is quite simple. *“Deception”* is defined in Strong’s Concordance as *emptiness or worthlessness*. Simply put, I am deceived if what I cling to or put my trust in is *something that leaves me empty because there is no lasting substance to it*. In this case, Ithiel and Ucal believed that riches were the thing they should pursue in order to gain true happiness. After all, they deserved it. They were important people, or at least they thought they were. Prov. 28:11 sums up the attitude they held. *“The rich man is wise in his own eyes, but the poor who has understanding sees through him.”* Agur knew they expected the best of everything, and he really wanted them to see the folly of such an approach to life. If you will look at the green box in the layout, you will see that the text itself shows that *“deception”* is the *“riches”* that give me so much that *“I be full and deny Thee and say, “Who is the LORD?”* You see, the rich man trusts in his money, and he doesn’t feel he

needs the LORD or anything spiritual. He simply doesn't need God. That is the deception riches generate, and in that frame of mind the rich man makes the claim of verse nine which states, *"Who is the LORD?"*. Phrased in modern-day vernacular, "God, who is He? Besides, if there really were a God, I wouldn't need him because I already have all that I need." Prov. 10:15 summarizes this attitude well when it says, *"The rich man's wealth is his fortress."* Prov. 18:11 tells us, *"A rich man's wealth is his strong city, and like a high wall in his own imagination."* The average rich man simply has no room for God. He may go to church and have a show of religion, but there is no depth to his relationship with the LORD. It is all show. In actuality, he does need the LORD, but he doesn't realize his need. Another thing he doesn't realize is that wealth is temporary, and it can quickly fly away and vanish into thin air. Prov. 23:4-5 tells us, *"Do not weary yourself to gain wealth, cease from your consideration of it. When you set your eyes on it, it is gone. For wealth certainly makes itself wings, like an eagle that flies toward the heavens."* When a rich man loses his money, he will need God, but not until then. So then, riches are indeed a deception, and Agur wanted his boys to understand this truth so that they could avoid the trap and its consequences. This is why he prayed asking the LORD to keep him from being caught in the disastrous trap of deception.

In reality, it is rare to find a rich man who knows the LORD and understands that everything he owns has come from the LORD. It is so refreshing to be around a man with wealth who acts like an average human being instead of being proud and boastful. This type of man has peace and contentment, and his life is not driven by a desire to gain more and more wealth. In fact, he is one who enjoys helping others in need and receives a real blessing in return for doing so.

2. The second request -- Don't let me believe the lie that poverty generates.

Next, Agur asked the LORD to keep him from believing lies — or more specifically, "A LIE." What were the *"lies"* he wanted to avoid? In this case the *"lie"* was *"poverty"* (see the blue box in the layout above). The lie was that God would not provide the needs of a man in deep poverty. We who know and love Jesus Christ know that God certainly will provide, but a man must have the faith to believe what God has promised. Sadly, few poor people believe the LORD will honor His word and provide for them. In the layout above, you will see for yourself that the *"lie"* is *"poverty,"* and for those who will not trust the LORD to provide, their needy condition will drive them to *"steal"* what they need and then *curse God to His face* for letting them down. Prov. 10:15b reinforces this belief when it states, *"the destruction of the poor is their poverty."* The poor man will likely be destroyed by his poverty unless he meets Jesus Christ and learns to trust Him for provision and security. Prov. 28:11 warns, *"The rich man is wise in his own eyes, but the poor who has understanding sees through him."* The wise, observant poor man will see and understand the folly of the way a rich man trusts his wealth for security and protection.

So, there is danger in having excess riches, and there is danger in experiencing severe poverty. In spite of these conditions, there must be some way in which a man can find peace, satisfaction, and security. Son, I am glad to inform you that there is such a condition. Read on and see.

3. Give me only what I need.

Verse 8c *"Feed me with the food that is my portion,"*

In order to gain a proper perspective of this paragraph, it will be helpful to understand the emphasis of the paragraph. Notice the text in the red box of the layout. *"Feed me with the food that is my portion"*. It is the key phrase because Agur knew that by virtue of their pride and arrogance, these boys expected the most and the best of everything. He also knew that their greed for acquiring things would end up ruining their lives. His goal here was to show them why their quest for material things was wrong and how being content with having just enough was a choice that would bring lasting contentment. We have already looked at how an excess of wealth makes the average rich man feel he does not need God. We have also seen how the lack that accompanies poverty makes the average poor man feel he cannot trust God to provide his needs. Now Agur showed Ithiel and Ucal through prayer that the wise thing to do was to be satisfied with having just enough to meet their needs.

Contentment is something most people would love to have but few ever find. It is certain that no one will find it by making the pursuit of money the focal point of his life. The pursuit of riches brings many hurts, heartaches, and disappointments for those caught up in the race, but the man who realizes the folly of such a pursuit can learn to be

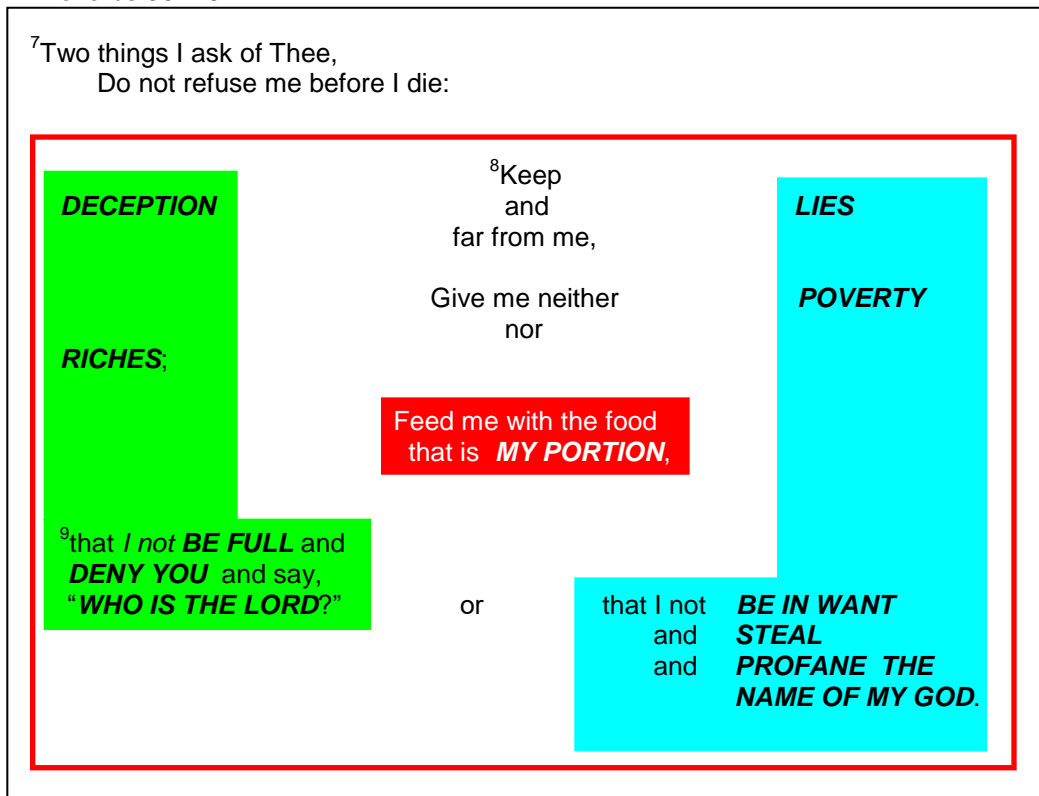
satisfied with what the LORD gives him. Television and newspaper advertisements are designed to make us feel we either want or need “things” that we could otherwise do without. But, if we acquire an “I’m satisfied as is” attitude, these advertisements will not make us hunger for those things. None of us deserves to possess riches, but God may grant them to us as He sees fit. If He doesn’t, it is not our place to devote all of our energies pursuing wealth.

First Timothy 6:6 tells us, *“But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment.”* The King James words it as, *“But godliness with contentment is great gain.”* Blessed is the man who finds this contentment. He will experience peace and joy the world will never know.

Now, I am not saying that to be rich is wrong or that to be wealthy is a sin for the man who knows, loves, and serves the LORD. It is the coveting of money and the pride that goes along with it that are the sins. There are a lot of rich people who love money, and there a lot of poor people who love money too. The problem is strictly attitude. What we think about wealth and money determines whether we have an attitude of well-being and contentment or greed. I have found over the years that faithful, regular work for a weekly income has done more for the average man than chasing money or get-rich-quick schemes have ever done for the average man. Being content with what the LORD provides for us is good, but seeking to be like the Joneses by working an exorbitant amount of hours is devastating to a family.

Below is a layout of this paragraph of text. I showed you at the beginning of the discussion of this paragraph, but it bears repeating. It is perhaps the most beautiful layout in all of Proverbs. It makes the logic so easy to understand, and it clarifies the proper expectation Agur attempted to get these two young men to understand and adopt. See the text layout below.

Proverbs 30:7-9



Below you will find another look at the logic structure of the chapter. We’ll add this piece of the puzzle and watch it fit neatly together with the rest of the paragraphs.

Problem area	The surface indicators	The root causes	The wake-up call
Disrespect for parents	These boys felt they were smarter than old dad.		
Wrong view of sin	They saw themselves as spiritual leaders.		
Pride	They expected the most and the best.		
Critical spirit			

Paragraph four – a critical spirit: These boys had a critical and destructive spirit

Verse 10 *“Do not slander a slave to his master, or he will curse you and you will be found guilty.”*

There are some people who regularly find fault with those around them. It is obvious that the faultfinder feels he is better, more correct, or more capable than the people he criticizes. It is easy for a man with this sort of attitude to run the next guy down. The dictionary defines the word “*slander*” as *the utterance of false charges or misrepresentations which defame and damage another’s reputation*. Ithiel and Ucal saw all sorts of flaws and weaknesses in people around them, and they were quick to point them out in a critical way. Unfortunately, they were not able to see their own shortcomings. In verse ten, the problem of *slander* was compounded by the fact that the damaging statements were made directly to the other man’s employer (in the case the owner of a slave). Even though a wise employer should verify whether there is any validity to a claim before making a judgment, if an employer is not careful he might feel that there actually is some substance to a claim made about his employee.

Slander is something a person claims but cannot substantiate in a court of law. Once the case has been heard and the facts are examined, the person defamed will be cleared of all charges made against him. Then the slanderer will become the guilty one. Once cleared of the charges, the one slandered will most likely curse the slanderer to his face for being so underhanded and cruel. Being cleared of the charges is what should happen when someone is slandered, but unfortunately it doesn’t always happen that way. Then too, even if a man is cleared of slander, there are always some people who will have taken the claim to heart and will remember it for years to come. That kind of reputation can damage a man’s testimony even though he has done nothing wrong.

The root cause of slander is a critical and hurtful spirit (see verse 14), and the root cause of a critical and hurtful spirit is pride. A man who will slander someone else is nothing more than a fool. Unless the LORD changes this man’s heart, there is almost no way to help him become a humble man. I say this because Prov. 26:12 tells us, *“Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.”* In addition Prov. 27:22 says, *“Though you pound a fool in a mortar with a pestle along with crushed grain, yet his foolishness will not depart from him.”* Since there is no hope whatsoever of converting a fool into a wise man, there is even less hope of changing a proud man into a humble man. The change must come from within through the prompting of God’s Holy Spirit. The best way to help a proud man is to pray for him, and as you have opportunity, share things with him that will help him see the folly of his ways. Do it carefully and discretely because he will most likely reject what you have to say if it is not done gently.

Agur’s reason for sharing verse ten with Ithiel and Ucal was to help them see and understand what they were doing wrong and how it was affecting those they criticized. You will see the whole picture more clearly as the chart of the chapter is filled in more completely. When we look at paragraph nine, you will understand more of this aspect of Agur’s rebuke.

Son, there is one more thing I would like to share with you before we leave this topic. The effects of slander are a wounded spirit on the part of the one slandered. He or she can easily become bitter against the one who slandered, and this is true even if the one slandered is a child of God. It takes a humble spirit and the grace of God to forgive one who has hurt you so deeply. For the sake of illustration, I would like to share an incident that happened to me a couple of years ago. I believe it will help you see how easily and how thoroughly a man can be hurt if he is of an unforgiving spirit.

There was a man at work to whom I will give the fictitious name of Billy. I had noticed over the period of several months that Billy spent way too much time standing around talking with co-workers. Since Billy was a professing

believer in Jesus Christ, I kindly approached him one day about what I saw. He seemed to understand what I was saying, and we went about our business. Several days later another friend of mine I'll call John was assigned the job of following Billy for a day to evaluate whether the job Billy was doing justified a full-time position. John was a believer and a good friend of mine, so I stopped to say hello. During the conversation, I mentioned to John that Billy would be a tremendous worker if he didn't spend so much time talking. I was sure John would not use this information in a negative way because he was only evaluating the amount of work to be done in a day and not Billy's work itself. I didn't think any more about it until a couple days later when Billy approached me asking what I thought about the coincidence that John would mention to him about the need to spend less time talking on the job. John was concerned about Billy, and as a brother in Christ, he too encouraged Billy to talk less on the job. I admitted to Billy that I had been careless enough to share something so potentially detrimental to his job with a man who was acting as an efficiency engineer evaluating Billy. It very well could have been detrimental to his job, but I believed John would not take it into account during his evaluation. At any rate, the end result is that Billy is deeply bitter against me, and rightfully so as a natural man. I was careless, and I made a drastic mistake. Almost every day on the job, I wished that I could take those simple words back, but they are on the slate of my record for all eternity. The net result is that a brother in Christ is still bitter against me to this day, and he appears so unhappy. Matthew 6:15-16 tells us *"For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions."* The thing that bothers me most about this whole situation is that according to these verses, since Billy is bitter against me, the Father will not forgive his sins. I don't believe Billy has any concept of what he is doing to himself by holding such a grudge. Billy will not even look me in the eye when we pass, and I don't know what I can do for him. I have gone to him to apologize, and it seemed, at the time, that he had forgiven me, but he has reverted to a bitter, unforgiving spirit. Unfortunately, He will most likely never trust me for anything personal again, and I don't blame him one bit. What Prov. 18:19 says is so true. *"A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city."*

I share this illustration with you because although the context of Prov. 30:10 teaches that slander is something someone will say with ill intent, the same results can be produced by a careless word with no ill-intent whatsoever, even when the statement made is completely true. You and I must be so very careful to watch what we say so that we don't offend a brother in Christ or do something that would give an unbeliever cause to question the value of becoming a follower of Christ in salvation.

Below you will find a layout of Proverbs 30:10.

¹⁰Do not **SLANDER** a slave to his master,
lest
he curse you and
you be found **GUILTY.**

Now let's add another piece of the puzzle to the chart.

Problem area	The surface indicators	The root causes	The wake-up call
Disrespect for parents	These boys felt they were smarter than old dad.		
Wrong view of sin	They saw themselves as spiritual leaders.		
Pride	They expected the most and the best.		
Critical spirit	They slandered other people.		

Section two—the root causes (paragraph 5)

We have seen what these boys were doing. Now we will see why they were doing those things. This section is comprised of verses 11-14, and we will examine each of these verses in turn.

1) A disrespect for parental authority

Verse 11 states, *“There is a kind of man who curses his father and does not bless his mother.”*

Respect for authority is one of the most important character traits a parent can instill in a child. This training should start during infancy and continue until the child becomes an adult. It would be so nice to be able to say that every parent has been successful in this area, but unfortunately there are multitudes of children and young adults who have little or no respect for their parents. Unfortunately, a lack of respect for parents spills over into a lack of respect for the government, employers, and church authorities. We all know that this kind of attitude creates all kinds of problems for both the child and the authorities.

As we examine these two rebellious sons, it is obvious that they did not quietly disrespect their parents. No, they were very vocal in their contempt for them. Notice in the text that their contempt was directed toward their *“father”* in particular. They treated their mother differently, and we will look at that in a moment. The word *“curses”* carries with it the idea of *vocally belittling*. The dictionary defines this word as *“to use profanely insolent language against.”* So that you get the full understanding of what is happening here, the word *“insolent”* as we said above is defined as *“insultingly contemptuous in speech.”* What does all this mean? It means that these young men hurled all kinds of cutting, mean, and degrading insults at their father with the intent of hurting him. They had no pity or compassion toward their father, only contempt and hate. People like this are ungrateful and have no understanding of all that their father has sacrificed in order to provide for their ungrateful souls. There is obviously little genuine communication that takes place between this type of sons and their father, and I’m sure their father’s heart was broken over the rebellion of his sons.

This type of young people treat their *“mother”* in a different way. The text states that this kind of man *“does not bless his mother.”* Strong’s says that the word *“bless”* means *“to praise.”* Simply put, they would not tell her how good she is, how good of a job she does, or how nicely she treats them. They simply could not say anything nice to her. Their attitude in relation to her was one of ungratefulness just like it was with their father. The text doesn’t specifically say that Agur’s sons belittled their mother, but it seems obvious from the text that they harbored an *“I’m smarter than you”* attitude. They seemed to have harbored deep contempt for their parents. Although it must have hurt Agur and his wife deeply, his concern was more for the welfare of the boys than for himself. It is obvious that he loved and cared about his sons or he would not have bothered trying to help them.

There are four types of people in verses 11-14, and the disrespectful son is the first. We will now add another piece of the chart. Notice how verse 11 showed the heart attitude that drove these boys to disrespect their parents.

Problem area	The surface indicators	The root causes	The wake-up call
Disrespect for parents	These boys felt they were smarter than old dad.	They showed hate & contempt for their parents	
Wrong view of sin	They saw themselves as spiritual leaders.		
Pride	They expected the most and the best.		
Critical spirit	They slandered other people.		

2) A distorted view of their own sinfulness

Verse 12 states, *“There is a kind (of man) who is pure in his own eyes, yet is not washed from his filthiness.”* (Grayed text added for clarity)

Son, before you can fully understand verse twelve, it is necessary to establish the fact that everyone sins from time to time. We who love God and strive to enjoy close fellowship with His Son Jesus Christ try our best to keep sins to a minimum, but try as we may we still sin from time to time. It is our nature, and we were born with it. Before we can control our sin problem, we must be born again through faith in Jesus Christ. It is then that we find forgiveness of sins and sweet fellowship with God. The first step toward finding saving faith in Christ is to understand Romans 3:23 which states, *“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”* Every person who ever lived, other than Jesus Christ, was born a sinner and is guilty of sinning against God in some form or another. But when we trust Christ as Savior, we receive a new nature that gives us the ability to say no to sin. Romans 3:24 continues the thought by stating *“being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.”* When we trust Christ in salvation we are purchased by God and belong to Christ. His Holy Spirit then lives within us giving us the power to abandon or avoid sin if we choose to do so. We can still choose to sin, and God will let us do so if we insist. But we must pay the penalty for our sin if we choose to indulge.

In Proverbs thirty, Ithiel and Ucal were two young men who either could not see themselves as sinners, or they thought they were too good to sin anymore. We will deal with this matter in much more depth in the application portion of this chapter, but for now we will take a brief look at the subject.

At a casual reading, it is highly unlikely that you would see how verse twelve fits into the overall structure of chapter thirty, but it is an essential part of what you need to know in order to fully comprehend the teachings of the chapter. It is clear from the text that Ithiel and Ucal thought they were so good and upstanding that they should be God’s spokesmen to the Jewish nation. The problem with their endeavor was that they were terrible sinners, and they could not see it. Trying to be God’s spokesmen while maintaining a practice of sin is the kind of thing that will certainly bring God’s punishment.

There is not much more that we can say here except to reiterate that there are people in this world who truly believe that they never have or never will sin. Regardless of their reason for believing this way, people of this persuasion are lost and doomed to a devil’s hell. The Scriptures are clear on the matter. Christ died to pay the penalty for their sins, but if they won’t admit that they are sinners and trust in the sacrifice that Christ made for them on the cross of Calvary, they are lost in their sins. There is simply no hope for them until or unless they see that they are sinners.

Now let’s fill in the next part of the chart of chapter thirty. Notice how verse 12 gives the reason why these boys felt like God’s spokesmen even though they were deceived sinners.

Problem area	The surface indicators	The root causes	The wake-up call
Disrespect for parents	These boys felt they were smarter than old dad.	They showed hate & contempt for their parents	
Wrong view of sin	They saw themselves as spiritual leaders.	They could not see themselves as sinners.	
Pride	They expected the most and the best		
Critical spirit	They slandered other people.		

3) A proud and arrogant attitude

Verse 13 states, *“There is a kind (of man) —oh how lofty are his eyes! And his eyelids are raised in arrogance.”* (Grayed text added for clarity)

We have already discussed this verse earlier in the chapter, but allow me to remind you of a few things here. It is true that there are some extremely proud people in this world. You have undoubtedly seen some of them, and you most likely discovered that you don’t enjoy being around them. They think they are better and more deserving than those around them, and when you are around them, they look down their nose at you. This was exactly the pride and arrogance Ithiel and Ucal maintained, and it was exactly the way they acted around most other people. Their pride was at the root of all their undesirable thoughts and actions. Agur recognized this fact and made a point of dealing with it when he rebuked his boys. Now let’s add this point to the chart of the chapter. Notice how this verse drives their desire for the most and the best.

Problem area	The surface indicators	The root causes	The wake-up call
Disrespect for parents	These boys felt they were smarter than old dad.	They showed hate & contempt for their parents	
Wrong view of sin	They saw themselves as spiritual leaders.	They could not see themselves as sinners.	
Pride	They expected the most and the best	They were proud and arrogant	
Critical spirit	They slandered other people.		

4) A critical and hurtful spirit

Verse 14 states, *“There is a kind (of man) whose teeth are like swords, and his jaw teeth like knives, to devour the afflicted from the earth, and the needy from among men.”* (Grayed text added for clarity)

Everyone knows that there are people in this world who are critical, mean, and destructive. You have seen them. They go around hurting other people, and it doesn’t even bother them to do so. In fact, they may not even be aware that they are doing it. Ithiel and Ucal were this kind of young men.

Strong’s tells us that the word *teeth* is literally *teeth as we know them*, and the words *jaw teeth* are *teeth, fangs, or incisors* like those found in a wild boar. When the text says that his *teeth are like swords* it seems to refer to speech and accusations that are cutting and destructive. When the text says that *his jaw teeth (are) like knives, to devour* carries the idea of a vicious wild boar with its fangs showing in rage. It tears and kills everything in its path while it is angered. These two young men were similar in that they would literally use their words to chew people up and spit them out. In the end, the unfortunate people Ithiel and Ucal attacked would literally be ruined.

As a result of their great pride, Ithiel and Ucal were critical and destructive. They looked down upon others, especially those who were poor or were experiencing various trials or difficulties. They felt that these people didn’t

deserve to live. Therefore, they took upon themselves the task of ridding the world of such miserable people. It is unfortunate that they chose to pour out their contempt upon people who were already experiencing trials and heartaches. The additional hurts and heartaches Ithiel and Ucal made them endure only made life worse for these unfortunate people.

Strong's says that the word *afflicted* literally means *poor, weak, afflicted, wretched*. This type of person is one who is experiencing all sorts of trials and heartaches, and the boys viewed them as undesirable. The word *needy* is similar in a way, and it means *a chiefly poor, needy person who is subject to oppression and abuse*. This would be like the welfare people of our day. I know that there are countless thousands who take advantage of the welfare system of our country, but there are some people who genuinely need financial help just to get along. These were the *"afflicted and needy"* people Ithiel and Ucal targeted. Ithiel and Ucal were extremely proud young men, and they simply could not see how these afflicted and needy people added anything of value to society. Therefore, they took it upon themselves to rid the world of such undesirables.

Son, are you critical of others less fortunate than you? Do you look down upon them? If so, check the Scriptures and see what they have to say on the matter. As you learn more and more of the Scriptures, you will find yourself becoming less and less critical of others and more critical of yourself as you grow in the LORD. Now, let's fill in the last Root Cause box in the chart. Notice how this heart attitude drove these two young men to slander another man.

Problem area	The surface indicators	The root causes	The wake-up call
Disrespect for parents	These boys felt they were smarter than old dad.	They showed hate & contempt for their parents	
Wrong view of sin	They saw themselves as spiritual leaders.	They could not see themselves as sinners.	
Pride	They expected the most and the best	They were proud and arrogant	
Critical spirit	They slandered other people.	<i>They sought to eliminate undesirables</i>	

Section three—what these boys needed to see in order to correct their detrimental attitudes and actions.

In paragraphs 1-4, we examined the surface indicators that showed the undesirable things Ithiel and Ucal were doing to themselves and others, and in paragraph 5 (verses 11-14), we saw the root causes for each of these undesirable actions and attitudes. Now we will look at paragraphs 6-9 to see the things these young men needed to understand in order to be able to correct their undesirable attitudes and actions.

Paragraph 6: Disrespect for parental authority – It will come to an abrupt end.

Verses 15-17 ¹⁵ *The leech has two daughters, "Give," "Give." There are three things that will not be satisfied, four that will not say, "Enough":* ¹⁶ *Sheol, and the barren womb, earth that is never satisfied with water, and fire that never says, "Enough."* ¹⁷ *The eye that mocks a father and scorns a mother, the ravens of the valley will pick it out, and the young eagles will eat it.*

¹⁵ The LEECH has two daughters, "GIVE," "GIVE."
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Verse 15a *The leech has two daughters, "Give," "Give."*

Have you ever seen a leech? It looks something like a fat worm. I saw one on TV several years ago, but I have never actually held one. I understand that in the past, they were used by physicians to clean open wounds. It would be hard to image a modern-day physician using them on a patient, but that was the medicine of the day when they were used.

The dictionary gives another definition of a "*leech*." It is *a hanger-on who seeks advantage or gain*. This is this idea that Agur was trying to convey. Lthiel and Ucal despised and cursed their parents, yet they were depending upon them for provision and shelter at home. They were indeed leeches. The single most distinguishing characteristic of a leech is that it "takes" and never gives. It is nothing other than a parasite. The word "*Give*" in the text is a question similar to the way a beggar asks for alms. In other words, the boys were saying "You're our parents. Give us what we need. You're our parents. Give us what we need." These boys were doing exactly the same thing. They disrespected their parents in a vocal, degrading way while at the same time expecting them to provide their needs. What arrogance!

Verses 15b-16 *There are three things that will not be satisfied, four that will not say, "Enough": ¹⁶ Sheol, and the barren womb, earth that is never satisfied with water, and fire that never says, "Enough."*

Agur wanted to show the boys just how much of a leech they were, so he gave them four examples. The first three are never "*satisfied*," and the fourth never says "*enough*." The two words are not the same. Notice the three and four pattern, because Agur used it again in the next three paragraphs of Proverbs thirty.

In today's terms *Sheol* would be *death or the grave*. We will all die unless we are alive when the LORD comes back to take his church to be with him at the rapture. There is no option. It is a fact, and death will certainly never be satisfied with how many it claims until all things are made new in heaven. It is certain that these boys could understand this truth.

The barren womb is something that affects selected women of every generation. It is devastating to women who cannot bear children, but as long as the human race exists, there will be some women who, for one reason or another, simply cannot conceive. I will admit that in some cases the husband is the sterile one, but it still leaves the woman without the ability to hold her own blood-born child. A couple can adopt a child, but for many women, it is just not the same. Simply stated, as long as the human race exists, there will always be women who must endure the pain and heartache of being unable to bear children.

The *earth* is never satisfied with how much water is dropped upon its surface. Other than where lakes and seas exist, the earth always seems to be able to absorb water in time. Oh, I realize that there are floods that leave standing water for a while, but in time, even that water is absorbed into the ground, evaporated into the atmosphere, or flows into streams, rivers, lakes, or the sea. It is simply a fact of nature.

All three of the above situations will not be satisfied—that is, they will never be a full cup. It seems there is always room for one more experience or event to take place. Such is not the case with fire. It is not a situation that will keep on going and going and going. No. It will only continue burning as long as there is fuel, oxygen, and ignition. It wants to consume everything in its path, and it doesn't care who or what gets in its way. The major difference between the first three and fire is that the first three are situations that will continue happening until the LORD comes back, but fire is in a class all its own. It is something that is alive and will continue to consume if we don't put it out. Indeed it will never *say enough*, but with the proper methods and tools we can extinguish it, or it will run out of fuel. You see, it will come to an end. This is the thing Agur wanted Lthiel and Ucal to understand because in the next verse, he made the same application to their individual situation with respect to parental authority. The simple fact is that fire WILL come to an end at some point in time. See the text layout below.

Proverbs 30:15-17

¹⁵The **LEECH** has two daughters,
“GIVE,” “GIVE.”

There are three things that **WILL NOT BE SATISFIED**,
four that **WILL NOT SAY, “ENOUGH.”**

¹⁶**Sheol**, and
The **barren womb**,
Earth that is **NEVER SATISFIED** with water,
Fire that **NEVER SAYS, “ENOUGH.”**

Verse 17 *The eye that mocks a father and scorns a mother, the ravens of the valley will pick it out, and the young eagles will eat it.*

By now Agur surely had the attention of these boys. Having illustrated the devastating and all-encompassing effects of fire, he transferred those same all-consuming characteristics to the aspect of parental disrespect. The word “*eye*” seems to convey the idea of [an outlook, attitude, or approach to life](#). Basically stated, it was the way Ithiel and Ucal saw things. They thought their parents were stupid and didn’t understand what life was all about, and they were convinced that they had life all figured out. Oh, but we know that they didn’t have a clue about what life was really all about. They were simply deceived.

Strong’s tells us that to “*mock*” is [to treat with contempt or ridicule](#). Knowing these definitions makes it easier to understand why Agur used such strong sarcasm when he approached the boys in the first paragraph of the chapter (Prov. 30:1-4). He knew he would get their attention if he gave them the same kind of treatment they gave him, so he used it there to illustrate their faults. Strong’s defines “*scorn*” as [to accuse another](#). The dictionary defines the word as [open dislike and disrespect or derision often mixed with indignation](#). “Derision” is [an object of ridicule or scorn](#), and “indignation” is [anger aroused by something unjust, unworthy or mean](#). Taking all of these dictionary definitions together, we can rephrase “*scorn*” to mean someone who [vents his anger toward another while showing open disrespect and ridicule](#). Basically, it is [to run a person down in such a way that it is obvious that you intended to hurt him](#).

These boys were vocal and adamant about their cruel ridicule of their parents, and they should have seen how the shoe of Agur’s rebuke fit their foot perfectly. They probably thought that they could go on and on treating their parents poorly, but Agur showed them differently. An eagle is a fascinating bird. I am told that they have very keen eyesight and that they can fly almost 100 miles per hour. With such ability, it is easy for them to swoop down from the sky and catch some unsuspecting animal completely unawares. It can happen so fast that the captured animal wouldn’t even see it coming and will wonder what happened. Once the prey is in the eagle’s claws, certain death awaits the captured animal. Once an eagle has prey in its claws, she will take it to her nest where her young will feed on it.

The thing Agur was trying to illustrate by the eagle is the quickness with which something happens. Just like the eagle captures his prey in an instant, so the downfall and/or premature death of those who scorn their parents will happen in an instant. They won’t even have time to prepare for their demise. It will take them totally by surprise. Therefore, Agur encouraged them to repent of their error and correct the bad relationship with their mom and dad before it was too late. In the last paragraph of the chapter (paragraph 11), Agur actually calls for them to repent.

On the following page you will find a layout of the whole paragraph.

Proverbs 30:15-17

¹⁵The **LEECH** has two daughters,
 "GIVE," "GIVE."

There are three things that **WILL NOT BE SATISFIED**,
 four that **WILL NOT SAY, "ENOUGH."**

¹⁶**Sheol**, and
 The **barren womb**,
Earth that is **NEVER SATISFIED** with water,
Fire that **NEVER SAYS, "ENOUGH."**

¹⁷The **EYE** that **MOCKS** a father,
 and
SCORNS a mother,

The ravens of the valley **will PLUCK IT OUT,**
 and
 The young eagles **will EAT IT.**

Now we will add another piece of the puzzle to the chart. Stay with me, because we are approaching the end.

Problem area	The surface indicators	The root causes	The wake-up call
Disrespect for parents	These boys felt they were smarter than old dad.	They showed hate & contempt for their parents	Disrespect for parents will come to a quick end.
Wrong view of sin	They saw themselves as spiritual leaders.	They could not see themselves as sinners.	
Pride	They expected the most and the best.	They were proud and arrogant	
Critical spirit	They slandered other people.	They sought to eliminate undesirables	

Paragraph 7: A distorted view of sin – Can't you see your own sin?

Verses 18-20 ¹⁸ *There are three things which are too wonderful for me, four which I do not understand.* ¹⁹ *The way of an eagle in the sky, the way of a serpent on a rock, the way of a ship in the middle of the sea, and the way of a man with a maid.* ²⁰ *This is the way of an adulterous woman: She eats and wipes her mouth, and says, "I have done no wrong."*

In the text above Agur stated that there were four things that he didn't understand. Did you notice how he repeated the "three" and "four" sequence? There he stated that there were three things that were beyond his ability to comprehend. Then there was a fourth. His logic is fascinating. We will see this "three" and "four" sequence again in paragraph eight.

First, he mentioned *"The way of an eagle in the sky."* As stated earlier, an eagle is a fascinating bird. See Prov. 30:10 for a brief discussion of this magnificent creature. Agur was amazed with the way it could fly, but Agur had no concept of how it was able to fly. In his mind it just did. He didn't understand anything about aerodynamics or lift on a wing. All he knew was what he saw, and what he saw was a bird gliding through the air. It truly would have been a fascinating concept in his day.

Next, he said that he didn't understand *"The way of a serpent on a rock."* I don't know about you, but I don't feel comfortable around any snake. There are some "good" snakes like the King snake, but I don't feel comfortable handling them either. It is fascinating, though, to see a snake sunning itself on a warm rock. It looks so peaceful and innocent lying there minding its own business. It is fine to stand back and watch the snake from a distance, but walk up on the snake and see what happens. It looks so peaceful one moment, but it will bite you if you get too close. Keep in mind that it is a wild animal, and it can become a killing machine in the blink of an eye. It is truly fascinating the way a snake can look so serene one moment and strike to kill the next moment. Agur simply couldn't understand it.

The third thing Agur mentioned was *"The way of a ship in the middle of the sea."* Can you imagine how a little ship can navigate the oceans and transverse wild and stormy seas successfully? The concept has fascinated me ever since I was a young child. It reminds me of James 3:4 which states, *"Look at the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot desires."* I don't know how ships keep from sinking in really serious storms, and it is fascinating how such a small rudder can steer such a large ship. It was done in Agur's day, and it continues to be done today. I am sure that Agur was absolutely fascinated with the idea and couldn't understand it either.

The last of the four that Agur mentioned was *"the way of a man with a maid."* You might be saying, "What in the world is he talking about?" It is simply this: when a man falls in love, he wants to spend every waking moment with the gal he is going to marry. He will do things for and with her that he would never do before he met her. Sometimes the things he does for her defy logic, but when they are married he stops doing those crazy and mushy things. Now, the three situations above are normal and natural in everyday life, but the fourth is not something that goes on as a normal course of events. It is a one-time thing that will happen over the course of several weeks, several months, or a couple of years, but once the couple is married, the young man's actions will revert back to normal. I guess Agur was fascinated with the way a perfectly normal man who is generally in control of his thoughts and actions could absolutely lose it when he falls in love with some sweet thing. It defies logic.

Next, he moved to a topic he hoped Ithiel and Ucal would see and understand. He said in verse 20 *"This is the way of an adulterous woman: She eats and wipes her mouth, and says, 'I have done no wrong.'" The thing to remember here is that verse twenty is part of paragraph seven. Verses 18-20 all go together. Therefore, verse twenty is a continuation of the thoughts shared in the previous two verses. I have asked dozens of people over the years what application they could draw from verses 18-20, and the common answer is, "I don't see any application to me at all." They saw this paragraph as a stand-alone paragraph, and with that approach, there is simply no good application. Oh, but since we know that this paragraph is indeed another part of a rebuke that spans the whole chapter, the context takes on a more far-reaching meaning. Agur knew that Ithiel and Ucal had a distorted view of their own sinfulness, and he wanted them to see the error of their ways. Therefore, he gave the illustration of a woman seducing a man, enjoying illicit sexual relations with him in the same bed she shared with her own husband, and then getting out of bed and immediately saying, "I have done absolutely nothing wrong. What I just did was perfectly OK." Now, even Ithiel and Ucal knew that she had done wrong according to both the Scriptures and civil law. As such, I can almost hear Agur say to those boys, "Come on, even you guys can see that what this woman did was wrong and that she had sinned against God. You can see her sin, but can't you see how you are sinning also? Wake up and correct your undesirable actions." It was true that Agur was unable to comprehend the four scenarios above, but he was just as much in the dark about the way the boys could not understand their own sinfulness. Agur's goal in giving this illustration was to show the boys their sin and give them an opportunity to repent and get right with the LORD.*

When we look at paragraph two (verses 5-6), keep in mind how Agur confronted the boys about the way they were pretending to be spiritual leaders. In verse 12, he showed them that the root cause for their masquerade was their inability to see themselves as sinners. Then in paragraph seven (verses 18-20), he encouraged them to see themselves for what they really were—sinners like everyone else. See a text layout of this paragraph on the following page.

Proverbs 30:18-20

18 There are three things which are Too Wonderful For Me,
four which

I DO NOT UNDERSTAND.

19 The way of an eagle in the sky,
The way of a serpent on a rock,
The way of a ship in the middle of the sea,
and
The way of a man with a maid.

20 This is the way of an adulterous woman:
She eats and wipes her mouth,
and says,
"I HAVE DONE NO WRONG."

Now we will add another piece of the puzzle to the chart. Stay with me, because we are almost done.

Problem area	The surface indicators	The root causes	The wake-up call
Disrespect for parents	These boys felt they were smarter than old dad.	They showed hate & contempt for their parents	Disrespect for parents will come to a quick end.
Wrong view of sin	They saw themselves as spiritual leaders.	They could not see themselves as sinners.	They could see others' sins, but not their own.
Pride	They expected the most and the best.	They were proud and arrogant	
Critical spirit	They slandered other people.	They sought to eliminate undesirables	

Paragraph 8: Pride – No one can stand to be around you.

Verses 21-23 ²¹ Under three things the earth quakes, and under four, it cannot bear up: ²² under a slave when he becomes king, and a fool when he is satisfied with food, ²³ under an unloved woman when she gets a husband, and a maidservant when she supplants her mistress."

Gregory, once again Agur used the "three" and "four" statement. Basically, he was saying that there are three types of people that are extremely difficult to be around and a fourth who is impossible to live with no matter what. The word "earth" used here must refer to the people of the earth. In essence, he is saying that every human being

would respond in a similar fashion given the same circumstances. Thus Agur included every man, woman, and child. Anyone who would be forced to live under or with the first three types of people would “quake”, because there would be no satisfying them no matter what was done for them. The word “quake” is defined by Strong’s as [to tremble, quake, rage, be agitated, be perturbed](#). Simply put, it is [to have dread mixed with fear, and both of these emotions are wrapped up in the garment of total disgust for the one causing those responses](#). Let’s look at each of the three in turn to see what in particular would generate such a negative response in people around them. It is important to understand how difficult these types of people are to be around because Agur was trying to show Ithiel and Ucal how difficult it was for people to be around them. You will understand more when we summarize this paragraph at the end of the chapter.

The first situation is [a slave when he becomes king](#). I am told that in Solomon’s day, the average slave never enjoyed the pleasures wealth could afford. Most simply did the grunt work and mingled with other slaves. They had a rather mundane existence while those who served in Solomon’s court or in his home had it pretty good. Can you imagine taking a man from such a background and placing him in a position of authority where he could have anything he wanted? A slave elevated to such a powerful position would most likely want to satisfy all of his desires, and he wouldn’t care what sacrifice others had to make in order for him to get what he wanted. He would simply be out of control and unrestrained in his pursuit of pleasures. Living or working under such a person would be a miserable state indeed. You could never do enough to satisfy him because as soon as you did what he required of you, he would demand something more of you. The essence of this situation is that it would be impossible to put up with such a demanding and unreasonable leader.

The second situation is [a fool when he is satisfied with food](#). We have already discussed the fool in the commentary on Prov. 1:7, so we will merely summarize here. To refresh your memory, a fool thinks he already knows everything he will ever need to know, so he is completely unteachable. He will talk and argue his point until you agree with him, and as Prov. 29: tells us [“When a wise man has a controversy with a foolish man, the foolish man either rages or laughs, and there is no rest.”](#) If you don’t agree, he will become angry with you. He is bull-headed, and there is simply nothing you can do to change his mind once he has decided to do a certain thing. In fact, he will not change his mind even if doing something gets him seriously hurt or causes his premature death. Now, with these characteristics of a fool in mind, let’s see why his being satisfied with food makes him so difficult to be around. At every opportunity the fool loves to share his opinion. To make matters worse, after he has eaten to his satisfaction there is nothing he needs, so he is free to talk to his heart’s content. Ecclesiastes 10:14-15 tell us [“Yet the fool multiplies words. No man knows what will happen, and who can tell him what will come after him? The toil of a fool so wearies him that he does not even know how to go to a city.”](#) Yes, he will talk, and talk, and talk until he is so tired he doesn’t have the strength to find his way home. There is simply no end to his talking and arguing. No matter what you say or do, he will still keep on speaking his mind. There is simply nothing you can do except get out of his sight. He is simply impossible to be around.

The third situation is [an unloved woman when she gets a husband](#). Marriage is sweet when a couple loves each other deeply, and even then, there are challenges both must work through to keep their marriage a happy one. Oh, but when a woman marries and finds that her husband does not really love her, she is hurt, and her world falls apart. Her husband demands intimacy and sexual satisfaction, but she knows all too well that he is only using her body and not uniting with her in spirit and emotions. She feels used and rejected, and even a woman who was sweet and loving when the marriage took place will most likely evolve into a bitter woman in time. That bitterness will be directed primarily toward her husband, but many times it is directed toward her children as well. When she resorts to venting her frustration, it is literally hell on earth. Nothing will satisfy her because the hurt is so deep, and the pain is so all-consuming that she takes out her frustration on everyone around her. Humanly speaking, there is simply no way to bring peace to such a family unless she finds the love she seeks. A good example of this kind of relationship is found in Genesis. In this instance, Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah, and Leah knew it. Read the following passage.

Genesis 29:15-30:24

¹⁵ Then Laban said to Jacob, "Because you are my relative, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what shall your wages be?" ¹⁶ Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. ¹⁷ And Leah's eyes were weak, but Rachel was beautiful of form and face. ¹⁸ Now Jacob loved Rachel, so he said, "I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel." ¹⁹ And Laban said, "It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to another man; stay with me." ²⁰ So Jacob served seven years for Rachel and they seemed to him but a few days because of his love for her. ²¹ Then Jacob said to

Laban, "Give me my wife, for my time is completed, that I may go in to her." ²² And Laban gathered all the men of the place, and made a feast. ²³ Now it came about in the evening that he took his daughter Leah, and brought her to him; and Jacob went in to her. ²⁴ Laban also gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah as a maid. ²⁵ So it came about in the morning that, behold, it was Leah! And he said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served with you? Why then have you deceived me?" ²⁶ But Laban said, "It is not the practice in our place, to marry off the younger before the first-born. ²⁷ "Complete the week of this one, and we will give you the other also for the service which you shall serve with me for another seven years." ²⁸ And Jacob did so and completed her week, and he gave him his daughter Rachel as his wife. ²⁹ Laban also gave his maid Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her maid. ³⁰ So Jacob went in to Rachel also, and indeed he loved Rachel more than Leah, and he served with Laban for another seven years.

³¹ Now the LORD saw that Leah was unloved, and He opened her womb, but Rachel was barren. ³² And Leah conceived and bore a son and named him Reuben, for she said, "Because the LORD has seen my affliction; surely now my husband will love me." ³³ Then she conceived again and bore a son and said, "Because the LORD has heard that I am unloved, He has therefore given me this son also." So she named him Simeon. ³⁴ And she conceived again and bore a son and said, "Now this time my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons." Therefore he was named Levi. ³⁵ And she conceived again and bore a son and said, "This time I will praise the LORD." Therefore she named him Judah. Then she stopped bearing.

^{30:1} Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she became jealous of her sister; and she said to Jacob, "Give me children, or else I die." ² Then Jacob's anger burned against Rachel, and he said, "Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?"

³ And she said, "Here is my maid Bilhah, go in to her, that she may bear on my knees, that through her I too may have children." ⁴ So she gave him her maid Bilhah as a wife, and Jacob went in to her. ⁵ And Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son. ⁶ Then Rachel said, "God has vindicated me, and has indeed heard my voice and has given me a son." Therefore she named him Dan. ⁷ And Rachel's maid Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son. ⁸ So Rachel said, "With mighty wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister, and I have indeed prevailed." And she named him Naphtali. ⁹ When Leah saw that she had stopped bearing, she took her maid Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as a wife. ¹⁰ And Leah's maid Zilpah bore Jacob a son. ¹¹ Then Leah said, "How fortunate!" So she named him Gad. ¹² And Leah's maid Zilpah bore Jacob a second son. ¹³ Then Leah said, "Happy am I! For women will call me happy." So she named him Asher.

¹⁴ Now in the days of wheat harvest Reuben went and found mandrakes in the field, and brought them to his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, "Please give me some of your son's mandrakes." ¹⁵ But she said to her, "Is it a small matter for you to take my husband? And would you take my son's mandrakes also?" So Rachel said, "Therefore he may lie with you tonight in return for your son's mandrakes." ¹⁶ When Jacob came in from the field in the evening, then Leah went out to meet him and said, "You must come in to me, for I have surely hired you with my son's mandrakes." So he lay with her that night. ¹⁷ And God gave heed to Leah, and she conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son. ¹⁸ Then Leah said, "God has given me my wages, because I gave my maid to my husband." So she named him Issachar. ¹⁹ And Leah conceived again and bore a sixth son to Jacob. ²⁰ Then Leah said, "God has endowed me with a good gift; now my husband will dwell with me, because I have borne him six sons." So she named him Zebulun. ²¹ And afterward she bore a daughter and named her Dinah. ²² Then God remembered Rachel, and God gave heed to her and opened her womb. ²³ So she conceived and bore a son and said, "God has taken away my reproach." ²⁴ And she named him Joseph, saying, "May the LORD give me another son."

Rachel suffered inner turmoil because she was barren, but can you see the conflict that Leah generated because Jacob didn't love her. It must have been hard for both her and the rest of the family because of her need for love. In this case, the LORD gave her some sort of reprieve through bearing children for Jacob, but even that did not make him love her any more than before. I can only imagine the turmoil she endured and how hard she made life for her family. It almost always works that way when a woman marries and finds that she is unloved. It is impossible to live with her. There is simply nothing you can do that will make the situation better.

All three of the above situations have one thing in common, and it is this: living with any of those situations would be miserable at best. You simply cannot find peace or happiness living with these types of people. Any sensible person would want to get away from them as far and as fast as he could. These three situations are bad

enough, but there is another that is even more difficult to endure. It is *a maidservant when she supplants her mistress*. You might say, "What difference is there between this woman and the slave who becomes king?" I submit to you that there is a great deal of difference. Whereas the slave demands things of you for his pleasure with no concern about what it may cost you, the maidservant who supplants her mistress is not so demanding as she is cutting, critical, and destructive. Before we continue, let's look at what the word "supplant" means. Strong's states that it is *to seize, dispossess, take possession of, inherit, be an heir*. In other words, the maid has taken the place of prominence and intimacy with the husband that his wife previously enjoyed. In essence, the wife has been pushed out of her rightful place of being the only one to enjoy intimacy with her husband, and another has been included. I am sure Sarah meant well by allowing another woman to enjoy sexual intimacy with Abraham in order to produce a child, but what a mess she created by doing so. How many women do you know who would not only invite her husband to have sexual intercourse with another woman but demand that he do so? I don't know of a single one. It just doesn't happen to normal people. I realize that Sarah wanted to follow the custom of the day and have a child by the other woman. She didn't do it merely to allow the other woman to enjoy sexual intercourse with him. Regardless of the reason, once the deed was done and Hagar discovered she was pregnant, she used her pregnancy to belittle Sarah at every opportunity. It must have been torture for Sarah to hear Hagar putting her down. The hard part was that Sarah couldn't do much about it. The whole situation must have been (excuse the word) pure hell on earth. Can you even imagine what it must have been like? I have some idea, but I don't think I can fully comprehend the extent of it.

So, what was the point Agur was trying to make by sharing these statements with Ithiel and Ucal? It is simply that in the same way people cannot stand up under these four types of relationships, those around Ithiel and Ucal could not stand being in their presence either. These two sons were equally as hard to live with as any of the illustrations Agur gave. It was like Agur was saying, "Guys, I know you can see that these people are impossible to live with. Can't you see that you are equally as hard to live with. Open your eyes, and see what you are doing? You are making other people miserable by your critical and demanding ways. Guys, recognize your sin and repent before it is too late." By the time we finish the chapter and summarize the logic, you will have a better idea of how this paragraph fits in the precision puzzle of the chapter as a whole.

Below you will find a complete layout of this paragraph.

Proverbs 30:21- 23

²¹ Under three things the earth QUAKES, and	
Under four IT CANNOT BEAR UP:	
²² Under a slave when he becomes king, and a fool when he is satisfied with food,	Feeds Mouth Runs Mouth -----
²³ Under an unloved woman when she gets a husband, and a maidservant when she supplants her mistress.	Mean / Hurtful Mean / Critical

We will now add another piece of the puzzle to the chart. After we finish one more paragraph the basic chart will be completed.

Problem area	The surface indicators	The root causes	The wake-up call
Disrespect for parents	These boys felt they were smarter than old dad.	They showed hate & contempt for their parents	Disrespect for parents will come to a quick end.
Wrong view of sin	They saw themselves as spiritual leaders.	They could not see themselves as sinners.	They could see others' sins, but not their own.
Pride	They expected the most and the best.	They were proud and arrogant	Other people could not stand to be around them.
Critical spirit	They slandered other people.	They sought to eliminate undesirables	

Paragraph 9: A critical spirit – Everything has value.

Prov. 30:24-28 ²⁴ *Four things are small on the earth, but they are exceedingly wise:* ²⁵ *The ants are not a strong folk, but they prepare their food in the summer;* ²⁶ *the badgers are not mighty folk, yet they make their houses in the rocks;* ²⁷ *the locusts have no king, yet all of them go out in ranks;* ²⁸ *the lizard you may grasp with the hands, yet it is in kings' palaces.*

Son, I don't know if I could explain this paragraph's context or application if this were a stand-alone paragraph. Thank the LORD that it is not, because within the context of the chapter this paragraph adds real beauty to Agur's overall rebuke. If you will remember, in paragraphs 1-4, we examined the surface indicators that showed the undesirable things Ithiel and Ucal were doing to themselves and others, and in paragraph 5 (verses 11-14), we saw the root causes for such undesirable actions and responses. Now we will examine paragraphs 6-9 to see the things these young men needed to understand in order to be able to correct their undesirable attitudes and actions. With this in mind, paragraph nine is the fourth and final paragraph dedicated to helping these young men comprehend what they need to know in order to correct their critical and destructive ways. Let's examine the paragraph, and you will clearly see what I mean.

Verse 24 tells us that *four things are small on the earth, but they are exceedingly wise*. The emphasis here is on the words *small* and *wise*, and there is a good reason behind the statement. In verse ten, Agur showed the young men that they were unjustly slandering people to their masters. Then in verse fourteen, he showed the boys that a critical and destructive spirit was the root cause of their slander. Here in verses 24-28, Agur showed them that everything on the earth has some value and some wisdom. Some things have more value than others, but the four he discussed here show a great deal of wisdom. Keep in mind that although these creatures do wise things, their actions and reactions are simply what the Creator programmed them to do. They do it because it is their nature to do so, but if we follow their example we will show great wisdom because doing so is not our nature. It is a choice and a good one at that. This same principle is taught in Prov. 6:6 where we are told, *"Go to the ant, O sluggard, observe her ways and be wise."* It does not say that the ant has chosen to be wise. It acts in a wise manner by nature, and if we learn her ways, we will become wise. So let's look at the four creatures and see what value they possess that justifies their existence.

First, in the area of preparation, we are told that *the ants are not a strong folk, but they prepare their food in the summer*. The emphasis here is not on a single ant but on "ants" collectively. They are strong for their size, but no single ant is able to sustain and defend itself by itself. No, they work and fight together as a unit within their colony. God designed them that way. Ants go out each day during the summer in search of food. When they find it, they carry what they can back to their home and store it for the winter months. No individual ant hordes food for itself. No, they all share and share alike. The important thing to remember here is that they thoroughly prepare ahead of time for a need that will come in the winter. If they did not, the whole colony would starve. With regard to the ants, Agur's emphasis is on the fact that ants have value because they show wisdom by planning ahead. We show great wisdom too when we do the same thing for our own preservation.

Second, in the area of protection, we are told that *the badgers are not mighty folk, yet they make their houses in the rocks*. A badger is a relatively fierce fighter, but he cannot fend off larger animals that would attempt to kill it. Therefore, he finds or digs holes among the rocks so that it can retreat into them when he needs to rest or hide from predators. This shows wisdom on his part, but it is what the Creator instilled in him by nature. God designed him that way. On the other hand, if we choose to defend ourselves in the same way, it shows wisdom because we

make a choice to do so. With regard to the badger, Agur's emphasis is on the fact that it has value because of the wisdom he displays in finding a secure place of protection.

Third, in the area of preservation, we are told that *the locusts have no king, yet all of them go out in ranks*. We don't usually call this creature a locust. We call it a grasshopper, but it is the same thing. These insects will jump when danger is near, but other than that, they don't even try to protect themselves. They simply run in groups of thousands or millions. You can easily kill one or several, but try to exterminate every grasshopper on the earth. As the southerners would say, "Ain't no way!" You could spend a lifetime chasing them, and when you die, there would be more of them than when you started. The thing to remember here is that there is no single locust that takes the lead. They simply travel in whatever direction the group happens to go, but the species survives nonetheless. There is wisdom in uniting with many others for the group's self-preservation. As such, the grasshoppers have value. We would do well to follow their example of uniting as a group for our preservation.

Fourth and finally, in the area of passiveness, we are told that *the lizard you may grasp with the hands, yet it is in kings' palaces*. These creatures harm nothing and simply run at the sight of danger. Some of them change colors to blend in with their surroundings, but they are everywhere. They even get into the king's palace and live there. The king wouldn't want them there, but they live there anyway. Mom and I were in a church in Antigua one time, and near the middle of the pastor's sermon, a lizard crawled across the back wall of the church for everyone to see. I never forgot that incident. They are cute little creatures, and it is amazing how they can appear out of nowhere.

Now what do these four creatures have to do with Ithiel and Ucal? It is simply this: since each of them shows some wisdom, then they are of some value. Certainly the people Ithiel and Ucal were attempting to destroy had some wisdom and value too. Ithiel and Ucal were wrong to decide on their own that a person doesn't deserve to live based solely upon the twisted misconceptions these boys harbored. They needed to understand this truth. If they did, they would have had the understanding necessary to correct their undesirable, critical, and destructive ways. See a complete layout of this paragraph on the following page.

Proverbs 30:24-28

24 Four things are **SMALL ON THE EARTH,**
 BUT
 they are **EXCEEDINGLY WISE:**

25 The **ANTS** are not a strong folk,
 but they
PREPARE THEIR FOOD IN THE SUMMER.

26 The **BADGERS** are not mighty folk,
 yet they
MAKE THEIR HOUSES IN THE ROCKS;

27 The **LOCUSTS** have no king,
 yet all of them
GO OUT IN RANKS;

28 The **LIZARD** you may grasp with your hands,
 yet it is
IN KING'S PALACES.

All have their own value

Plan ahead

Smart defenses

Team Workers

Stealthy

Now we'll add the final piece to the chart of the body of Agur's rebuke.

Problem area	The surface indicators	The root causes	The wake-up call
Disrespect for parents	These boys felt they were smarter than old dad.	They showed hate & contempt for their parents	Disrespect for parents will come to a quick end.
Wrong view of sin	They saw themselves as spiritual leaders.	They could not see themselves as sinners.	They could see others' sins, but not their own.
Pride	They expected the most and the best.	They were proud and arrogant	Other people could not stand to be around them.
Critical spirit	They slandered other people.	They sought to eliminate undesirables	Others have value. Stop being critical.

Agur's conclusion

Paragraph 10: Some things are stately.

Prov. 30:29-31 ²⁹ *There are three things which are stately in their march, even four which are stately when they walk:* ³⁰ *The lion which is mighty among beasts and does not retreat before any,* ³¹ *the strutting rooster, the male goat also, and a king when his army is with him.*

Here Agur again used the “three” and “four” statement. He told of three things that were stately by nature and one that was stately by position of authority. As we discuss this paragraph, I’ll show you how it ties into the scope of the chapter.

Verse 29 tells us that *there are three things which are stately in their march, even four which are stately when they walk*. What is the difference between a *walk* and a *march*? The idea here is that *walk* must refer to a *manner of living* while *march* must refer to a *parading of one's position or possessions*. The first three statements are about animals who act in a certain way because it is their nature to do so. The fourth is a king who is stately because of his position, not his nature. I think you can see the correlation. Now let's look at the three animals that have a walk that makes them stately. By the way, what does it mean to be “*stately*?” The dictionary defines the word as *marked by lofty or imposing dignity, impressive in size or proportions*. Simply stated, one who is called *stately* has either done something or is something that rightly justifies the title.

The first stately animal discussed is *the lion which is mighty among beasts and does not retreat before any*. Everyone knows that the lion stands out among all of the other animals as a ferocious hunter and killer. It is powerful, fast, and crafty. Anyone who watches a lion hunt down and devour another animal is impressed with its power and courage. It is indeed king of the jungle. The lion is rightfully called stately, but remember, he is stately (stands out above the rest) by nature.

The second stately animal is *the strutting rooster*. Just like the lion is king of the jungle, so the rooster is king of the roost among all of the hens. It doesn't take long watching the rooster strut around the barnyard to recognize that he is boss to all the other chickens. He struts around showing all the other chickens that he is tough and master of all of them. The rooster is rightfully called stately, but remember, he is stately (stands out above the rest) by nature. The King James Version calls this animal *a greyhound*. Strong's states that the meaning of the word is *loins, or hips*. The animal Agur was referring was probably a tremendous runner, but whether the animal was a rooster or a greyhound is immaterial to the point Agur was trying to make. The point here is that the animal deserves the title of stately.

The third stately animal discussed is *the male goat*. There is no way a barnyard goat could rightfully be called *stately*, but a mountain goat is a different story. Anyone who has seen one of these marvelous creatures navigate the steep sides of a rocky hill and keep its footing can't help but be impressed. They are magnificent creatures, and it is a thrill to see one in person. The male mountain goat is rightfully called *stately*, but remember, he is stately (stands out above the rest) by nature.

I want to leave a single thought with you about these three animals. They are stately based solely upon the fact that each of them on a regular basis does something that shows them to be stately. They don't claim to be anything. They simply are. I will associate this principle as a whole after we look at the king.

The fourth thing that Agur addressed was *a king when his army is with him*. The King James states it as *a king, against whom there is no rising up*. The wording is slightly different, but the point Agur was trying to make is the same. Neither you nor I would dare approach a king for the purpose of rebuking or correcting him when he has his whole army right by his side dressed in battle gear and ready for war. No single man or woman could stand before such an array of fighters. Just seeing a king and his army parading in their battle dress uniforms would cause any man or woman to stand in awe of them. There is power there, and men simply don't mess with him under those conditions. Anyone seeing him would say without hesitation that he is certainly *stately*. You and I would too. The king is rightfully called *stately*, but remember, he is stately (stands out above the rest) because of his position, power, and authority.

Now, what does all of this have to do with the Agur's rebuke of Ithiel and Ucal? If you were to try to draw application from this paragraph assuming it is a stand-alone paragraph, you would be hard-pressed to come up with anything worthwhile. But you don't need to do that. You see, this paragraph is the first of two paragraphs that together form the conclusion of Agur's rebuke. We need to look at the first sentence of the next paragraph of the Scripture text in order to fully understand what Agur was trying to do with the topic we are presently discussing. Let's move to the last paragraph and tie the two together. Below is a text layout of this paragraph.

Prov. 30:29-31

29 There are three things which are **STATELY** in their *march*,
 even four which are **STATELY** in their *walk*.

30 The **LION** which is mighty among beasts and
 does not retreat before any,

31 The **STRUTTING COCK,**
 The **MALE GOAT** also,
 and
 A **KING** when his army is with him.

Now let's add the first part of Agur's conclusion to the overall chart.

Problem area	The surface indicators	The root causes	The wake-up call
Disrespect for parents	These boys felt they were smarter than old dad.	They showed hate & contempt for their parents	Disrespect for parents will come to a quick end.
Wrong view of sin	They saw themselves as spiritual leaders.	They could not see themselves as sinners.	They could see others' sins, but not their own.
Pride	They expected the most and the best.	They were proud and arrogant	Other people could not stand to be around them.
Critical spirit	They slandered other people.	They sought to eliminate undesirables	Others have value. Stop being critical.

The Conclusion

Some things are stately, but not you guys.	
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Paragraph 11: Agur's conclusion.

Prov. 30:32-33 ³² *If you have been foolish in exalting yourself or if you have plotted evil, put your hand on your mouth.* ³³ *For the churning of milk produces butter, and pressing the nose brings forth blood; so the churning of anger produces strife.*

Son, everything Agur shared with these two boys was designed to get them to this point in his rebuke. It was necessary so that he could offer these two boys an opportunity to repent. Simply sharing a person's shortcomings without giving him an opportunity to make it right would be cheating that person out of something that would make his life better. Agur really wanted Ithiel and Ucal to get right with the LORD and experience a life of joy and peace,

but he knew that if they continued in the direction they were headed, certain disaster awaited them. It was just a matter of time before the results of their sin came crashing down upon their heads, and he didn't want to see that happen.

He continued his conclusion with the phrase *if you have been foolish in exalting yourself*. Before we proceed, I must remind you once again that the key verse of the chapter is verse thirteen. It tells us that *there is a kind (of man)—oh how lofty are his eyes! and his eyelids are raised in arrogance*. (Grayed text has been added for clarity). Simply stated, these boys were proud and arrogant. They thought they were the best and deserved to be treated like the best and most important people around. Agur would not have made the statement *if you have been foolish in exalting yourself* unless they had indeed been exalting themselves or putting themselves on a pedestal as someone really great. It is upon this backdrop that we draw meaning and application from the previous paragraph. Keep in mind that all three of the animals were *stately* because they did something to deserve to be called *stately*. The king possessed the position and authority that justified his being called *stately*. In the case of Ithiel and Ucal, they merely claimed to be someone important without having done anything to deserve that title. They told everyone how important they were and then expected those same people to treat them as though their claim was true. Therefore, the statement, *if you have been foolish in exalting yourself* could rightfully be stated as *since* you have been foolish in exalting yourself. To sum up the previous paragraph, Agur was saying something like this: "Guys, there are some things that are stately, but you guys are not among them." Man, how blunt can a man get?

Agur's statement to the boys was not only *If you have been foolish in exalting yourself*, but it was also *if you have plotted evil*. It is fairly plain to see that Ithiel and Ucal had made more of themselves than they deserved, but had they really plotted to do some evil? You merely need to look at verse ten and verse fourteen to find the answer. Verse ten tells us, *Do not slander a slave to his master, or he will curse you and you will be found guilty*. Verse fourteen states, *There is a kind of man whose teeth are like swords and his jaw teeth like knives, to devour the afflicted from the earth and the needy from among men*. After reading these verses, it should be obvious that these two young men were cutting, destructive, and cruel. They were planning on doing away with people they felt didn't deserve to live, so both of these statements were true. They had been foolish enough to brag about how important they were, and they had planned to hurt innocent people. Since they were guilty on both counts, Agur was ready to draw the net.

The next phrase of the text is the key phrase of the paragraph. He said, *put your hand on your mouth*. Can you think of a good reason why he would say such a thing? I can. Have you ever been there to watch someone who had just recognized that he had done something really wrong? Did you see him put his hand over his mouth in a gesture that said without words, "Man, I messed up?" The gesture is not only an expression of his failure but a recognition that he must do something to correct the damage he has done. It is as though the person was saying, "Man I did wrong, and I must make it right." The gesture then is admitting that a mistake has been made accompanied by a desire to make it right. This is exactly the idea Agur was trying to get across to Ithiel and Ucal. Basically, he was saying, "Guys, recognize that you have been awful sinners, and repent of your wickedness.!!!"

Having called for a repentant spirit on the part of these young men, Agur now tried to drive home the truth that if they continued following the path they had chosen, certain disaster awaited them. He said, *the churning of milk produces butter*. Son, as far as I know you have never operated a butter churn. Mom and I used to make butter at the boy's ranch, and it is tedious work. We would push the beater up and down for what seemed like a million times. We would reach a point where we were sure it would never turn to butter, and then all of a sudden, it would start getting hard. In what seemed like no time at all the cream turned to butter. If you keep at it long enough, I guarantee that the cream will turn to butter. As certainly as cream will turn to butter, *so the churning of anger produces strife*. Now, where does anger fit into the equation? It is simply the fact that these boys were agitating people around them so much with their proud, arrogant criticism that sooner or later people were going to reach a point where they would no longer put up with the boys' pride. Then those same people would make so much trouble for Ithiel and Ucal that there would be no rest for them.

Along the same line, Agur said that the *pressing the nose brings forth blood*. Simply stated, if you hit another person in the nose, it will bleed. There is nothing difficult to understand here. If you beat on people, you will hurt them, and if you beat on people long enough, they will retaliate against you. Therefore, *the churning of anger produces strife*. If these young men continued on the path they had chosen, they should expect so much trouble in return that it would destroy them.

I hope these young men had enough discernment to recognize their error and repent. The Scriptures simply don't say. Any wise young man would listen to rebuke and follow the advice of a godly man, but judging by how far these young men had traveled down the wrong road, it is unlikely that they heeded Agur's rebuke.

Prov. 30:32-33

³²If you have been **foolish** in **EXALTING YOURSELF**
or
If you have **PLOTTED EVIL,**

PUT YOUR HAND TO YOUR MOUTH.

³³For the churning of milk **produces** butter,
and
the pressing of the nose **brings forth** blood;

SO

the CHURNING OF ANGER

PRODUCES STRIFE.

Now we will add the last piece of the precision puzzle that comprises the total logic of chapter thirty. It is indeed a beautiful picture of the chapter.

Problem area	The surface indicators	The root causes	The wake-up call
Disrespect for parents	These boys felt they were smarter than old dad.	They showed hate & contempt for their parents	Disrespect for parents will come to a quick end.
Wrong view of sin	They saw themselves as spiritual leaders.	They could not see themselves as sinners.	They could see others' sins, but not their own.
Pride	They expected the most and the best.	They were proud and arrogant young men.	Other people could not stand to be around them.
Critical spirit	They slandered other people.	They sought to eliminate undesirables	Others have value. Stop being critical.

The Conclusion

Some things are stately, but not you guys.	Repent now or suffer the consequences.
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Son, you now have a complete look at the logic of the chapter, but you probably don't remember all the logic presented in the earlier portions of the commentary. Therefore, I am going to review and summarize the chapter so that you can see the whole picture clearly. Please follow along as we put the whole puzzle together in one neat package. I think you will find it to be a beautiful presentation by Agur. As we proceed, be sure to recognize that the three thoughts in each of the four rows of the chart go together as a unit. Each of the four sections to follow will maintain this pattern.

1) First, Agur confronted his disobedient sons about the undesirable things they were doing—the surface indicators of rebellion.

Problem area	The surface indicators	The root causes	The wake-up call
Disrespect for parents	These boys felt they were smarter than old dad.	They had hate & contempt for their mom and dad.	Disrespect for parents will come to a quick end.
Wrong view of sin	They saw themselves as spiritual leaders.	They could not see themselves as sinners.	They could see others' sins, but not their own.
Pride	They expected the most and the best.	They were proud and arrogant young men.	Other people could not stand to be around them.
Critical spirit	They slandered other people.	They sought to eliminate undesirables	Others have value. Stop being critical.

2) Next, he showed them the root causes of their rebellion.

Problem area	The surface indicators	The root causes	The wake-up call
Disrespect for parents	These boys felt they were smarter than old dad.	They had hate & contempt for their mom and dad.	Disrespect for parents will come to a quick end.
Wrong view of sin	They saw themselves as spiritual leaders.	They could not see themselves as sinners.	They could see others' sins, but not their own.
Pride	They expected the most and the best.	They were proud and arrogant young men.	Other people could not stand to be around them.
Critical spirit	They slandered other people.	They sought to eliminate undesirables	Others have value. Stop being critical.

3) Then he showed them what they needed to understand in order to correct their undesirable actions and attitudes.

Problem area	The surface indicators	The root causes	The wake-up call
Disrespect for parents	These boys felt they were smarter than old dad.	They had hate & contempt for their mom and dad.	Disrespect for parents will come to a quick end.
Wrong view of sin	They saw themselves as spiritual leaders.	They could not see themselves as sinners.	They could see others' sins, but not their own.
Pride	They expected the most and the best.	They were proud and arrogant young men.	Other people could not stand to be around them.
Critical spirit	They slandered other people.	They sought to eliminate undesirables	Others have value. Stop being critical.

4) Finally, he gave them an opportunity to repent and get it right.

Problem area	The surface indicators	The root causes	The wake-up call
Disrespect for parents	These boys felt they were smarter than old dad.	They had hate & contempt for their mom and dad.	Disrespect for parents will come to a quick end.
Wrong view of sin	They saw themselves as spiritual leaders.	They could not see themselves as sinners.	They could see others' sins, but not their own.
Pride	They expected the most and the best.	They were proud and arrogant young men.	Other people could not stand to be around them.
Critical spirit	They slandered other people.	They sought to eliminate undesirables	Others have value. Stop being critical.

The Conclusion

Some things are stately, but not you guys.	Repent now or suffer the consequences.
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Having seen the basic approach Agur took in his rebuke, we will now summarize each of the areas of the rebuke in turn.

A disrespect for parental authority.

If you will remember, in verses 1-4 (paragraph 1), Agur confronted the boys in a sarcastic way in order to help them see the kind of disrespect they were showing toward him—they thought they were smarter than old dad; in verse 11, he showed them that the root cause for such behavior was hate and contempt for their parents; and finally in verse 15-17 (paragraph 6), he showed them that their disrespect was going to come to a quick end if they didn't correct their behavior. It is plain to see that all three of these segments deal with a lack of respect for parental authority.

Problem area	The surface indicators	The root causes	The wake-up call
Disrespect for parents	These boys felt they were smarter than old dad.	Disrespect for parents will come to a quick end.	Disrespect for parents will come to a quick end.
Wrong view of sin	They saw themselves as spiritual leaders.	They could not see themselves as sinners.	They could see others' sins, but not their own.
Pride	They expected the most and the best.	They were proud and arrogant young men.	Other people could not stand to be around them.
Critical spirit	They slandered other people.	They sought to eliminate undesirables	Others have value. Stop being critical.

The Conclusion

Some things are stately, but not you guys.	Repent now or suffer the consequences.
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A distorted view of their own sinfulness

Next, in verses 5-6 (paragraph 2), he confronted them about the way they were claiming to be spiritual leaders without understanding anything about their own sin; in verse twelve, he showed them that the root cause for such behavior was that they did not see themselves as sinners; and in verses 18-20 (paragraph 7), he showed them that everyone else saw them as sinners. Even Ithiel and Ucal could see that the adulteress was sinning, but they could not see their own sin. It is plain to see that each of the three statements in this row dealt with a distorted view of the boys' own sinfulness.

Problem area	The surface indicators	The root causes	The wake-up call
Disrespect for parents	These boys felt they were smarter than old dad.	They had hate & contempt for their mom and dad.	Disrespect for parents will come to a quick end.
Wrong view of sin	They saw themselves as spiritual leaders.	They could not see themselves as sinners.	They could see others' sins, but not their own.
Pride	They expected the most and the best.	They were proud and arrogant young men.	Other people could not stand to be around them.
Critical spirit	They slandered other people.	They sought to eliminate undesirables	Others have value. Stop being critical.

The Conclusion

Some things are stately, but not you guys.	Repent now or suffer the consequences.
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A proud and arrogant attitude

Then in verses 7-9 (paragraph 3), he confronted them about the way they expected the best and the way they wanted to be treated the best; in verse thirteen, he showed them that the root cause of their distorted expectations was pride and arrogance; and in verses 21-23 (paragraph 8), he showed them that other people could not stand to be around them. There was simply no putting up with them when they were so demanding of respect and praise. Again, it is plain to see that all three of these statements deal with pride and what it causes.

Problem area	The surface indicators	The root causes	The wake-up call
Disrespect for parents	These boys felt they were smarter than old dad.	They had hate & contempt for their mom and dad.	Disrespect for parents will come to a quick end.
Wrong view of sin	They saw themselves as spiritual leaders.	They could not see themselves as sinners.	They could see others' sins, but not their own.
Pride	They expected the most and the best.	They were proud and arrogant young men.	Other people could not stand to be around them.
Critical spirit	They slandered other people.	They sought to eliminate undesirables	Others have value. Stop being critical.

The Conclusion

Some things are stately, but not you guys.	Repent now or suffer the consequences.
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A critical and destructive spirit

Finally, in verse ten (paragraph 10), he confronted them about slandering others; in verse fourteen he showed them that the root cause of their hurtful and degrading actions was a critical and destructive spirit; and in verses 24-28 (paragraph 9), he showed them that even the smallest of creatures have some value based upon the wisdom they display. Therefore, the people these boys sought to eliminate had value as well. As you can see, all three elements in this row deal with a critical and hurtful spirit.

Problem area	The surface indicators	The root causes	The wake-up call
Disrespect for parents	These boys felt they were smarter than old dad.	They had hate & contempt for their mom and dad.	Disrespect for parents will come to a quick end.
Wrong view of sin	They saw themselves as spiritual leaders.	They could not see themselves as sinners.	They could see others' sins, but not their own.
Pride	They expected the most and the best.	They were proud and arrogant young men.	Other people could not stand to be around them.
Critical spirit	They slandered other people.	They sought to eliminate undesirables	Others have value. Stop being critical.

The Conclusion

Some things are stately, but not you guys.	Repent now or suffer the consequences.
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The last two paragraphs (verses 29-31 and 32-33) form the conclusion of Agur's rebuke. First Agur stated that there were things that were rightfully called stately. In the last paragraph, He stated that although there were some who were stately, Ithiel and Ucal were not among them. Now he called for them to repent, and he shared with them that if they did not, certain disaster awaited them.

Problem area	The surface indicators	The root causes	The wake-up call
Disrespect for parents	These boys felt they were smarter than old dad.	They had hate & contempt for their mom and dad.	Disrespect for parents will come to a quick end.
Wrong view of sin	They saw themselves as spiritual leaders.	They could not see themselves as sinners.	They could see others' sins, but not their own.
Pride	They expected the most and the best.	They were proud and arrogant young men.	Other people could not stand to be around them.
Critical spirit	They slandered other people.	They sought to eliminate undesirables	Others have value. Stop being critical.

The Conclusion

Some things are stately, but not you guys.	Repent now or suffer the consequences.
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Now you have the logic of the chapter in a nutshell. Next, I would like to show you an interesting deduction. Please refer to the page you printed and the chart below. If paragraph 2 (verses 5-6), verse 12, and paragraph 7 (18-20) (all in red) deal with a distorted view of sin, and they do; if paragraph 3 (verses 7-9), verse 13, and paragraph 8 (verses 21-23) (all in green) deal with a proud and arrogant spirit, and they do; and if paragraph 4

(verse 10), verse 14, and paragraph 9 (verses 24-28) (all in blue) deal with a critical and destructive spirit, and they do; then I submit that paragraph 1 (verses 1-4), verse 11, and paragraph 6 (verses 15-17) (all in brown) deal with disrespect for parental authority. Since they do, every time I read the chapter, it is obvious that Agur is the actual father of Ithiel and Ucal. Why else would he say that he himself is more stupid than any man? If another were their father, he would have said that their father was more stupid than any man. The logic of the chapter drives me to the same conclusion over and over again. It is a fascinating concept. You may disagree, and if you do, that's fine. I, though, am as convinced as I can be.

Problem area	The surface indicators	The root causes	The wake-up call
Disrespect for parents	These boys felt they were smarter than old dad.	They had hate & contempt for their mom and dad.	Disrespect for parents will come to a quick end.
Wrong view of sin	They saw themselves as spiritual leaders.	They could not see themselves as sinners.	They could see others' sins, but not their own.
Pride	They expected the most and the best.	They were proud and arrogant young men.	Other people could not stand to be around them.
Critical spirit	They slandered other people.	They sought to eliminate undesirables	Others have value. Stop being critical.

The Conclusion

Some things are stately, but not you guys.	Repent now or suffer the consequences.
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Application:

It is a tremendous opportunity to have the privilege of gaining a good understanding of the context and structure of Proverbs chapter thirty, but it is of no real benefit unless you and I can draw some useful application for ourselves, our children, and our children's children. There is a great deal of value in understanding how Agur formulated the rebuke and how he approached his two rebellious sons. He used a three-step process. First, he confronted them head on about the things they were doing that were sinful and undesirable. Think about it for a moment. He didn't wait until school officials or the boys' pastor said something to them. No, he took the responsibility upon himself and did what needed to be done. Nothing is said in the text as to how the young men responded, but that is not the issue here. The important thing to remember is that the dad had enough courage and concern to confront his sons himself for their own good.

When you have children, there will be times when they will purposely do something wrong, and you must confront them about it. Do it yourself and don't wait for someone else to do it for you. Have enough courage and concern to deal with it yourself. Remember, it is not your wife's place to confront them. No, no, it is your responsibility and yours alone.

Second, he showed them the root causes that generated their unacceptable actions and attitudes. In step one, Agur showed the boys **WHAT** they were doing wrong. In step two, he showed them **WHY** they were doing these things. When you approach your children about something they have purposely done wrong, it will be your job to help them see and understand what generated their undesirable actions or attitudes. They need to know this in order to know what to change for the better in the future.

Third, he told them what they needed to understand in order to recognize the end result of their sin. He showed them how their disrespect for parental authority would one day come to a quick and complete end; he showed them how they could see sin in others, but they could not see their own sin; he showed them how other people could not stand to be around them because of their pride and arrogance; and he showed them that even those they intended to eliminate had some value. When you approach your children to discipline them, you need to tell them what their sin will cost them. They need to know how their sin will ultimately hurt them in the end. You won't want them to experience severe hurts and heartaches as a result of some sin, so you need to explain to them the disastrous results of sin before they become so entrenched in sin that there is no turning back.

Finally, he gave them an opportunity to repent of their sin. It was here that he reinforced the truth that if these guys continued on the path they had chosen, their life would end up in turmoil and disaster. When you discipline your children, you must seek for a repentant spirit on your child's part. It is not enough for a child to say "I'm sorry" if there is no intention on his part to change his behavior and abandon a sinful practice. The whole goal of discipline is a change of heart on the part of the one being disciplined. That is your goal, and that is your responsibility. Try your best to get your child to repent, and when he does, you have won your child.

The method Agur followed was a good one for any parent of a rebellious child. When a child is a young man, it is too late to spank him. He must be dealt with from a standpoint of sound biblical reasoning and logic. Once you have approached a rebellious young man in this manner, it is solely up to him to either heed your godly counsel and repent or reject your wisdom and sound advice.

Let me ask you, we have been talking here about the responsibility of a parent, but do you see a problem in your own life in any of the four areas Agur addressed? If you do, now would be a good time to face the problem head-on and get it right. Take Agur's advice and do what Ithiel and Ucal should have done. Repent, and get things right with the LORD and with those you have offended. There is no better time than right now to do it.

A) What Proverbs has to say about a parent's responsibility.

What does Proverbs teach about the relationship between parents and their sons? We will look at several verses from Proverbs and see for ourselves, but before we look at these verses, it is important to recognize that parents MUST PRACTICE what they teach their children. Consider what Judges 13:1-14 and 24-25 have to say. I have underlined the key phrases in the text that deal with this idea.

¹ Now the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, so that the LORD gave them into the hands of the Philistines forty years. ² And there was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren and had borne no children. ³ Then the angel of the LORD appeared to the woman, and said to her, "Behold now, you are barren and have borne no children, but you shall conceive and give birth to a son." ⁴ "Now therefore (YOU – Samson's mother), **be careful not to drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing.** ⁵ For behold, you shall conceive and give birth to a son, and no razor shall come upon his head, for the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines." ⁶ Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, "A man of God came to me and his appearance was like the appearance of the angel of God, very awesome. And I did not ask him where he came from, nor did he tell me his name." ⁷ But he said to me, "Behold, you shall conceive and give birth to a son, and now **you shall not drink wine or strong drink nor eat any unclean thing, for the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb to the day of his death**(YOU – Samson's mother)."

⁸ Then Manoah entreated the LORD and said, "O LORD, please let the man of God whom Thou hast sent come to us again that he may teach US (Samson's mom and dad) what to do for the boy who is to be born." ⁹ And God listened to the voice of Manoah; and the angel of God came again to the woman as she was sitting in the field, but Manoah her husband was not with her. ¹⁰ So the woman ran quickly and told her husband, "Behold, the man who came the other day has appeared to me." ¹¹ Then Manoah arose and followed his wife, and when he came to the man he said to him, "Are you the man who spoke to the woman?" And he said, "I am." ¹² And Manoah said, "Now when your words come to pass, what shall be the boy's mode of life and his vocation?" ¹³ So the angel of the LORD said to Manoah, "Let the woman pay attention to all that I said. ¹⁴ **She should not eat anything that comes from the vine nor drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing; let her observe all that I commanded.**"

²⁴ Then the woman gave birth to a son and named him Samson; and the child grew up **and the LORD blessed him.** ²⁵ And the Spirit of the LORD began to stir him in Mahaneh-dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol. (The gray text has been added for clarity)

Note that the angel did not tell the parents what Samson would do for a living except that he would be used of the LORD to begin delivering the children of Israel from the Philistines. What is important here is that the parents were required to practice what they were expected to teach their child as he grew up. Obviously, no parent today will raise another Samson, but the principle of living what we teach is still true. If we want our children to learn to love and fear the LORD, then we must love and fear the LORD as an example to them. We must do so from the

time they are born until the day we die. We simply will not be successful in teaching them godliness if we are not godly. We will not be successful in teaching them to love and fear the LORD if they do not see us love and fear the LORD. It simply doesn't work any other way. I share this with you because this is the foundation upon which all teaching of children must be based. If this is not done, then the results of whatever teaching we do for our children will fall far short of what God intends for them.

Have you ever tried to understand why Rheoboam tore the kingdom apart after Solomon's death? Think about it. Solomon shared in Ecclesiastes how he was never satisfied with what he had accomplished or gained. God gave him tremendous wisdom, but he wasn't satisfied with that. So, he pursued worldly wisdom. That didn't satisfy, so he pursued physical pleasures. They didn't satisfy, so he acquired vast possessions. They didn't satisfy. Finally, he pursued power and prestige. It didn't satisfy. Now why have I mentioned all of these ventures? It is simply this: everyone outside of the palace saw Solomon as one who had it all together, but his son, Rheoboam, saw the discontent his father harbored. Solomon told his son that wisdom was great and that he should pursue it, but I can just hear Rheoboam say about his dad, "Wisdom hasn't worked for you. Why should I pursue it? It is a waste of time." You see, Solomon didn't live what he was trying to teach his son, and he failed miserably. Therefore, you and I need to live the fear of the Lord and live good and godly before our children. It generates good success.

Mom and dad's responsibility:

If you truly love your son or daughter you will discipline him. Prov. 22:6 sums up the parents' responsibility to their child when it states, *"Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it."* I have heard this verse preached from half a dozen different perspectives, but I believe the teaching of this verse is very plain. In its simplest form it is a promise. If you do this, then that will result. I have paraphrased this verse based upon all that I have learned about Proverbs, and I believe it would read something like this:

"If you teach your child from infancy to love and fear the LORD, his love of God will be the driving force that causes him to do good, and his fear of God will be the driving force that causes him to turn away from sin and evil. If he learns these well while he is a child, he will still be doing good and turning away from sin and evil when he grows to be an old man." (JLSParaphrase)

This kind of attitude is what will keep a child on the right path even when severe trials come his way. So, it is your responsibility to teach him how to trust the LORD in this manner. It may be that you don't trust the LORD this way yourself, and if so, search the Scriptures. Find out for yourself how you can have this kind of productive faith and trust in the LORD.

In order to secure good results with your child you must discipline him. Prov. 13:24 states, *"He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently."* Strong's definition of *discipline* is *to teach, chasten, and/or correct*. Disciplining a child correctly is a lot of hard work, but if you really desire to see your children grow up to be good and godly men and women, you must teach them both by words and by example. It is your job to teach them how to live right, and you must punish them when they purposely do wrong. When they do choose to do wrong, you must correct them so that they will know the right thing to do the next time. The word *diligently* is commonly understood to mean *to do something consistently and with urgency*. If your child's future is really important to you, then discipline him every time it is needed and be consistent about it. Throughout the process, don't forget to show him that you love him even though you must discipline him.

Why should you discipline your children? Because Prov. 22:15 says, *"Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of discipline will remove it far from him."* No one wants a fool for a son, and no one wants their child doing foolish things that will end up hurting him. Prov. 29:15 states, *"The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother."* The opposite of a fool is a wise man. It should be every parent's desire to rear children who grow up to be wise men and women. Assuming this is your desire, you must start when the child is still in diapers in order to gain the outcome you want. Now, you may be somewhat hesitant about disciplining your child, but listen to Solomon's advice. Prov. 23:13 states, *"Do not hold back discipline from the child, although you beat him with the rod, he will not die."* Discipline is a process of teaching a child what to do and what not to do. Corporal punishment, or spanking, is only a small part of that. We can hope that our children will learn by a good example and by verbal instruction, but when they steadfastly refuse to obey, spanking is in order. I can testify that it works because my dad spanked me when I needed it, and I am grateful for it even today. I know that it saved me from some severe hurts and heartaches in the long run. I am convinced of this because I have seen what has resulted in the lives of my childhood friends who were allowed to do pretty much whatever they wanted during their teen years.

Start disciplining your child while he is an infant. Teach him as he grows, and he will make you happy. Prov. 29:17 states, *“Correct your son, and he will give you comfort; he will also delight your soul.”* I know several couples who let their children do their thing and didn’t correct them or didn’t correct them consistently. Most of those kids are rebels now in some form or another. It is tragic, but those parents ended up sowing what they reaped. They sowed apathy in disciplining their children, and they reaped havoc when their kids grew up. This doesn’t have to happen to you though. Determine that you and your wife-to-be will be consistent and faithful in disciplining your children. In the end, your kids will be a real source of comfort and joy even when they have grown into adulthood. It is a promise from Scripture. Now I realize that children can fall into the company of wrong companions and end up shipwrecked, but those who do are the exception if their parents do their job well.

We need to discipline our children before severe problems surface. Prov. 19:18 states, *“Discipline your son while there is hope, and do not desire his death.”* If parents put off training and disciplining their kids, there will most likely come a day when the full impact of their child’s rebellion comes crashing down upon their heads. When this happens, it hurts the parents so much that they might wish their child was dead. By the time a child has progressed this far in his rebellion, there is almost no resolution. It is much better to discipline kids consistently before they start going wrong than to try to salvage them after they have gotten into trouble.

The principle of treating someone as though they were family produces many benefits. Prov. 29:21 states, *“He who pampers his slave from childhood will in the end find him to be a son.”* I have heard of employees who have been treated well by their employer and, in time, were considered part of the family. Some of these same employers found the employee to be more of a son than their own kids. Treating people in a kind and loving manner reaps big dividends and produces joy and happiness in the relationship.

B) What Proverbs has to say about the son’s responsibility.

It is the parents’ responsibility to teach their children, but it is the child’s responsibility to be willing to listen to their parents’ teaching and then do what they are taught. Prov. 23:26 states, *“Give me your heart, my son, and let your eyes delight in my ways.”* This is the invitation by every godly parent to his child. If done from infancy, the rate of success is very high. Prov. 13:1 states, *“A wise son accepts his father’s discipline, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.”* This verse can be summed up by Prov. 20:11 which states, *“It is by his deeds that a lad distinguishes himself if his conduct is pure and right.”* It is obvious when you see an obedient, respectful child. It is not by accident that he is this way. It is usually a result of loving and caring parents who took the time and effort to properly love and discipline that child. If, on the other hand, you fail to discipline your child, he will not follow the path of doing good and right deeds. Prov. 19:27 states, *“Cease listening, my son, to discipline, and you will stray from the words of knowledge.”* When a child stops listening to good advice, he will follow bad advice from others who also refuse to listen to good advice. When this happens, disaster awaits just around the corner.

How the son’s actions affect his parents:

Son, one of the most important things a mom and dad can teach their kids is parental respect. Any son or daughter who looks at his parents with contempt or shows disrespect for them is a rebellious child. Prov. 19:26 states, *He who assaults his father and drives his mother away is a shameful and disgraceful son.* I am sure you have seen kids like this. Watching their actions and reactions toward their parents is disgusting and repulsive. Unfortunately, somewhere in the child’s past, he has gotten away with such undesirable behavior, and he was not disciplined in love for his own good. It is unfortunate for any child to have to experience such unhappiness and turmoil, but it affects more than just the child. It adversely affects the parents too.

Son, parents are hurt by their kids’ bad actions and attitudes. In fact, some parents have been destroyed by the reputation and responses of their kids. Prov. 19:13 states, *A foolish son is destruction to his father, and the contentions of a wife are a constant dripping.* I still remember when you were so openly bitter toward the LORD. It affected me so severely that at one point I even started questioning my own relationship with the LORD. For about a year I walked around asking myself, “How do I know there really is a God?” Fortunately for me, I spent a lot of time in the Scriptures, and every time I went to the Bible the same answer surfaced. There must be a God, and He is real. After a time of struggling with the matter, I finally came to the heart-felt conclusion that even if you rejected God and went to hell, I would follow Him with all my heart. Do you remember when I came to you and said, “Gregory, I am not worried about you anymore. God will bring you back to Himself.” At first you balked at the idea, but after a little while you understood what I meant. I still feel the same way today.

Rebellious sons and daughters hurt their parents in other ways too. Prov. 17:25 states, *A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her who bore him*. Parents of such children are in a constant state of turmoil and stress. In some cases, the pressure is so great that the parents wish the child had never been born. Some parents are so humiliated by their son or daughter that they don't want to face other people. Prov. 28:7 states, *He who keeps the law is a discerning son, but he who is a companion of gluttons humiliates his father*. It is hard to face friends and family members when your child has made a mess of his life, but somehow we find a way to move on with life. Although we discussed Prov. 19:18 in the previous section, it is worth repeating here. It tells us to, *"Discipline your son while there is hope, and do not desire his death"*. Hopefully you will start disciplining your children while they are young so that you won't have to experience a rebellious son or daughter. Solomon knew how devastating children could be to their parents, so he started the random verses section of Proverbs with verse 10:1 which states, *The proverbs of Solomon. A wise son makes a father glad, but a foolish son is a grief to his mother*. He reinforced the idea in Prov. 15:20 where he wrote, *A wise son makes a father glad, but a foolish man despises his mother*. Every father and mother wants their son or daughter to be wise, but in order to end up that way, they must be taught, corrected, and disciplined for their own good.

It is hard and painful to have a rebellious son or daughter in the home, but it is pleasant and satisfying to have a wise son or daughter under your roof. Prov. 23:15 states, *My son, if your heart is wise, my own heart also will be glad...* Another verse, Prov. 23:24 tells us that *The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice, and he who begets a wise son will be glad in him*. Because these statements are true, Solomon encouraged his own son to be wise when he wrote in Prov. 27:11, *Be wise, my son, and make my heart glad, that I may (have a good and appropriate) reply to him who reproaches me*. (The gray text has been added for clarity). He, too, wanted his son to be wise. It is unfortunate that when he wrote the book of Ecclesiastes, he wondered whether his own son would be a wise man someday. He knew for certain that his son was not a wise man at that point in his life. It is sad that with all the writing and teaching Solomon did, his own son, Rheoboam, turned out to be such a foolish man.

Pray for your sons and daughters like your mom and I have prayed for you and your sister all these years. We have also been praying that the LORD would mold your wife-to-be into a good and godly woman. You are probably saying, "Yeah, right. I'm not even married yet." True, but when the LORD brings the right young lady across your path and you marry, there will most likely be children born to you. It never hurts to plan ahead.

Twenty-two times in Proverbs, Solomon or one of the other writers made the statement something like this: "My son, listen to what I have to say." Below is a list of some of those verses. Take the time to read and ponder them. You will surely benefit from those instructions.

Prov. 1:8, 10, 15; 2:1, 3:1, 11, 21; 4:10, 20; 5:1, 20; 6:1, 3, 20; 7:1; 19:27; 23:15, 19, 26
24:13, 21; 27:11

C) What Proverbs has to say about a distorted view of sin?

All of us are sinners, but many people simply cannot see that they have done anything bad enough to classify themselves as sinners. This kind of person is unsaved even though he may be religious. He thinks that if his good works outweigh his sins, he will be ushered into heaven by a loving God. The LORD knows that there are countless people in this condition and that their end is a devil's hell. They either do not understand what the Bible says about salvation by faith in Christ, or they refuse to believe it.

Oh, but there is another class of people who cannot see their sin, and I believe that Ithiel and Ucal were among those. These guys made an outward show of religion, and they thought they were good enough by virtue of their religion to qualify for heaven. Some people of this persuasion are actually church leaders teaching their distorted view of sin as though it were the gospel. I suspect that even some in our own church believe that they are good enough on their own merit to deserve heaven. Hopefully the preaching of the true gospel of salvation by faith in Christ alone without works will sink in before it is too late, and they will receive Christ.

I'd like to take a rabbit trail at this point to see if we can figure out what class of sinners these Ithiel and Ucal fall into. 1 John 1:5-10 expands upon the principle of a distorted view of sin by some who claimed to be part of the church of Christ. I will illustrate this passage in chart form, and it will help you understand the heart attitude of Ithiel and Ucal in Proverbs chapter thirty. We are looking at 1 John chapter 1 in order to understand the kind of people they were and which distorted view of sin they might have harbored. You see, these two guys were totally clueless about their sinfulness. As far as we know, they felt that they were moral, upstanding children of God. They felt there was no need to confess their sins because, in their eyes, they didn't have any. Consequently, their load of sin grew greater and greater as the days went by. Since they did not confess and forsake their sin, it went unforgiven, and any fellowship they might have had with God, if there really was any, had been broken.

Why do we do the things we do? We do them because we feel that they are okay. When we discover that we are doing something wrong, our conscience lets us know, and normal folks recognize that they should stop doing that thing. This is what should happen, but unfortunately we are usually the last ones to become aware of our own faults. Others see them in us long before we do, but most of the time they will not tell us the truth about ourselves. That is unfortunate, because all of us have blind spots. Others would do us a favor by lovingly telling us where we are going wrong or failing.

It is important to get a firm grasp on the fact that sin does break our fellowship with God. As long as we have one or more pet sins that we enjoy and practice on a regular basis, we simply cannot have sweet fellowship with Christ or with the Father. First John sheds valuable light on this subject and gives us insight into the type of young men Ithiel and Ucal might have been. Look with me as we examine that text.

1 John 1:5-10

⁵ And this is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; ⁷ but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

Let's arrange the text in a different form so that it explains itself. I will take you through the discussion of the text, and then we will apply it to both Ithiel and Ucal's situation back then.

The Standard

⁵ And this is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.

In verse five, John established the fact that God the Father Himself is the right and only One against whom we should compare ourselves. The verse simply states that *"God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all."* As you read and study First John, it will quickly become apparent that *"light"* refers to **moral and spiritual purity**, whereas *"darkness"* refers to **the practice of sinning in some form or another**. Therefore, we rightfully conclude that God is completely pure and free from sin. He is the perfect example of one who is good in every way. We human beings, though, like to compare ourselves to someone who is a worse sinner than we are so that we don't look like such a bad person. It may make us feel better about ourselves by comparing ourselves with someone else, but when we compare ourselves to a perfect and holy God, we are shown up for what we really are –sinners by nature and sinners by choice. The Scriptures say in 2 Corinthians 10:12 that *"For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise."* (KJV). So, we must compare ourselves with the only perfect One who ever existed, and that is Jesus Christ. By doing so, it is impossible to feel better about our sin by claiming that the next guy is a worse sinner than we are. After all, we wouldn't choose to compare ourselves with someone who is a really good guy. No, we naturally choose someone who is an obvious sinner so that we can make ourselves look better. When we compare ourselves with the LORD, our sinfulness stands out like a sore thumb, and we are able to see how bad our sin really is.

Having established the standard against which we must compare ourselves, there are only four conditions in which a believer or professing believer can find himself. The first condition is the man who knows that sin will keep him from fellowship with God, so he abandons every sin. When he does commit some sin, he confesses and forsakes it right away. This is the man who walks in close fellowship with the LORD and finds peace. Prov. 28:13

sums up this man well when it states, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." (KJV) God will forgive this man's sins and walk closely with that son.

The other three conditions are to be avoided by all believers who want to be right with the LORD. In each of the three cases the statement "if we say" has been made. Since the text uses the word "we," it is plain that the people who make these claims are members of the church or gave the impression that they are members of the body of Christ. We can claim anything we want, but claiming something does not make it true in and of itself. There needs to be evidence that will substantiate our claim. For each **claim** the text shows the person's true **condition** and what is necessary to understand in order to find a **cure** for the undesirable behavior.

The first undesirable condition – Some were practicing a pet sin and still professed that they were enjoying fellowship with God.

The Claim: Verse 6a – "*If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness...*"

There are people who really think they are in fellowship with the LORD even though they are practicing some pet sin. We are not talking here about one sin. No, we are talking about someone who is making a practice of doing some particular sin over and over again. Deep down inside they know the truth (that is, that they are sinning), but they do not want to own up to it nor do they want others to know that they are involved in the sin. They either don't understand the fact that their sin has caused God to break fellowship with them or they simply don't care. Either way, their fellowship with God has been severed. This does not mean that God has disowned them. No, no! They are still children of God if they have truly been born again, but they are disobedient children of God. The only thing that has been severed is their fellowship with God, and that only lasts as long as it takes for the sinner to repent and forsake his sin.

The Condition: Verse 6b "*we lie and do not practice the truth.*"

None of us wants to think that we are liars, but that is exactly what this type of person is. If he were honest with himself, he would have to admit that he knows right from wrong, but he has chosen to do wrong. He is in direct disobedience to God's demands in the Scriptures. He will most likely try to justify his actions so that he can feel better about his sin, but he knows better. If he would examine the Scriptures closely and without bias, he would realize his error. The problem is that he feels he is OK and that his sin is no big deal. Deep down inside he knows the truth, but he is **not practicing it**. He does not realize that he cannot practice the truth and practice a lie at the same time. It is impossible. He can only do one or the other, and this guy has chosen to do wrong.

Notice that the text says that he is lying. How is he lying? He is lying by failing to admit that he really is sinning against a holy God, that God is watching everything he does, and that God will one day bring him into account for the sins he commits. You see, he is lying to himself. Others may see his lifestyle of sinning, but for whatever reason, he is either unwilling to admit to himself that his sin really is something bad or he is so engrossed in his sin that he will not or cannot give it up. The key thing to remember here is that **he is not practicing the truth he knows**.

The Cure: Verse 7 "*but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.*"

God delights in offering His children an opportunity to repent after they have sinned, and He encourages them to find restored fellowship with Him. Although confession of sin is part of the process of being restored to fellowship, the emphasis of this verse is on **repentance**. The first part of verse six shows some professing believers practicing one or more pet sins, that is, they are going the wrong way in relation to the LORD and His Word. In verse seven, there is a 180 degree change in direction. Whereas they were practicing some pet sin, here they are encouraged to abandon that sin and start the practice of doing good in its place. To correct any sin, men must first recognize that they are sinning and then confess and forsake it. When they do, the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses them of those sins so that those sins do not come between them and a holy God. Once the sin problem is confessed, abandoned, and forgiven, fellowship with the LORD and with other believers is automatically restored without having to do anything else. This is the normal and natural result of a life free from the practice of sin. Keep in mind, though, that the essence of the turn-around of a sinning believer is still **repentance**.

The Standard

⁵ And this is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.

The Claim	The Condition	The Cure
<p>⁶ <u>If we say</u> that we have fellowship with Him <u>and yet walk in the darkness,</u></p>	<p>we lie and <u>do not practice the truth;</u></p>	<p>⁷ <u>but if we walk in the light</u> (<i>repentance</i>) as He Himself is in the light, <u>we have fellowship</u> with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.</p>

The second undesirable condition – Some believed they were not able to sin anymore.

The Claim: Verse 8a *“If we say that we have no sin”*

In verse six some folks claimed that they were experiencing sweet fellowship with the LORD even though they were actively practicing some pet sin. They either didn't understand that their sin was a serious problem, or they didn't care. In verse eight the picture is different. Here folks were making the claim that they had reached the point that they didn't sin anymore. This condition (if it were really possible) is called “sinless perfection.” In their eyes, they had grown so much in their spiritual life that they were above sinning. They may have thought they were living without sinning, but I'm sure their husband or wife would quickly say differently.

The Condition: Verse 8b *“We are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”*

Anyone who truly believes that he has reached sinless perfection is, as the text says, deceiving himself. He isn't fooling anyone else. The reason he cannot see his sin is because he does not understand the truth of the Scriptures. In the first condition, sinning believers were not practicing the truth they knew, but in this second condition, it is clear that these folks **do not know the truth**. Romans 3:23 states, *“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”* Christ Himself reinforced this idea when he said to a young man in Matthew 19:16-17 *“And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God...”* (KJV).” When we receive Jesus Christ as personal Savior, our sins are under the blood, but we still have a sin nature. It is a constant struggle for a believer who really wants to experience a deep, personal, intimate fellowship with the LORD to keep himself pure from sin. We are sinners by nature, and we must work hard at living a pure life. God Himself told Cain the same thing in Genesis 4:7 where He said, *“If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it.”* It is each person's responsibility to avoid sinning. It is a choice, but avoiding sin is a task we must all undertake.

Solomon asked the question in Prov. 20:9 where he wrote, *“Who can say, “I have cleansed my heart, I am pure from my sin”?”* His question was not merely one of wondering who could legitimately say such a thing, but it was also a rhetorical question saying in essence, “There is no one who can rightfully make such a claim.”

The Psalmist knew he was a sinner. His testimony is recorded in Psalm 106:6 where he states, *“We have sinned like our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have behaved wickedly.”* The New Testament states it another way in Acts 7:51 where the Pharisees were being rebuked. It said of them, *“You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did.”* They acted this way because they had a sin nature. I realize these were unregenerate men, but we believers do the same thing if we are not careful to guard our manner of living and thinking.

The Cure: Verse 9 *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*

It is true that we sin after we become children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. Ah, but we don't have to make a practice of it, and we don't have to carry the burden of our sin. No, when we sin we can go to the LORD in prayer, confess the sin, forsake it, and He will forgive us. So then, **confession** is what is needed. According to Strong's, the word *confess* means **to say the same thing as another** or **to admit or declare one's self guilty of what one is accused of doing**. When we agree with God that we have sinned and we admit our wrong, the LORD will hear and forgive. Understand one thing though — recognizing and admitting that we have done wrong demands some corrective action on our part. To confess our sins with the full intention of committing those same sins again is not confession at all. There must be a desire to change our actions even if in a time of weakness we fail and commit the same sin again.

Isn't it wonderful that when we confess our sins He forgives us, and He forgives us completely? Our sins are as Psalm 103:12 states removed from us *“as far as the east is from the west.”*

The Standard

⁵ And this is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.

The Claim	The Condition	The Cure
⁶ If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness,	we lie and do not practice the truth;	⁷ but if we walk in the light (<i>repentance</i>) as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.
⁸ If we say that we have no sin,	we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us.	⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

The third undesirable condition – Some believed that they had never sinned.

The Claim: Verse 10a *“If we say that we have not sinned”*

Whereas the previous verse showed people who believed they were not sinning now, the people in verse ten felt that they had never sinned, not even once in their entire life. It is a fact that there are people in this world who truly believe that they have never done anything “wrong enough” to make them a sinner. They feel that being a sinner is reserved for someone who has murdered or robbed or cheated in such a big way that they have been caught and brought to trial. The little things they do that we see as wrong are no big deal to them.

The Condition: Verse 10b *“we make Him a liar, and His Word is not in us.”*

Anyone who believes this way is only deceiving himself and is calling God a liar. God inspired the Scriptures, and what they say is exactly what God wanted them to say. When Romans 3:23 states, *“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God”* (KJV), He means that every man, woman, and child is a sinner. It is as plain as

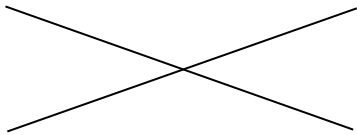
that. Because the Word of God is true and God Himself is true, when a man or woman claims that they have never sinned, they are calling God Himself a liar. This is some pretty heavy stuff when we start calling the God of heaven a liar. People do this because they have no concept of what the Word of God says about their sin. They may know what Romans 3:23 SAYS, but they have no idea what it MEANS. As a result, their words say that the verse is not true and that they themselves are just fine. They don't feel they need salvation because they are good enough already.

The Cure: (Not stated)

Unfortunately, there is no cure for this condition. There is a big X in the box labeled cure for verse ten. You see, until or unless a man is willing to admit that he is a sinner, there is absolutely no way he can be saved and have his sins forgiven. He is lost and blind to his condition. Yes, unless a man is born again by accepting the free gift of eternal life offered by God through the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ, on the cross of Calvary, that man is lost in his sin and bound for hell. The Bible is very clear on this matter.

The Standard

⁵ And this is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.

The Claim	The Condition	The Cure
⁶ If we <u>say</u> that we have fellowship with Him <u>and yet walk in the darkness</u> ,	<u>we lie</u> and <u>do not practice the truth</u> ;	⁷ but if we <u>walk in the light</u> (<i>repentance</i>) as He Himself is in the light, <u>we have fellowship</u> with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.
⁸ If we <u>say</u> that we <u>have no sin</u> ,	<u>we are deceiving ourselves</u> , and <u>the truth is not in us</u> .	⁹ If we <u>confess our sins</u> , He is faithful and righteous to <u>forgive us</u> our sins and to <u>cleanse us</u> from all unrighteousness.
¹⁰ If we <u>say</u> that we <u>have not sinned</u> ,	<u>we make Him a liar</u> , and <u>His Word is not in us</u> .	

In summary:

The key things to remember from 1 John 1:5-10 are these:

- 1) There are some believers who avoid or abandon sin and experience sweet fellowship with the LORD.
- 2) There are some who know the truth but do not practice the truth. It is not that they don't know the truth. They know it all right, but to them knowing the truth is their security blanket. They do not feel any need to

practice what they know because they are secure in the fact that they believe a certain thing to be true. It may be that they are enjoying their sin so much that they do not want to give it up, but for whatever reason, they **DO NOT PRACTICE THE TRUTH**. They are truly deceiving themselves, and most of the time, they don't even know it. For someone in this condition, **repentance** is the key to restored fellowship with the LORD.

2) There are some who feel that they do not sin anymore, and they think they are in fellowship with the LORD. They feel that they have reached the point of "sinless perfection." They are not saying they have never sinned but that they are not sinning today. What they need, though, is to acknowledge their sin and **confess** it in order to find restored fellowship with the LORD. These people not only don't practice the truth, they **DO NOT KNOW THE TRUTH**. The worst part of this situation is that they have no concept that they don't know the truth about their sinfulness. For a person in this condition, **admitting** and **confessing their sin** is the key to forgiveness and restoration.

3) There are some who feel they have never sinned, not even once in their life. They are lost in their sin and doomed to hell. Until or unless they learn to see themselves as sinners, there is no hope of being saved. For a person in this condition, there is nothing anyone can do for them spiritually until they admit that they are sinners. Once they do, they have an opportunity to trust Christ in salvation. There truly is no cure for this condition. These people not only don't know the truth, **THEY DON'T EVEN KNOW OR UNDERSTAND THE WORD THAT CONTAINS THE TRUTH**.

Into which category would you place Ithiel and Ucal? 1) They may have had a head knowledge about the Messiah and simply didn't see their sin as being filthy deeds and thoughts. If so, they would not have experienced any real fellowship with the LORD no matter what they claimed. 2) They may have thought they had become so good that they were above sinning. I have met a few people who believed they had reached this point, but I found them to be proud and critical people. Ithiel and Ucal may have been in this condition taking into account the extreme pride and arrogance they harbored. 3) They may never have seen themselves as sinners in the first place. In all three cases, they could easily justify their actions in their own minds. I'm sure that it was obvious to others that these two guys were sinners, but they themselves didn't have a clue. I would place Ithiel and Ucal into one of the last two conditions since they appeared to be unable to understand their own sinfulness. My own dad was like this. He went to good Bible preaching and teaching churches as long as I can remember, but when I became an adult, I discovered that he was shacking up with as many as seven women during the same time period while he was still married to my mom. He felt there was nothing wrong with his actions because his father taught him adultery was OK. Ithiel and Ucal not only couldn't see their own sinfulness, but they thought they were called of God to teach others what the Scriptures were "really" saying (see Prov. 30:5-6). The key thing to remember here is that these boys paraded around trying to give the impression that they were good men and God's spokesmen. Man, what a delusion.

Son, before we move on to other topics, let me ask you something. What is your own view of your sinfulness? Can you clearly and accurately see yourself for what you really are inside? Have you ever really examined your life in-depth by comparing your thoughts and actions with what the Scriptures say you should be doing? If you have, then you are way ahead of Ithiel and Ucal. If you haven't, then you have the perfect opportunity right now to see and correct any undesirable actions or thought processes. Why don't you do it now? Learn what the Scriptures require of you, call upon the LORD, and admit that what you are doing or have done is wrong. Then confess your sins and change your manner of living by abandoning those pet sins. In their place, start practicing the truth as conveyed in the Bible. I guarantee that you will find and experience sweet fellowship with the LORD after you do. I do not share this with you because I see some gross sin in your life, but I hope you will take an honest look at yourself to really evaluate where you stand with the LORD. When you do, any deficiencies will become obvious to you, and you can correct them.

Proverbs 31:1-31

A bachelor's shopping list when looking for a wife.

Gregory,

I feel safe in saying that any time Proverbs 31 is mentioned, most people think about the virtuous woman (verses 10-31). Although that is a major portion of the text, there is more to the chapter than just "*her*." In this discussion you will see a wonderful correlation between advice on abstaining from alcoholic beverages (verses 1-9) and advice on finding an excellent wife (verses 10-31). I submit that you cannot accurately understand the passage on the virtuous woman without seeing how the passage on alcohol ties in so beautifully. If you give this discussion your undivided attention, you will find a wonderful treasure.

It is essential for you understand who was writing this chapter, who advised him, and who his mother was referring to when she mentioned the virtuous woman. Look at verse one of the chapter and see what political title Lemuel held? Obviously he was a king. That made his mother a queen mother. Both he and she were royalty. So royalty was advising royalty. She advised, and he recorded her advice for posterity. The woman his mother discussed was the kind of woman she desired Lemuel to choose as his wife. It is obvious, then, that when this virtuous woman married Lemuel she would become a queen. So then, royalty was advising royalty about selecting a wife who would become royalty. You might be asking why I feel the need to stress this point. It is simple. A queen could simply be content to be a figurehead where servants would wait on her hand and foot, and no one would think it strange. Oh, but the woman Lemuel's mom advised him to seek was a woman who wanted to do things with her hands. She was not content to sit around all day and do nothing. Remember these facts as we proceed through the chapter because they are the key that will help women of today understand that they don't need to feel inferior to her or guilty about not being able to do all of the things an average believer *perceives* she does in a day.

Keep in mind that this chapter was recorded for posterity by a good man for good men who would live long after he was dead and gone. It is apparent that Lemuel was a good, moral man. This truth is evidenced by the fact that chapter 31 was included in the Scriptures. If he had not been a good, moral man, he would have had no reason to record instruction on how to live right. Gregory, it pays to live right, and it always has. I am glad that you have lived in a manner that shows you fear the LORD. I have seen many people scoff at sound morals and pure living, but you are different. I have watched you, and you have a healthy respect for the LORD and His ability and willingness to punish sin. I am glad that you have not followed the example of your shipmates by drinking and carousing with loose women. I commend you for your self-discipline and courage to stand for your convictions in the face of a sometimes-ridiculing group of shipmates. I pray often that you will keep up the good work now that you are out in the civilian workplace. It is my goal to show you from Proverbs and other selected Scriptures the positives and negatives of why you should avoid alcoholic beverages and how you should choose an excellent woman as your wife. It is also my goal to show women who read this discussion why they don't need to feel guilty that they are not "*like her*." Ladies, as you read, you will see that you definitely are not like her.

Proverbs chapter 31 is a wonderful lesson on the positive aspects of abstaining from alcoholic beverages, and it will teach a king how to find a good queen. We will look first at the positive reasons why we should avoid drinking alcoholic beverages, and then we will discuss the positive aspects of women—that is, the excellent wife (virtuous woman). At the end of the chapter, we will discuss the negative aspects of drinking alcoholic beverages. We have already discussed the adulterous woman since it includes all or parts of Proverbs chapters 2, 5, 6, 7, and 9. That discussion would be too lengthy to include in this chapter of the commentary. I hope the things we discuss here and in the commentary on morally loose women will solidify forever your determination to avoid alcoholic beverages and illicit sexual relations. What you learn here should be sufficient to establish or reinforce good, sound convictions, and it should also give you enough positive information to argue your case for abstinence with anyone who asks a reason for your godly lifestyle. Best of all, it should give you enough information to help you make an excellent choice in a wife.

There are many things that can ruin your life, but by far the two most devastating sins are drunkenness and illicit sexual relationships. It is unfortunate for believers that these sins do not affect only the unsaved. Believers can be captured by them as well. It is important to understand that a believer in Christ is capable of doing any sinful act an unsaved man or woman can do given the right circumstances and frame of mind. I have seen some godly leaders

fall prey to adultery and some to alcohol, so it is in your best interest to guard yourself against these two potentially devastating sinful activities. Chapter 31 deals with both, but as I said above, it deals with them from a positive perspective. Simply being told not to do something is much less effective than being told why you should not do it and what to do in its place.

Please understand something here. It is your responsibility to choose not to sin. I am reminded of the situation in Genesis chapter four where God rejected Cain's offering. This made Cain very angry. In verse 7 God said to him, *"If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it."* (KJV, underling added for clarity). Your *countenance* is simply your facial expression. So then, the phrase *"your countenance be lifted up"* basically means that you will have a smile on your face. The phrase, *"its desire is for you"* is basically saying that sin's desire is to master you and finally destroy you. Never lose sight of the fact that sin can and will destroy you if you let it. Notice that God placed the responsibility of avoiding sin squarely upon the shoulders of Cain. The LORD simply said that *you must master it* so that the devil will not be successful in convincing you to do wrong. In spite of God's warning, Cain killed Able in a fit of anger. We have somewhat of an advantage over Cain in that Christ gave us a new nature when we were born again, and this new nature gives us the power to successfully avoid or abandon sinful practices. Even so, you and I have the same responsibility to resist the temptation of giving into sin. By learning the Scriptures and meditating upon them, we can be successful in this area. Just remember, though, that avoiding sinful practices is up to you. It is your choice and your responsibility, so choose well.

As you will see, verses 4-9 of chapter 31 are based upon the aspect of **responsibility**. Lemuel was a ruler and needed to have a sound mind so that he could judge his subjects justly and accurately. As ruler, he could be called upon to judge a matter of law at any moment, and he could not judge rightly if he were drunk. This chapter also deals with a responsible woman (verses 10-31). She not only cares well for her home, but she also helps her husband be a responsible ruler. Try to keep this idea of **responsibility** in mind as we examine both drinking and women.

Before we proceed, I feel it is necessary to mention that you cannot fully understand verses 10-31 about the excellent wife (virtuous woman) without understanding how verses 1-9 are coupled together with them. Much has been said, written, and preached about the virtuous woman, but precious little has been said or written about verses 1-9. It is unfortunate that these verses are so frequently overlooked because they set the stage for understanding what Lemuel's mother was trying to teach about the virtuous woman. I am convinced that all of chapter 31 goes together as a unit rather than containing two separate paragraphs that have virtually nothing to do with each other. I freely admit that this is a rather unconventional approach to the chapter, but I believe that after you have read this commentary and see the correlation between the two paragraphs, you too will agree that the chapter goes together as a unit. If you don't agree, that's fine. I would not argue the point with you, but I am convinced. Please read all of this chapter of the commentary and avoid the temptation to go directly to the discussion on the virtuous woman. Skipping the discussion on alcoholic beverages will make the logic of the discussion on *"her"* less effective.

Commentary

1. The premise of the chapter (verses 1-3)

A) A Mother's teaching (verse 1)

¹ The words of King Lemuel, the oracle which his mother taught him:

The first part of verse one states, *"The words of King Lemuel."* All of the commentaries I have read agree that no one really knows for sure who this man was or whether Lemuel was his real name. All we know for sure about Lemuel is that he was a king who had a wise mother. His identity is not important for this study, but what is important is the fact that his writings were included as part of the Scriptures. I have heard some folks preach that Lemuel was an alias for Solomon, but I personally don't think he had any part in writing this chapter. It is quite likely that someone penned the words after Solomon's death and included them in the book. Prov. 31:26a says that the

virtuous woman “*opens her mouth in wisdom.*” This phrase tells me that the author of Proverbs 31 felt that at least some women were wise. Ecclesiastes appears to tell us that Solomon didn’t see any woman that way. In Ecclesiastes 7:23-28 he wrote,

²³ I tested all this with wisdom, and I said, “I will be wise,” but it was far from me. ²⁴ What has been is remote and exceedingly mysterious. Who can discover it? ²⁵ I directed my mind to know, to investigate and to seek wisdom and an explanation, and to know the evil of folly and the foolishness of madness. ²⁶ And I discovered more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets, whose hands are chains. One who is pleasing to God will escape from her, but the sinner will be captured by her. ²⁷ “Behold, I have discovered this,” says the Preacher, “adding one thing to another to find an explanation, ²⁸ which I am still seeking but have not found. I have found one man among a thousand, but I have not found a woman among all these.”

Since Solomon didn’t know of a single wise woman, it is unlikely he would have written a chapter in Proverbs that claimed the excellent wife speaks with wisdom. So then, for the purpose of our discussion, it doesn’t really matter whether Solomon, Lemuel, or someone else wrote our text. What is important is that this chapter contains sound advice and counsel on how young men (and older men too) can avoid heartaches and enjoy the blessings of good choices in two crucial areas of living.

Son, I have a question for you. Is this chapter a man’s idea of a good woman, or is it a woman’s idea of a good woman? Surprisingly, most people I have asked don’t know. The text itself gives us the answer. Look at the second half of verse one. It says, “*the oracle which his mother taught him.*” It is obvious from the text that Lemuel’s mother was the one doing the teaching. Therefore, Lemuel merely recorded her teaching for posterity. He knew that young men for generations to come would benefit from her wise advice. It is obvious, then, that this chapter is a woman’s idea of a good woman, not a man’s. Lemuel’s mother was concerned about her son’s well-being and tried to help him know what to do and what to avoid. Imagine your mom sharing something like this with you out of a heart of love and concern for your welfare. If you can picture this discussion that way, it will become more personal to you.

Chapter 31 is what the Scriptures call an *oracle*. The King James Version translates it as *the prophecy that his mother taught him*. Strong’s Concordance states that the essence of the *prophecy* or the *oracle* is sharing a “burden.” All of chapter 31 is the expression of a deep “burden” by a loving and caring mother for the welfare of her son. Her strong “burden” for her son drove her to tell him how to become and remain a good young man and not let alcohol or immoral women destroy him. The same Hebrew word is used in Habakkuk 1:1 where it states, “*The oracle which Habakkuk the prophet saw.*” In both Habakkuk and Proverbs, there was a strong desire to share information that was vital to the future of those for whom the oracle was being given.

Lemuel’s mother had lived long enough to see how abuses in the areas of alcohol and illicit sex had destroyed numbers of men, and she didn’t want her son to experience those same hurts and heartaches. Please keep in mind that Lemuel was a king and his mother was most likely a queen. Therefore, she taught him from the perspective of royalty and seasoned her teaching with generous doses of *responsibility*. Keep this thought in mind as we proceed through the chapter, especially when we discuss the virtuous woman. We will touch on the aspect of *responsibility* several times at appropriate places later in this discussion.

B) A mother’s right to advise her son (verse 2)

Proverbs 1:1-9

¹ The words of King Lemuel, the oracle which his mother taught him:

² What, O my son? And what, O son of my womb? and what, O son of my vows?

At the beginning of her teaching Lemuel's mother wanted to establish her right to advise her son. Verse two states,

*“What, O my son?
And what, O son of my womb?
And what, O son of my vows?”*

You might be asking yourself like I did early in this study, “What in the world was she trying to say? It doesn't make any sense to me.” Fortunately, after meditating upon this portion of text, it finally dawned upon me that she was merely telling Lemuel why she, above everyone else, had a perfect right to advise him. This was a good reason for him to listen to what she had to say. Consider the sequence of her statements. In today's vocabulary she was saying something like this:

“Lemuel, you are my son legally; you are my son physically; and you are my son as the result of the many vows I made to God concerning you. Who has more right to advise you than me? Therefore, listen carefully to what I am about to tell you, and do it. In the end you will be glad you did.”

So if we look at the Scripture again and add the labels for each statement it would look something like this:

What, O my son? _____ (He was her son legally)
And what, O son of my womb? _____ (He was her son physically)
And what, O son of my vows?” _____ (He was her son spiritually because of her vows to God)

These three things are ample reasons for any son to listen to and obey his godly mother. It is obvious by her words that she cared deeply about the welfare of her son, and she really wanted him to see and understand her concern.

C) A mother's warning (verse 3)

Verse three states, *“Do not give your strength to women, or your ways to that which destroys kings.”*

Proverbs 1:1-9

¹ The words of King Lemuel, the oracle which his mother taught him:

² What, O my son? And ← His mother legally
 what, O son of my womb? And ← His mother physically
 what, O son of my vows? ← His mother spiritually

³ Do not give your strength to women, or your ways to that which destroys kings.

After establishing her right to advise her son, she summed up the whole chapter in one verse. There are two distinct things Lemuel was to avoid. The first was illicit sexual relations, and the second was something that could destroy him as a king. Now, it is easy to understand what Lemuel's mother was referring to when she told him not to sleep with prostitutes, loose women, or other men's wives, but at a casual reading, it is not really clear what she meant when she talked about *that which destroys kings*. Without referring to the text of verses 4-9, there are a number of things that could destroy people, but when we consider what the text itself teaches, it is obvious that she

was referring to only one thing: the drinking of alcoholic beverages. In fact, she dealt with drinking in excess, and drinking in excess equals drunkenness.

The second topic of verse three is the statement, *“Do not give your strength to women.”* This instruction is rather straightforward compared to the one referring to alcoholic beverages. Here Lemuel’s mother was simply saying that he shouldn’t waste his strength on illicit sexual relations. We will look at this idea more thoroughly later, but it is important for you to understand the words *your strength* in this verse. Strong’s Concordance defines this word as *one who is strong, efficient, and with exceptional abilities*. Basically, this guy was *an army of one*. Lemuel was a man of strong character, good abilities, and ample physical strength. He was instructed by his mother to use that strength in constructive ways, not in the pursuit of forbidden sexual pleasures. It is interesting to note that the word *strength* in verse three referring to Lemuel is the same Hebrew word referring to the *excellent wife* NASB (*virtuous woman* in the KJV) in verse ten. It is also the same word found in Psalm 110:3 where David describes the LORD’s own power. This is significant, because Lemuel’s mother was telling him something like this:

“Son, you are a strong man, you have strong character, you are emotionally strong, and you are physically strong. You have a lot going for you. Don’t waste it all by sleeping with anything that wears a skirt. Instead, find a woman with the same strengths you possess, and make her your wife. Then enjoy sexual relations with her alone. She will be good for you and will help you be a responsible leader.”

Verse three is the key verse for the chapter and is bordered in red in the text layout above. It is essential to keep this in mind as you study the chapter because both drunkenness and women are discussed in this one verse. Therefore, verse three ties the first paragraph (vv. 1-9) together with the second (vv. 10-31). As you read you will learn that the thrust of verses 4-9 is *responsibility*. It is also the thrust of the section on the virtuous woman. This truth is crucial to understanding the passage. When verses 1—31 are studied from the aspect of *responsibility*, the passage becomes a thing of real beauty.

Topic 1 – The positive aspects of not drinking alcoholic beverages (verses 4-9)

These verses read,

⁴ “It is not for kings, O Lemuel, It is not for kings to drink wine, or for rulers to desire strong drink, ⁵ lest they drink and forget what is decreed, and pervert the rights of all the afflicted. ⁶ Give strong drink to him who is perishing, and wine to him whose life is bitter. ⁷ Let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his trouble no more. ⁸ Open your mouth for the dumb, for the rights of all the unfortunate. ⁹ Open your mouth, judge righteously, and defend the rights of the afflicted and needy.”

Verses 4-5 -- Don’t abandon your responsibilities

Verses 4-5 *⁴ “It is not for kings, O Lemuel, It is not for kings to drink wine, or for rulers to desire strong drink, ⁵ lest they drink and forget what is decreed, and pervert the rights of all the afflicted.”*

Before we can intelligently discuss these two verses we need to define a few words. The word *“drink”* in verse four is just that. It is the drinking or ingesting of an alcoholic beverage. Strong’s Concordance indicates that the word *desire* in verse four is developing a taste for or longing for one more drink. This is the condition of the man in Prov. 23:29-35 where in verse 35c we read, *“When shall I awake? I will seek another drink.”* In other words, a man who develops a taste for alcohol may become a hopeless drunk because he is addicted to the stuff. The word *drink* in verse five is different than in verse four. It is defined by Strong’s Concordance as *to drink, to become drunk*. So then, this word *drink* is drinking alcoholic beverages to the point of becoming drunk. This is the result of developing a desire for the stuff.

Lemuel’s mom had undoubtedly seen numbers of drunks during her life and knew how alcohol adversely affects a man. A drunk loses his ability to think logically, abandons his morals, and comes to the point where he doesn’t even know where he is or what he is doing. Lemuel’s mom didn’t want to see her son waste his life in the same manner, so when she approached Lemuel about this subject, she did it from a positive standpoint. Keep in mind that Lemuel was a king, and as such he was *responsible* for the welfare of every one of his subjects. Ecclesiastes 10:16-17 tells us *“¹⁶Woe to you, O land, whose king is a lad and whose princes feast in the morning. ¹⁷Blessed are*

you, O land, whose king is of nobility and whose princes eat at the appropriate time—for strength and not for drunkenness.” This principle was true back then, and it is true today. Lemuel was not free to party all the time. There was always plenty of work to be done in managing and directing his kingdom. The judgments he decreed were to be fair and just for all parties involved. It was because of his position and duties that she appealed to him on the basis of his **responsibility**. If he were to become drunk, he would lose the ability to remember what the laws state, and in that condition he could never apply them fairly to any case he would hear. Please understand that he was judge, jury, and executioner in his kingdom. Therefore, it was solely up to him to try a case correctly. If he were drunk, he would not be concerned in the least about whether or not one of his subjects received justice. He would only be concerned about his own needs. This was never right because there were people in his kingdom who were experiencing hard times or enduring oppression. They depended upon him for help, and it was Lemuel’s **responsibility** to see that they got good help. He certainly could not do this for them if he were drunk. So, his mother simply told him not to go there. Rather, he should be a **responsible ruler** and do what was best for his subjects.

Verses 6-7 -- Who should drink?

⁶ Give strong drink to him who is perishing, and wine to him whose life is bitter. ⁷ Let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his trouble no more.”

It is not good to drink alcoholic beverages at any time. The New Testament supports this in the following verses: 1 Timothy 3:8 says, *“Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine (drunkards) or fond of sordid gain.”* Titus 2:3 states, *“Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine (drunkards), teaching what is good,”* and Romans 14:21 reads, *“It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine (drinking it at all), or to do anything by which your brother stumbles.”* (The grayed text in the above verses has been added for clarity).

The problem with drinking alcohol is that no one knows for sure that he will not become a drunk. The only one who can be sure is the one who doesn’t take a drink in the first place. It is never wise to drink strong drink for pleasure. I used to teach a Bible class at a rescue mission in Los Angeles, and it was a sad sight indeed. There were extremely intelligent people living at that mission, some of whom had been doctors, lawyers, business people, and others who held valuable positions in the workplace. All of them had become enslaved to alcohol, and it had ruined their lives. They had lost their jobs, their families, and their future, and it all happened because they couldn’t control their habit of drinking. Hear me, son! The best way to avoid becoming a drunk is to avoid the stuff altogether. You and I simply cannot be sure that we will not eventually become a drunk. There is no way to tell, but we can be sure we won’t get drunk if we don’t take the first drink.

Many professing Christians feel that it is OK to indulge in social drinking. They feel that as long as they don’t get drunk, they are alright. One of the problems with drinking even lightly is that there are a lot of people hurt or killed in car accidents by social drinkers who are not legally drunk, but nonetheless, they are still impaired. Does it make any difference whether you hit and kill someone while you are almost drunk or when you’re totally plastered? I, for one, don’t think so. I have unsaved co-workers who take a drink in the privacy of their own home or back yard. They know the danger involved, so they would not think of driving soon afterwards. I would not encourage them to drink, but I have respect for those guys for keeping it to themselves. Hopefully they will never drink and drive.

Prov. 20:1 states, *“Wine is a mock, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is intoxicated by it is not wise.”* The King James Version states, *“Wine is a mock, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise”. Let’s look at some individual words in these verses and draw some conclusions. The words *mock* and *brawler* are describing the beverage itself, but in reality, they are describing the predictable results that overtake a person drinking in excess. Historically, drunks respond the same way each time they get really drunk. Strong’s defines the word “*mock*” as “to mock, to deride”. The dictionary defines “*mock*” as to treat with contempt or ridicule and “*deride*” as the act of laughing. To put it simply, a “*mock*” is simply that which laughs at something because it despises it. The word “*brawler*” is commonly understood to mean that a drunk gets into all kinds of fights and arguments. In short, he becomes belligerent.*

The key to understanding Prov. 20:1 is to recognize the deception that takes place when a person drinks liquor. The verse states, *“and whosoever is deceived (or intoxicated) thereby is not wise”*. It is not a matter of whether or not alcohol will deceive you, make you intoxicated, and then make a fool of you. No, it is simply the fact that if you ingest enough of the stuff, it **will** deceive you and make you intoxicated. Son, remember, though, that you are a follower of Jesus Christ, and as such, you should be continually searching for wisdom. If this is the case, you should leave alcohol alone knowing that to become drunk “*is not wise*.” If becoming drunk is not wise, then drinking

something that could make you drunk is not wise. After all, the essence of wisdom is making good and productive choices based upon trustworthy knowledge and sound understanding.

Before we move on, I would like to mention something very important. Throughout Proverbs, Solomon stressed the need to become wise. Part of being wise is being prudent, and being prudent is [carefully evaluating the consequences of every choice in life and then proceeding only with those that will produce good and beneficial results](#). After considering the consequences, or potential consequences, the prudent man will avoid choices that will hurt him, and he will proceed only with those choices that are good and beneficial. This principle is especially true for drinking alcohol. The prudent man will recognize that alcohol can easily make an absolute fool out of him, and on the basis of [responsibility](#) both to the LORD and those around him, he will choose not to drink. Therefore, anyone who chooses to drink, even socially, is not wise. That is a fact, plain and simple. For one to argue in favor of social drinking is to show the world that he is not wise. As a testimony to the saving grace of the LORD Jesus Christ, I have chosen to abstain. Any wise man or woman would do the same.

As we look at verses six and seven, Lemuel's mother was not giving her approval for people to drink simply because they were not people in authority. No. She said, *"Give strong drink to him who is perishing, and wine to him whose life is bitter."* Normal, healthy people do not need to ingest alcoholic drinks as beverages. The high it brings is a false high and can be found in more legitimate ways. What she was saying here is that **IF** anyone were to need to drink alcohol, it would be the man who is on his death bed. The word *"bitter"* as used in this verse cannot refer to one who is merely experiencing troubles in life. It must be more than that. The verse seems to indicate that the kind of difficulties discussed here are so severe that the person is dying or thinks he is about to die. Consider other ways this Hebrew word for *"bitter"* is translated: *"fierce"* in Judges 18:25 and Habakkuk 1:6, *"greatly distressed"* in 1 Samuel 1:10, *"bitterness of death"* in 1 Samuel 15:32, *"more bitter than death"* in Eccl. 7:26, and *"bitter as wormwood"* in Prov. 5:4. When considering these renderings of the word *"bitter,"* I feel that Lemuel's mother was saying that strong drink should only be given to the man or woman who is in such terrible shape that there is absolutely no hope of getting well. He or she is going to die.

This is the kind of situation Lemuel's mother was talking about. What she wanted him to understand was that other than the terminally ill, there is no one who has any business drinking something that will make a man drunk. Drinking to excess equals drunkenness, and drunkenness is what the dying person desires from alcohol. When a man is drunk, he loses all ability to feel pain. Prov. 26:9 states, *"Like a thorn which falls into the hand of a drunkard, so is a proverb in the mouth of fools."* Since a drunk does not feel any pain, he can pass from this life in comfort.

It is important to understand that a man won't remember his pain and troubles if he stays drunk until he dies because in death there is no remembrance of the troubles of this life. They are all gone and stay that way forever. Obviously, Lemuel was not dying. Today, though, we have morphine and other strong pain medications that will deaden pain without causing the patient to lose consciousness or the ability to reason. Since we have those medications at our disposal, drinking alcoholic beverages simply has no place in the life of a believer, ever.

Verses 8-9 -- Be a responsible leader

⁸ Open your mouth for the dumb, for the rights of all the unfortunate. ⁹ Open your mouth, judge righteously, and defend the rights of the afflicted and needy."

The key to understanding verses 1-9 is the matter of [responsibility](#). Lemuel was the man in authority over a whole kingdom. He had taken a pledge before God to rule and reign for the good of his people and judge them with fairness and justice. Verses 8-9 are merely saying that since Lemuel vowed to be a good ruler, he must fulfill the oath he took when he was crowned. I can almost hear his mother saying,

"Lemuel, speak up for those who cannot speak up for themselves. Defend those who cannot defend themselves because of their circumstances. Speak up, and don't keep quiet. Yes, be aggressive in helping those unfortunate people. They are depending upon you. Don't let them down."

What she shared was true and was good advice to follow, but her reason for sharing it was to help Lemuel see that a man in his position needed to think clearly every waking moment of the day. When he was needed to judge a civil case, his thinking must be clear and logical. If he would do this, justice would be rendered, but he could never do so if he were drunk.

I can't stress this aspect of [responsibility](#) enough. Lemuel was a man of [responsibility](#), and he could not in good conscience abandon his responsibilities. The fact that he followed her advice is obvious by the fact that Lemuel

recorded his mother's advice for posterity. If he thought her advice was useless or he didn't want to follow it, he would never have shared her teaching with young men who would live generations after him.

Now, how does this teaching on alcoholic beverages relate to you in your situation? It is simply this: You are a son of God. You have trusted Jesus Christ as your personal LORD and Savior. As such, you are an ambassador for Christ to a lost and dying world. You and I are also to be an example of godly men to our brothers and sisters in Christ. It is therefore our **responsibility** to be a good testimony for the LORD every waking moment of the day. People are watching us, and even if they don't agree with what we believe, they will be directly or indirectly affected by how we conduct ourselves. If we convey a joy that comes from deep inside, they will see it. If we seek joy and happiness in a bottle, they will see that we are no different from them. But we are different because you and I have been called by Christ to serve Him. It is our **responsibility** to be sober all the time as a testimony to the grace of Christ.

The young man on your previous ship is a good example of what I am talking about here. He was a practicing warlock, and he tried his best to turn you to his twisted way of spiritual thinking. When he found he couldn't adversely affect you, he started to realize that you had something he didn't. To make a long story short, he came to trust in Christ as Savior, and he did it because you showed Christ-like conduct that he could see was different from the rest of the people around him. You could never have been this effective for Christ if you had partied and drank with the rest of the guys. No, you were disciplined, and that made all the difference. Son, I praise you for that and encourage you to keep on doing the same for the rest of your life. Live for Christ and not solely for the pleasures you can get out of this life. You will discover that it is very rewarding in the long run.

Consider some New Testament Scriptures that shed light on drunkenness. I believe that for the most part these Scriptures speak for themselves.

Galatians 5:19-25 ¹⁹ *Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, ²¹ envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.* Since you have been born-again, you should desire to experience and display the fruit of the spirit and not the deeds of the flesh. The choice is very simple.

Ephesians 5:18 *And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;* It is obvious that in order to have the fruit of the spirit you must be filled with the Spirit. This Scripture indicates that instead of allowing alcohol to take control of your life, allow the Holy Spirit to take control of your life as completely as alcohol would if you would let it.

Luke 21:34-35 ³⁴ *Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap; ³⁵ for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth.* Romans 13:13 *Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.* As is apparent from these verses, the **responsibility** to be on guard against falling prey to the urge to party and drink falls squarely upon your shoulders. You are the one who must decide to abstain or indulge. You have chosen well so far. Keep up the good work.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 ⁹ *Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.* The Scriptures cannot be any more clear when they state that a drunkard will not go to heaven. It does not matter whether a man claims to be born again. This verse is clear when it states that no habitual drunkard will inherit heaven.

1 Corinthians 5:11 *But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.* Since the drunkard is lost in his sin and is sold out to alcohol, you are not to make him a close friend, especially if he claims to be a brother in Christ. Of course, you should befriend him in order to tell him about the saving grace of Christ, but 1 Corinthians 15:33 states, *Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals."* The same

principle holds true for friends in general. (See my commentary on Prov. 1:20-33 regarding separating yourself from detrimental friends).

This completes the discussion on the positives of drinking alcoholic beverages. You will find a discussion of the negative aspects of drinking alcoholic beverages beginning at the end of this chapter.

Topic 2 – Women in Proverbs

[Return to Index](#)

Gregory, there is much to consider as we examine the topic of women in Proverbs. In this discussion we will examine good women. We have already discussed the sexually promiscuous woman in chapter 10 of this commentary. Pay close attention as you read this chapter because it is in your best interest to find a good wife and guard yourself against falling prey to either an adulteress or a prostitute. Note: Many women feel inferior to the *Excellent wife* (virtuous woman KJV). If they will take the time to read this chapter carefully, it will become clear that they should not try to compare themselves to “her” on equal terms. The simple fact is that they are not equal. Once a woman sees this truth, it will take a lot of pressure off of her.

The virtuous woman (excellent wife NASB) (verses 10-31)

Before we dive into the discussion of the excellent wife (virtuous woman in KJV) of Proverbs 31, it is essential for you to understand the context upon which this poem is based. Lemuel was a king and a bachelor. The woman he would marry would someday become a queen. Most queens are waited upon hand and foot. She is not required or expected to do any more than care for herself, and her servants would often help her with even that. What am I saying? It is simply this: Lemuel’s wife-to-be could easily be a stiff, impersonal socialite who is unwilling to do anything to help around the palace, and no one would think it odd. Ah, but his mother knew that he needed more from a wife. So she advised him (as king) to look for a woman (a queen to be) who would be valuable to him personally. So, the whole of verses 10-31 constitutes a poem written by royalty, to royalty, and about royalty. As such, I will show you why the average woman of today cannot compare herself to this queen on equal terms. Read on and see why she shouldn’t.

The premise upon which this whole discussion will be built is based upon the aspect of **responsibility**. Yes, we’re back to the area of **responsibility** again. Please remember that verse three is the key verse for all of chapter 31 and ties verses 1-9 together with verses 10-31. Lemuel’s mother addressed both subjects in one verse. The first paragraph of the chapter discussed Lemuel’s abstinence from drinking alcohol because he needed to be **a responsible ruler**.

As we begin the discussion of the excellent wife (virtuous woman), you need to understand that verses 10-31 are an acrostic where each verse starts with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet. We will not be able to follow this poetic approach, but I will show you how this poem is in its very essence a shopping list for a royal bachelor looking for a royalty wife. It is a list of her **abilities** and **responsibilities** in and around the home (castle). We will approach the virtuous woman from this standpoint. In the past I tried to compare your mother with the virtuous woman activity for activity, and your mother did not compare well. The reason was that your mom doesn’t run a sewing business, doesn’t have any interest in planting a vineyard, and doesn’t have the money available to hire women servants. So, these things made a direct comparison impossible. All is not lost though, because when I started comparing her to the virtuous woman from the standpoint of her abilities and how she fulfills her **responsibilities**, she compared very well. As you read through the following discussion, remember the aspect of **responsibility** because it is crucial to your understanding of the chapter.

Let me ask you. When you find a woman you consider marrying material, what will you look for in her that would make you think she compares favorably with the virtuous woman of Proverbs? I’m not saying you have anyone in mind, but if you did, what would you look for? Take a moment to write down some things you would consider important character traits and abilities. Do not let her physical beauty or lack of it have any bearing upon your answers because beauty is not even a consideration in the text of Proverbs 31. Simply write down what you would like her to be and what you would like her to be able to do. Try to be honest with your concerns and write down exactly what you are thinking. After you have made your list, continue reading the following paragraphs. Please don’t continue reading until you have completed your list.

If you choose well in selecting a wife, she will help you successfully navigate all of the hard knocks that life will bring your way. When the right woman is by your side encouraging and supporting you, you can help each other weather the most severe storms of life. The love you two will share will be the instrument which will enable both of

you to endure trials and successes, needs and blessings, and heartaches and happiness. You will not only endure them, but you will experience a deep-seated joy that no one can take away from you. Since choosing a wife is such an important decision, I am going to attempt to help you make a knowledgeable choice in a wife by understanding how Proverbs gives you general guidelines for selecting an excellent wife (or the virtuous woman as the KJV calls her). Master this material well, and you will have the knowledge and understanding necessary to make a discerning and successful choice in selecting a wife. Son, choosing the right one is essential to your future happiness, but choosing the wrong one is disastrous. I am sure you know of men who have made bad choices and are now reaping the consequences of divorce or heartache. Don't be among those who have been hasty and allowed emotions to take precedence over sound wisdom and godly discernment. It may result in marrying the wrong person. Of course, it is too late after the deed is done because once you are married you must live with the consequences of the decision you made.

Son, much has been written and preached about the virtuous woman. Most women perceive her as some sort of super woman, but a closer examination of the text teaches otherwise. It must be remembered from the onset that Proverbs 31:10-31 is a royal woman's view of a good queen. Everything this excellent queen is and does comprises things women would like to be or what she would like other women to see in her. I realize that the text was recorded by a man, but he merely recorded for posterity what his mother taught him. Therefore, it is more correct to view this portion of Scripture as a shopping list a royal bachelor can use when searching for a queen. I am not saying that this portion of Scripture is not a reasonable guide for women if they really understand what this passage of Scripture is actually teaching, but it was not intended primarily for that purpose. It is in its very essence a list of her abilities and responsibilities in and around the castle, nothing more, nothing less. Remember, though, that based upon the thrust of verses 1-9, this text majors on the fact that "she" is a woman of responsibility, and because she is, she can help her husband be responsible.

When studying any portion of text, it is important to understand what the text says, but it is equally as important to understand what it does not say. Read verses 10-31 several times and notice that it says nothing about love, affection, intimacy, time spent with the kids, or time spent with the husband. Family relationships are not even mentioned. However, the text does show that she is compassionate toward the needy and afflicted, but beyond that it says nothing about friendships or associating with her neighbors. Why? Because this portion of Scripture is not dealing with an excellent wife from the standpoint of love for family, love for her husband, or friendships outside the home. No, it is dealing with how she runs her castle and how she fulfills her responsibilities in and around it. The text is simply a manual of the mindset and character of an efficient and strong manager of the home.

Son, as we proceed through the following verses, stop from time to time and look at your list of things you would like to see in a perspective wife. Compare them with the text of Proverbs. There are a number of telltale signs you can see in a woman, and if you have a discerning eye, you will be able to know how well a perspective woman compares to the virtuous woman. There are also telltale signs that a woman can see in you that will tell her whether you are the kind of man she, as a virtuous woman, desires as a life's mate. Therefore, it is the better part of wisdom to work on deficiencies in your own character and abilities. It will put you in a much better position to satisfy the qualifications a virtuous woman will be looking for in a perspective husband. When you find a woman that you consider marrying material, be sure to evaluate her with your mind before you evaluate her with your heart or let the thrill of emotions take full control. By then it is too late to do any objective, logical thinking. Also, work at being the kind of man who is strong in character, strong in fulfilling responsibilities, and strong in the fear of the LORD. You need to master these areas because they are what you should be seeking in a woman. You should not expect her to receive any less from you than you expect to gain from her.

It is not my goal to teach you mere facts about what constitutes an excellent wife. I want this to be something you can use as a dependable guide in selecting your wife-to-be. Keep in mind that the passage on the virtuous woman is indeed a shopping list for a bachelor king seeking a wife. Therefore, I am going to attempt to write this portion of the commentary noting the things you should look for in a potential mate. Realize from the start that you will probably not find a woman who exhibits all of the characteristics of "her," but there are many women out there who exhibit a lot of the characteristics attributed to "her." I would also like to warn you against being overly critical of the women you date, yet by the same token, don't sweep any of her deficiencies under the carpet either. By all means, find a way to examine her worth without allowing your emotional attachment to override logic and good discernment. If you allow your emotions to drive your evaluation, you will have lost all objective comparisons. Don't let this happen to you. As you critique your future wife, try your best to differentiate between inexperience and inability on her part. This aspect can be deceiving. Your cousin Jennifer couldn't cook well a short time before she married Josh, but she has blossomed into a wonderful cook since then.

The key -- her worth

Verse 10 *“An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels.”*

What constitutes *an excellent wife*, or *a virtuous woman* as the KJV calls her? Before we proceed, I must repeat the fact that the Hebrew word for *strength* as relating to Lemuel in verse three above is the same Hebrew word as *“excellent”* or *“virtuous”* in verse ten. Strong’s Concordance defines this word as **one who is strong, efficient, and with exceptional abilities**. Her strong character, strong Biblical morals, ample physical strength, good confidence, and sense of self-worth are all enhanced by her excellent **abilities** and **responsibilities** making her **a virtual army of one** in and around the home. This kind of woman is an excellent manager of the home, and you can depend upon her to do a good job of caring for the household. She is merely doing what the New Testament teaches a young woman should do. Titus 2:3-5 teaches, *“The aged women likewise, that they be in behavior as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; that they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.”* (KJV) Always keep in mind that Lemuel’s mother knew that almost any woman could satisfy her son’s sexual desires, but not just any woman would be the kind of efficient and **responsible** queen he needed as a wife. Keep in mind that this passage of Scripture was only describing the “model” woman of royalty in his day. I admit that the virtuous woman (excellent wife) may not have actually existed, but the list is a good guide for a king.

I am personally grateful that the text says, who can find *“An excellent wife,”* instead of *“The excellent wife,”* You might say, “What difference does that make?” Well, it makes a great deal of difference. Had the text said **the excellent wife**, every other woman would never have a chance to become *her* equal or take her place. You see, there can only be one best person in any field of endeavor. As such, every woman to come on the scene after *her* would be inferior to *her* except for the one woman who just might excel over all the rest and become the new excellent wife. Even though many may almost equal her excellence, they would still be inferior. Fortunately, though, the text uses a word that allows any woman of like **abilities** and **responsibilities** to qualify as *an excellent wife*. This ought to be a real encouragement to every woman aspiring to be like *“her.”*

Notice also that this verse says, *“An excellent wife, who can find?”* Since there can be more than one excellent wife (or virtuous woman), then there are actually some of these women out there for you to find. Now, I admit that there may not be an overabundance of women these days who fall into the category of being all that *“she”* was, but there are some. This should be an encouragement to you because your mother and I have prayed for years asking God to do something special in the life of the young woman who will one day become your wife. Even though we do not know her name, through the years we have asked the LORD to keep her pure, make her strong spiritually, and cause her to love and fear the LORD with all her heart. Although we have no idea who this young lady is, the LORD knows, and He is preparing her for you right now. You will find her someday, and when you do, you will see that the LORD has made her a work of art. Oh, she may not be as beautiful as a fashion model or have the ability to charm every man that comes across her path, but she will be a beautiful person on the inside where it really counts. I would encourage you to pray for her each day even though you have no idea who she is right now. In the years to come, you will be glad you did. Remember, Proverbs 31 is your shopping list for finding the woman who is to become your mate and helper, so use it as your prayer list to guide you as you pray for her to become all that she can be for the LORD and for His glory. When you seek the LORD’s interests regarding a mate, He will give you the wisdom to do what brings honor to His name.

The last part of verse ten states, *“for her worth is far above jewels.”* As you will see by the time we finish the discussion of verses 10-31, this woman is indeed a rare treasure. Prov. 18:22 states, *“He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the LORD.”* No amount of money can buy a woman like this one. When you find her, you will agree that she is worth more than the most costly diamonds or rubies, and you will never want to part with her. You will value her too much. It is one thing to desire to have a woman like this as your own, but it is entirely different to actually have her as your wife. When you do, you will appreciate her even more as you watch her perform her duties and faithfully fulfill her **responsibilities**.

The value of an excellent wife is far greater than any amount of gems, precious metals, or bank accounts. Money cannot bring true happiness or contentment, but a faithful, **responsible** wife like *“her”* certainly can. Search for her, and you will certainly find her. Look for certain characteristics in her. When you spend time with a young lady, see if she helps in the kitchen at home, is respectful to her parents, and is quick to help take care of needs as they arise. It is important for you to remember that she will be no different after she is married than she was before marriage. If she does not fulfill **responsibilities** well, work hard and efficiently, and care about others before you marry her, you might as well forget about her doing them after she is your wife. Marriage simply does not change the character of

a man or woman. Any person, man or woman, who is a lazy person before marriage will be a lazy married person. Someone who is industrious and **responsible** before marriage will be the same after marriage. Son, remember this fact when you are dating. It can make your marriage wonderful if you choose well in the dating phase of your relationship. Choose well, and at the same time work hard at being all you can be for her benefit.

1) What she is worth to him personally.

He can trust her not to waste his wealth

Verse 11 *"The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain."*

Son, I have found it absolutely wonderful to have complete confidence that your mother will be faithful to me and seek my good as long as she lives. Mom and I both feel this way about each other, and we have had that confidence from the day we were engaged to be married. In most every way, your mom compares favorably with this excellent wife. Now that I understand the thrust of the passage is **responsibility**, she has compared really well as long as I have known her. It is so sweet to be completely at peace within myself that we belong to each other. When you find a woman like *"her,"* she will be totally and completely dedicated to and supportive of you. You will be able to *trust in her* with everything that is in you because she will love and trust you with all her heart. That is the most beautiful aspect of marriage, and when this kind of couple enjoys sexual pleasures together, it takes on a whole new dimension of oneness that a single person or adulterer will never experience. When we talk about the excellent wife's loyalty to her husband, it is not so much her love for her husband that makes her faithful, but it is her commitment coupled with her love that makes her the one her husband can trust unreservedly.

Even though Lemuel could trust her with all of his heart, there was something more he as king needed to address. Stop for a moment and consider who is being addressed in the text. He is a king and an extremely wealthy man. He had amassed or inherited a great deal of wealth, and he didn't want a potential wife to come along and waste what he had worked so hard to gain. His mother knew his concern, so she set his mind at ease when she said that he would *"have no lack of gain."* Now, does that mean that he would be able to depend on her to work and get more gain? Certainly not! What his mother was saying was that he wouldn't need to worry about her wasting his hard-earned money. As you will see as the commentary progresses, *"she"* was a very careful and frugal spender. This is not to say that she sacrificed quality for economy, but she was not impulsive. She thoroughly evaluated what she desired to purchase and weighed her options carefully. Remember, though, that she must have practiced this kind of careful shopping long before she would become a wife.

He can trust her with his heart.

Verse 12 *"She does him good and not evil all the days of her life."*

Son, a woman like *"her"* will not only be careful with your money, but she will be careful to protect your heart. You see, a woman who is totally in love with you *does "you" good and not evil all the days of her life*, and she does it with every ounce of her being. Because real love has nothing but the best interest in mind for the one she loves, she will never willingly do anything that will hurt her husband or be detrimental to his reputation. It is because of this kind of love and dedication that you can trust her to do *good and not evil* to and for you as long as she lives. I trust your mother the same way, and she can trust me because we both are equally as determined to do good to each other for as long as we both shall live. This is the kind of woman you will enjoy when you find *"her"* as a wife.

A perfect Bible example of an excellent wife is Ruth. She was known by everyone in and around Bethlehem as a woman of physical strength, strong character, dedication, and faith. Boaz realized this the first time he met her. Ruth 2:8-13 states,

⁸ Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Listen carefully, my daughter. Do not go to glean in another field; furthermore, do not go on from this one, but stay here with my maids. ⁹ Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them. Indeed, I have commanded the servants not to touch you. When you are thirsty, go to the water jars and drink from what the servants draw." ¹⁰ Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground and said to him, "Why have I found favor in your sight that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?" ¹¹ Boaz replied to her, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband has been fully reported to me, and how you left

*your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and came to a people that you did not previously know.*¹² *May the LORD reward your work, and your wages be full from the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to seek refuge.*¹³ *Then she said, "I have found favor in your sight, my LORD, for you have comforted me and indeed have spoken kindly to your maidservant, though I am not like one of your maidservants."* (Underline added for clarity)

Boaz knew the Scriptural admonition against marrying foreign women, but he also knew that the Scriptures approved of marrying a foreign woman who had become a Jew by choice and wanted to worship the true God, Jehovah.

Ruth was a hard worker, loyal to Naomi, had excellent moral fabric, and was indeed worth more than jewels to Boaz. It was obvious that God was pleased with the match by the fact that Ruth's offspring was in the line of Christ. Isn't it tremendous the way the LORD blesses those who love Him and faithfully serve Him.

2. What she is worth to him in and around the home.

How she buys and prepares. (v.v. 13-16)

A. She acquires the raw materials for her sewing. (verse 13a)

Verse ¹³ *"She looks for wool and flax,"*

This woman went shopping for the raw materials she would use in the making of the cloth and thread that she would later use to make clothes for her family and belts to sell to the tradesmen. Judging by her quest for quality in all that she did, there is no doubt that she sought only the finest quality wool and flax. The quality of her craftsmanship was very important to her, and she knew that the quality of her finished product could be no better than the quality of the raw materials she used to make the finished product.

She used the same approach to buying materials as she did in purchasing a field. One of her strengths in business was that she was not an impulsive buyer. No, she calculated the benefits and detriments of a purchase before she bought. This is not to say that she paid more for the best material than she would a lesser quality nor that she was more concerned about the price than the quality. She used her head and got the best materials at the best price.

She shopped for these raw materials herself. She did this because she knew what comprised really good wool and flax, and she wanted to see the potential purchase herself before she bought it. She could have sent one of her servant girls, but she was more careful than that.

It is interesting to note the difference between "wool" and "flax." In the world of cloth, it is commonly understood that flax is used to make linen cloth. This was the fabric used to make spring and summer clothing. Wool, on the other hand, was used to make winter clothing. It is a much warmer fabric, and it retains the body's warmth on a cold day. We will see in later verses how these fabrics are used.

B. How she approached work. (verse 13b)

"and works with her hands in delight."

Once she acquired the wool and flax, she was thrilled to work on them with her own hands. To make the text more clear, you should view this phrase as *"and works (on both the wool and the flax) with her (own) hands in delight."* (Gray text added for clarity). She could easily have assigned one of her maidservants to do the task, but working with her hands was something she really enjoyed. You see, the issue wasn't so much that she worked with her hands but that she thoroughly enjoyed doing so. In fact, she looked forward to it. It is obvious from the context of the chapter that she was a skilled craftswoman when it came to making garments. As we will see later, the clothes she made for herself were fit for royalty. They ought to have been because she was a queen, and if she didn't know how to make her own garments, the king's seamstresses would have made them for her. When you start dating a young woman, you would do well to find out if she likes to work with her hands. Does she know how to sew? It isn't critical that she knows how, but if she does, it is merely a plus for her. Let's take a moment here to examine this area of responsibility.

Your mom used to sew, but she rarely does anymore. She does, however, do a wonderful job of seeing that our family is properly clothed. If your mom can buy shirts and blouses for less than it would cost to buy the fabric, thread, and pattern, has she fulfilled her responsibility? I say a hearty “yes.” If the young woman you consider as your wife is not inclined to work willingly with her hands, you might expect to live in an unkept house with a lazy wife. Watch her with a discerning eye and know her work ethics before you make her your own. One thing you will see in verse 27 is that the excellent wife *“does not eat the bread of idleness,”* and neither should you.

C. How she acquired food items that produced meals with variety.

Verse ¹⁴ *“She is like merchant ships; she brings her food from afar.”*

What is there about an excellent wife that could be favorably compared to a merchant ship? It has to be the fact that the ship goes to great distances to acquire hard to find items and then brings them to local ports where they can be purchased and enjoyed by local people. This woman operated in much the same way except that she was not doing it for hire. No, she loved to serve foods with variety in order to make her meals special, and she was not content to feed her family the same old “stuff” over and over again. Now, she could have sent one of her servant girls to acquire the things she needed, but once again, she was as particular about the foods she acquired as she was about the wool and flex she purchased. This is why she wanted to do the shopping herself. Because she was so particular about the out of the ordinary foods she acquired, many times her meals were fit for a king. They should have been because Lemuel was a king.

Son, your wife to be should learn to cook with variety, but it would not be realistic for you to expect her to travel all over the place buying exotic foods for your meals. Keep in mind that *“the excellent wife”* discussed in Proverbs was working on a much larger budget than your wife to be, and as such, your wife will have to be much more frugal with your money. Still, there are numerous ways in which your wife can make meals special and bring variety to the dinner table. Your mom finds lots of good and different things on sale, and doing so makes those things very affordable.

Now, with regard to *“her”*, let’s be careful here to compare apples with apples. Lemuel’s wife was a queen with seemingly unlimited resources while your wife will have to work with average means. This is not a put down for your wife or any other wife in her situation. It merely means that your wife cannot be compared on equal terms with *“her.”* In spite of the economic differences, there are many ways in which your wife-to-be can be compared favorably with this woman. Always remember that Proverbs 31 is showing her **abilities** and **responsibilities** coupled with her favorable attitudes. In this sense, your wife has the potential of being very much like *“her”* **ability** for **ability** and **responsibility** for **responsibility**. It all depends upon whether or not your wife has acquired and maintains the same attitudes, character traits, and abilities as *“her.”* You will be the judge of the one you will someday choose for a wife. Judge her fairly, but judge her honestly. You will probably be deeply emotionally involved with her, but try to set your emotions aside and examine how she compares to Proverbs 31. She will not be perfect, but does she convey enough of the characteristics of *“her”* to be the one with whom you wish to spend the rest of your life? Beauty and charm can easily deceive a young man, but the real beauty of a woman resides on the inside where you will find her true character. You can always depend upon that kind of beauty. The key to the matter is whether you will take an honest look at her without laying logic aside, or whether you will look at her only through the eyes of your emotions.

D. How she gets the home off to a good start early in the morning.

Verse 15A *“She rises also while it is still night,”*

This queen is indeed a morning person. There is no such thing as sleeping in until 11:00 AM for her. She gets started early in the day, but she does it for a specific purpose. She is the manager of her castle, and she does a wonderful job of it. Being the wife of a king, her home is actually her castle, and she wants it to run smoothly and be maintained in such a way that visitors will be impressed with it at any time of the day or night. The excellent wife of today desires the same with regard to her home. It is not a literal castle for the average wife, but it is a castle in her eyes, nonetheless. Her home is her **responsibility**, and she takes that **responsibility** seriously. Keep in mind that she will need your help in maintaining your home so that it will be what she wants it to be any time of the day.

Verse 15B *“and gives food to her household,”*

She rises early in order to be sure that the morning meal is prepared not only to perfection but also on time. Although she may be a good cook and knows what her family needs for well-rounded, nutritious, and tasty meals, I just imagine that as the wife of a king, she does not prepare many of the meals herself. She certainly oversees her servant girls as they prepare the meals. Remember, “*she*” is royalty, and royalty does not usually do manual labor. This woman may prepare a meal from time to time as a labor of love for her family, but as you will see in the following paragraph, she does not do so as a normal thing. She does, however, provide her cooks with the out-of-the-ordinary things she acquired from faraway places and instructs them about how to make those special meals. The main thing to remember here is that she sees that her family is fed well and on a regular basis. She is very meticulous when it comes to seeing that her family is fed well, and this is just one of the many areas of **responsibility** she handles well.

Verse 15C *“and portions to her maidens.”* **Key truth**

This phrase is the most important aspect of the whole passage on the excellent woman of Proverbs. At a casual reading, the English wording of the text makes it sound like she gets up before dawn, slaves over the stove preparing breakfast, sits her family and servants down, and feeds them breakfast at the start of the day. Oh, but this is definitely not the case. How many queens do you know who cook breakfast every morning? It simply doesn't happen. The Hebrew word *portions* carries a far different meaning. Strong's Concordance defines this word as “**job assignments.**” Remember, this queen had numbers of women servants at her disposal. The verse is literally saying, *“She rises early while it is still night, oversees meal preparation, and gives daily job assignments to each of her servant girls.”* Yes, she is a good manager of the castle, so she rises early in the morning in order to give work assignments to her servants so that the home would run smoothly throughout the day. That way none of the maidservants had to wonder what she was to do for that day.

For the woman of today, there is an important lesson to be learned. The Proverbs 31 woman was queen. As such she had numbers of servants girls. Each morning she would assign all of **the things that needed to be done** leaving her free to do **the things she wanted to do** without conflicting with her **responsibilities** as manager of the castle. Her servants took care of those things for her. The fact that this woman had servants to do all the menial tasks means that, once again, the average woman of today cannot compare herself with this woman on even terms. The average wife of today does not have the resources to free her from all of the household duties in order to run a business, plant a vineyard, sew for the family, and run a wholesale and retail clothes manufacturing business. This truth ought to go a long way toward freeing women of any feelings of inferiority or guilt generated by the thought that they cannot do all of the things they **perceive** the virtuous woman doing. Son, your mom was once given a book entitled *The Proverbs 31 Lady and other Impossible Dreams* by Marsha Drake. In the book the author tried to perform all of the things she felt *the virtuous woman* did in exactly the same manner she perceived “*the virtuous woman*” did them back then. Before long, the author became completely frustrated. She did not understand that she was different than “*her.*” The aspect of royalty and the principle of **responsibilities** rather than actual deeds was completely overlooked. As a result, she felt guilty that she could not be like “*her.*”

Once a woman understands that she does not have the resources to be exactly like “*her,*” it should take a great deal of pressure off of today's wife. For example, your mom finds that many times it is cheaper to buy a shirt for me than to buy the pattern, thread, and fabric. This also does not include the time it takes to sew the thing together. Keep in mind, though, that by buying the shirt, she has fulfilled her **responsibility** to keep the family clothed well, and she does a wonderful job of it.

E. How she evaluates major purchases.

Verse 16A *“She considers a field and buys it;”*

This woman (and your mom) was a dream when it came to spending money. She was not impulsive in the least. On the contrary, she carefully evaluated an item under consideration to determine whether it was worth the asking price and if the return on her investment was worthwhile. Notice how she *considered* a field. The idea here is that she was not in such a hurry that she had to have it right now. It takes self-discipline to wait, but when she was sure it was the right thing to do, she proceeded to buy it with the confidence that she was doing the right thing. It is no

wonder that her husband would *“have no lack of gain.”* She was probably as frugal, or more so, than her rich husband.

I have a question: “Where did she acquire the funds to buy the field?” The answer is quite simple. She got them from her earnings. This was the same source that provided her with the money to plant a vineyard on the property she bought.

F. How she invests her money.

Verse 16B *“from her earnings she plants a vineyard.”*

Notice that she had income of her own. She generated it, and it was hers to use as she saw fit. Her husband was very wise to give her this freedom. It is apparent from the verse that she had saved much of what she earned and had been doing so for some time. This is the only way she could have had enough money available to pay for a piece of property in full at the time of the transaction.

Allow me to interject a thought here. The text does not say that she conferred with her husband about the purchase or that she even mentioned it to him before the transaction was made. Please understand, I am not saying here that an excellent wife of today should make major purchases without discussing them with her husband, but I am saying that she was trustworthy enough to make good decisions even about major purchases if she needed to do so. Remember, the Proverbs 31 woman was royalty, and although there were ample funds in her husband’s treasury, she used her own. In the case of your wife-to-be, she will have to be much more careful and be in agreement with you before she makes a major purchase. Your finances will be much more fragile than a queen’s, and it will take both you and your wife to keep them in check. In fact, the area of finances is one of the leading causes of contention leading to divorce these days, so you two will need to be in full agreement before major purchases are made. This also means that you will need to discuss your own major purchases with her, and when you both agree, go ahead with the transaction. Let me give you some good advice here. Learn early in your marriage to depend upon your wife’s intuition in these kinds of matters. If she is hesitant or feels you should not go ahead with some purchase or financial agreement, abstain. God made women to help us men in this way because we seem to be blind to the same perceptions. She seems to have a sixth sense about her that tells her whether a thing under consideration is worth doing or whether it would be best to abstain. Your mother is especially helpful to me in determining whether or not to trust a person or trust what someone tells us. I have learned this truth over the years, and several times it has kept me from making some major mistakes. I have also made some major goofs when I didn’t listen to her.

Regarding her investments, this woman didn’t merely buy the field intending to sell it later at a much higher price. No, she bought it in order to plant a vineyard that in itself would provide wine. This is not to say that everything your wife buys should be purchased with some return in mind, but it does show that each purchase is deliberate and well thought through. Your mom shops in much the same manner as the Proverbs 31 woman. She finds deals like nobody else I know, and she usually does not sacrifice quality to do so. You would do well to find a young woman who handles money like your mom. Gregory, when you look for a wife, watch how she spends her money, and find out what she has saved for a rainy day. Her spending and saving patterns will be the same after she is married as they were before marriage. It is to your advantage to know this about her before you get too deeply involved with her. While you are at it, evaluate your own spending and saving habits, especially the aspect of saving for the future. Perhaps now is a good time to put your house in order.

G. How she keeps herself strong physically and mentally.

She exercises her body in order to be strong.

Verse 17 *“She girds herself with strength, and makes her arms strong.”*

If you will remember, one of the aspects of the *virtuous woman* (KJV) or *excellent wife* (NASB) is the physical strength and stamina she maintained. She accomplished a lot throughout the day, and she had to be a strong woman in order to accomplish all that she required of herself. You might be asking yourself, “What do you mean by the phrase *required of herself?*” I mean exactly what I said. What she was and what she accomplished were her choice. Nobody forced her into doing those things. No, she was a queen. They were things she chose to do because she wanted her household to run smoothly, and she wanted her business to thrive. She did it all on her own. She may not have done the same physical work the modern woman without servants must do around the

house, but nonetheless, she was a busy woman. Even though she was busy, she set aside time on a regular basis to exercise, and it gave her the stamina (*girds herself with strength*) and strength (*makes her arms strong*) she needed. She had to have that stamina to be able to accomplish as much as she did in a day, and she needed the strength in her arms both to make the thread and fabric and to sew all those clothes together. Don't forget, she didn't own a sewing machine. She had to sew everything by hand. Can you imagine a woman of today trying to sew a complete dress together by hand, not to mention making the fabric used to construct that dress? I don't think you or I will ever live to see that in our lifetime.

Now, son, what does all this exercise stuff have to do with you? Well, nothing directly but a great deal indirectly. The young lady you will someday choose as your wife needs to be physically fit. She ought to be concerned about her shape and stamina. If you become interested in a woman who does not try to maintain her body, she will be lax in other areas also. I am not suggesting that she go overboard with exercise, but she ought to be exercising on a regular basis. In fact, you and I ought to be doing so also. It is not right to expect something of your wife that you do not expect of yourself.

I know that you want a healthy wife, and I hope she is fit. It just may be, though, that the woman God has for you might have some sort of physical infirmity. In that case, she can exercise within her physical limitations. I can only hope that the woman we have been praying for all these years is a healthy, sharp, and godly woman. God knows.

She has good self-worth mentally

Verse 18 *"She senses that her gain is good; her lamp does not go out at night."*

An excellent wife feels that most everything she does is good, and this good outlook gives her self-worth. Yet it is not so much what she does, but the product of what she does that gives her the most satisfaction. Notice that the text says, *"She senses that her gain is good;"* Women need to feel that what they do makes a difference. They need to feel that other people see the value in what they do. The main thing to remember here is that this woman felt good about herself. She was not carrying around an inferiority complex, and she seldom found herself in an emotional low.

When you look for a wife, look for a woman who is happy about **who** and **what** she is. This is not to say that she shouldn't want to excel in some area or another, but she should not look down upon herself or be dissatisfied with who she is or what she has accomplished. The stability and contentment a woman brings into your household will help sustain your marriage through the rough times as well as the good ones.

Notice that there is a semicolon between the two sentences in verse eighteen. That punctuation means that the teaching of the second sentence closely ties to the teaching of the first sentence. The first part of the verse says that she felt good about what she had accomplished. The second part of the verse basically says that since she felt so good about what she had accomplished, she desired to accomplish more of the same things that brought satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment in the first place. In short, she was spurred on to do even more and better things than she had done in the past. Success breeds success, and since she wanted to excel, *"her lamp does not go out at night."* This is not to say she stayed up all night, but she did leave a lamp burning so she would be ready at any time of the night to attend to any matter that needed her attention. She simply did not leave things for the morning that could be taken care of right away. That was the kind of woman she was.

Your mother is much the same way. When it is time to go to bed, I simply go to bed, but the same is not true for her. She must make sure there are no dirty dishes on the counter or in the sink and that things are picked up. Whereas I feel that the same energies would be better utilized the next morning, she is compelled to take care of them right away. A good woman is made that way, and she is definitely a good one.

When you find a potential wife, notice whether she takes care of **responsibilities** as they surface. If she puts them off or fails to perform those **responsibilities**, ask yourself if this is really the kind of woman you want for a wife. Remember, you are going to live with her for the rest of your life. It is best to choose wisely now than to endure the consequences later.

H. How she uses her hands for herself and others.

She loves working her craft

Verse 19 *"She stretches out her hands to the distaff, and her hands grasp the spindle."*

It has been explained to me that once the wool or flax have been stretched into a crude thread-like length of fiber, the *spindle* was used to twist the fibers into thread. The *distaff* was used to wind the thread onto spools or bobbins. Later she would use this thread to weave cloth and to sew the garments together. This is the basic idea, and I'm sure you get the picture.

The main thing to remember here is that she was doing these things **with her own two hands**. There is no glory in making the thread, but again, she wanted to be sure that the materials that went into making clothes were of the highest quality. The thread was merely one form of raw material she used to make the final product, and she wanted all of her finished products to be of the best possible quality. Without doubt, little details mattered to this woman, yet she was not an excessive-compulsive person. It simply made a difference to her that her work was of high quality.

How does this correlate with the woman you will someday select as your wife? Simply this: she should be someone who is willing to do the menial tasks, but even in those tasks, she should want to do an excellent job. She may not know how to sew or even be interested in learning, but she will at least be willing to work with her hands instead of letting someone else do it for her.

She is willing to help the less fortunate

Verse 20 *"She extends her hand to the poor; and she stretches out her hands to the needy."*

Since this woman was a queen, she could very easily have closed her eyes to the needs of people around her. After all, she was the wife of the most important official in the kingdom. As such, she could easily have thought she was better than those around her, but she didn't. Without doubt she had rubbed shoulders with all sorts of people when she went into town to buy wool, flax, food, or land. If she was observant during those trips, she would have seen people who needed help from somebody. Being the compassionate person she was, she didn't wait for someone else to help them. She did it herself. The same hands that did the delicate work of making fabric and clothes reached out to the poor of her community. Therefore, *"She extends her hand to the poor.;"* She was not too good to touch those undesirable people. The word *extends* seems to indicate that she reached out and touched the people. She was not driven by pride to do what she did. If she had been proud she would not have had anything to do with such unfortunate people. Instead she felt compassion for the less fortunate.

In a gesture of good will *"she stretches out her hands to the needy."* The word *stretches out* is different than the word *extends* in that *stretches out* carries with it the idea of reaching toward them in a gesture of concern, but not touching them unless she was invited to do so. If those people with a need were willing to accept her help, she would do whatever she could to meet that need. She made the offer to help, but when someone was too proud or would not accept her help, she would make the offer and go her way. Basically, the verse is saying, "Can I be of help to you? I'll do what I can if you will allow me."

The woman you choose for your wife should be a compassionate and caring person. She should be able to empathize with the concerns of others. Notice whether she is concerned about the needs of others or whether she is only concerned about herself or the people close to her. If her needs are so important that they blind her to the needs of others, you would do well to look for another woman. Don't ever forget that what your wife-to-be is before you are married is what she will be as after you marry her. Oh, there may be some minor accommodations during the initial honeymoon period, but before long, she will revert back to what she was before you were married.

J. How she meets the clothing needs of her family and business.

She makes clothes for her family

Verse 21 *"She is not afraid of the snow for her household, for all her household are clothed with scarlet."*

How many women have you met who know how to make all the clothes her family needs? If I had to guess, I'd say you don't know anyone like that. Well, since this kind of woman doesn't seem to exist these days, how could a woman of our generation qualify as an *excellent wife*? Once again the answer is *Responsibility*. Remember, we said earlier in this study that *responsibility* was the key element with regard to understanding this chapter. Now, what is the *responsibility* in verse twenty-one? It is to see that the family is provided with clothes to keep them warm throughout the winter months (*not afraid of the snow for her household*). Your mom is a good seamstress, but she rarely touches a sewing machine any more. Even so, we have all the clothes we need to get through all the

seasons of the year. You see, your mother shops for our clothes, and more often than not, she finds good bargains. Now I ask you, if she sees to it that we have all the clothes we need, has she fulfilled her **responsibility** to properly clothe the family? I say an emphatic YES, and she does a tremendous job of it.

Let's stop here and take a realistic look at this verse. Remember that Lemuel's mother was speaking from the standpoint of royalty with all the extravagance that goes along with it. As such, the kind of the clothes she acquired **for all her household** were **scarlet**. I am told that in Lemuel's day, this was the color of clothes worn by royalty. While the Proverbs 31 woman had all the means necessary to acquire clothes fit for royalty, your wife to be could never buy those kinds of clothes for your family on the income you will generate. Does that sound like a put down? I hope not, because it is merely an honest assessment. You cannot directly compare your future wife with "**her**" because they are not on an equal social or financial playing field, and you are not on the same financial plane as king Lemuel. This is not to say that the woman you seek is any less worthy or able. It is merely stating that she does not have the means to be so extravagant. She can, though, purchase good, quality clothes at a decent price that are fashionable and adequate for the different seasons of the year.

Does your wife-to-be know where to go to purchase clothing for the family while staying within the budget both of you and she will establish for clothing? Have you talked with her about this aspect of her **responsibility**? Any woman can go to the brand name stores and pay top dollar for fashion clothes, but it takes a special woman to find quality clothes at reasonable prices regardless of whether or not they have the brand name on the garments. The woman you choose may be inexperienced regarding this matter, but she should already have prudent buying practices firmly established before your marriage so that she can easily move into this aspect of her new **responsibilities** as a wife.

She makes clothes for herself

Verse 22-23 "She makes coverings for herself; her clothing is fine linen and purple. Her husband is known in the gates, when he sits among the elders of the land."

How does your wife-to-be dress? Is she fashionable yet discrete? Does she dress in such a way that others can tell she is a Christian? Does she look for places to shop where she can find quality clothing without spending an arm and a leg? Is her choice of clothing appropriate for the occasion? Does she choose clothes that make her look lovely? Does she have an eye for color coordination? If she does these things, then she should have no problem acquiring an appropriate wardrobe for herself.

The "model" woman in this chapter made her own clothes, and what she made was indeed fit for royalty. She made her clothes from **fine linen and purple** fabric. Even the fabric she chose was expensive in those days, but she was a queen and needed to wear appropriate clothing. It was her normal practice to look dignified and sharp, and she did a marvelous job of it. This fact is evident by the statement in verse 23 which states, "**Her husband is known in the gates, when he sits among the elders of the land.**" It is obvious from the text that this woman dressed for the express purpose of enhancing both her husband's reputation and standing in the community. Judging by the fact that he was so well known in the gates (that is, in the circles frequented by officials), she was successful. Officials who knew Lemuel would say, "Oh yes, your wife is the one who dresses beautifully. Lemuel, you really have a really classy wife."

Hopefully, the woman you seek will dress for your benefit and not solely to draw attention to herself. Pride causes a woman to dress in a way that shows off her body, but dressing for your benefit is love. Hopefully she will dress in a dignified manner and do it in order to draw attention to her strong character and confidence. You will recognize this aspect when you see it in a woman. Remember, there is nothing wrong with dressing casual if the occasion warrants, but when she is in public, she should dress in a dignified manner. If her clothing is sloppy, majors on showing off her body, or conveys an "I don't care" attitude, be assured that she will have the same attitude in other areas of her life as well.

She makes garments and belts to sell in the open market

Verse 24 "She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies belts to the tradesmen."

Everything this woman made was of superior quality. The verse says that **she makes linen garments and sells them**. The linen garments were of lesser value than those for her own family, and she sold these garments directly to the people of the city, thus netting a decent retail profit. The text says that she **supplies belts to the tradesmen**. These belts were the kind soldiers wore to hold their sword. It was similar to a scabbard or a policeman's duty belt

and holster. Since the sword belts she made were of superior quality, they were highly sought after by the people of her day. One taken in battle was highly prized⁴¹. She would make these belts and sell them to the tradesmen at wholesale who would in turn sell them at retail to folks in other parts of the known world. She was smart to sell in both the retail and the wholesale markets, and it showed that she was a shrewd businesswoman.

Does the woman you seek have a skill by which she could generate income for herself? I am not necessarily talking here about working outside the home. She may do that, but there is a lot to be said about generating income from within the home if she desires, especially while the children are young. They really need mom to be there for them during those growing up years. Not every woman will want to run her own business, but if she wishes to do so, you would do well to let her try as long as it does not take away from the unity of the family or create other problems that cannot be resolved without terminating the business. If she does generate income, she should be allowed to use some of that income as she wishes unless it is really needed to supplement the family's income. Keep in mind, though, that she needs some discretionary money from time to time to use as she sees fit. You would do well to see that your wife has some once in a while.

⁴¹ Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, © 1980 by The Moody Institute of Chicago, volume 1, page 263

K. She displays self-worth and self-esteem

She maintains strong character and a dignified presence

Verse 25a *“Strength and dignity are her clothing,”*

What kind of person is this Proverbs 31 queen on the inside? What makes people desire to make her the model for Christian women to follow? I believe that it is her genuine, biblical fear of the LORD. This is the most important character trait in a woman. In fact, her character and cheerful outlook toward the future are the result of her fear of the LORD. These qualities give her the drive and ability to do and be all that she is and does. This verse talks about her *strength and dignity* (or *honor* in the KJV). When we discuss these two traits, we must remember that they are being referenced to the words *her clothing*. Clothing is worn to cover our nakedness, but it also shows others our personality and approach to life in general. When people looked at *“her,”* they saw a woman of inner strength and dignity. They saw it because of the expression on her face, the way she walked, the way she talked, and the way she interacted with people. She literally wore her attitude as it were a garment for all to see.

A derivative of Strong's definition for *“Strength”* is *one who has strong character, can stand up for herself, can handle herself well in almost any situation, and has the self-discipline and drive to accomplish anything she sets her mind to accomplish*. Basically, this woman had real character. She was not only confident, but she reminded herself that as *an army of one* she had good physical, mental, and emotional strength and endurance. She was not quickly discouraged or dissuaded once she made up her mind to do something, yet this did not mean that she was inflexible. Most likely she had the wisdom to know when to abandon a goal.

Strong's tells us that the word *“dignity”* (*honor* in the KJV) is *being worthy, honorable, and highly esteemed*. Everything this woman did conveyed a quality about her that said she was an honorable person and worthy of admiration. She walked, talked, looked, and acted like a gracious, honorable woman. She was just as much at home in the house of a poor family as she was in the royal court. There are some people who just seem to emanate this quality, and this woman was one of them.

She not only possessed these two qualities, but they were such an integral part of her being that when others looked at her, they saw these qualities as it were *“her clothing.”* People did not have to study her to see them either because it was apparent at a glance that she was different than most women. Prov. 15:13a states, *“A joyful heart makes a cheerful face...”* In other words, what a person is on the inside shows on the outside. If you are sad, people will see the downcast look on your face; if you are happy, they will see a big smile on your face; and if you are concerned (a nice word for worried), they will see the apprehension on your face. This woman was so confident that others could see it at a glance. They couldn't miss it. Then too, she was so committed to excellence that it could easily be seen in her craftsmanship, her dress, and her relationships with others.

She maintained a good outlook toward the future

Verse 25b *“and she smiles at the future”*

According to Strong's, the word *“smiles”* means *to laugh mockingly*. In other words, she was so prepared spiritually, mentally, and physically that she felt she could weather anything the future might throw at her. She literally chuckled on the inside at each prospect, and on the outside her lips spread into a quiet smile. Please don't get me wrong. This woman was not proud or cocky. No, on the contrary, she simply did not fear what the future may bring. She had an ample dose of self-confidence and self-worth, and those two qualities gave her the inner strength to avoid the worry or panic other women experience. She could do this because she planned and prepared for the future. Son, this kind of stability in a wife is of great value to you. Hopefully, the woman you choose as your wife will have this kind of outlook. By the way, do you have this same kind of outlook toward the future? I hope so. But remember, it is not right to expect this kind of good attitude in her if you don't possess it yourself.

L. How she relates to others in and around the home.

Verse 26a *“She opens her mouth in wisdom,”*

Women were born to talk. Scratch that. It is more appropriate to say that women were born to communicate. As I have seen through the years, men talk, but they generally are unwilling to bear their hearts to another man. Men normally do not have the makeup to share their deepest emotions in that way. Women are different. They want to share their feelings with other women, and they do it well. They have empathy where most of us men do not. As a result, they communicate, not just talk.

Every woman talks, but the *excellent wife* (*virtuous woman* in KJV) always has something worthwhile to say. This woman speaks with *wisdom*. As we have already stated in the commentary on Proverbs 1:1-6 that the word *“wisdom”* ^{<02451>} is the same kind of wisdom that God gave Solomon, and John MacArthur writes that it *includes both the knowledge and the skill to live life like God intended man to live*⁴². As can be seen in the commentary on Prov. 1:7 (chapter 4 of this commentary), wisdom is not merely good decision-making based upon trustworthy knowledge and sound, godly understanding. No, it is more than that. It includes the performing of that good decision you make based upon trustworthy knowledge and sound, godly understanding.

When the excellent wife speaks, her words are the product of good discernment. She not only chooses her words carefully, but she says things that are worth saying. She is not one of those women who puts her mouth into gear before she engages her mind. No, she is someone who through good logic and sound understanding speaks what the listener needs to hear. She has good perception about life and has learned what life is all about. In short, she has her head screwed on straight. Many times when she speaks, she is the one whose words are *“apples of gold in pictures of silver”* (Prov. 15:11).

⁴² MacArthur, John. *MacArthur Study Bible*, Copyright © 1997, Word Publishing, pg. 877

Verse 26b *“and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.”*

This woman not only spoke with wisdom and discernment, but she did it in a kind and gentle way. She did not lord her knowledge and discernment over others, but she empathized with others in a way that allowed her to speak to the heart of the hearer. Men have a difficult time doing this, but it comes easily for an excellent wife. This is not something she had to stop and think about doing. It was a normal practice. She knew that she was no better than the one to whom she spoke, and as such, others recognized her humility.

Notice the word *“teaching.”* She was not only a kind and gentle woman, but she liked to teach others around her to be kind and gentle. At every opportunity she tried to teach others how they should properly respond to those around them. She must have had a great deal of patience to work with people in this way because some people do not accept constructive criticism well. I'm sure that some people would not allow her to be kind, but she was kind to everyone who would allow her to show kindness.

In summary:

Verse 27a *"She looks well to the ways of her household,"*

This verse and verse 15 are probably the most important verses to master if you are going to gain a sound understanding of the *excellent wife* Lemuel's mother was attempting to describe. You must first understand that *"she"* was the wife of a wealthy man, and as such, she didn't have to work inside or outside the home. She could easily have been the rich aristocrat other women of her social status had chosen to be, but this woman was much more than that. The text doesn't say whether she liked to socialize (party) with the other socialites, but it does say that she took her *responsibilities* in the home very seriously. Although she probably did little of the menial tasks around the house, she was a very meticulous manager of her home. One of the aspects of being a good manager is checking to see that the assigned jobs have been completed. Her servant girls knew that once she assigned them a task, it had better be completed well and in the prescribed time because *"she"* was going to check up on them to see that it was completed. She not only checked to see that it was done, but I'm sure that she inspected the job to see that it was done right.

Verse 27b *"and does not eat the bread of idleness."*

Undoubtedly this excellent wife kept busy throughout the day. Knowing that the daily tasks around the house were being done and done well by her servant girls, she could devote herself to the things she wanted to do. She loved to use her hands to sew, she valued her time in the garden (rather, vineyard), she maintained her garment business, and she shopped for those special items for meals for the family. This woman had to be in pretty good shape physically, emotionally, and spiritually to be able to do all the things she required of herself. I mentioned this above, but you might be asking, "What do you mean, required of herself?" That is exactly what I mean. She didn't have to do any of these things. She had servant girls who could buy the wool and flax, make it into thread, make the thread into cloth, and make the cloth and thread into garments. She had other servant girls who could do the shopping for those special food items, care for the vineyard, and do all the other things she chose to do. I am simply saying that this woman could just as well have done nothing. She could be the important wife of a ruler, and no one would have thought it strange. Why, because she was wealthy. She could hire someone to do all of the things she didn't want to do, but this *"excellent wife"* could not stand by and see that happen. No, she was a doer, and doing it herself was her way of gaining satisfaction and accomplishment. Women need to understand this about *her*.

To state it simply, this woman didn't have a lazy bone in her body. It makes me tired just thinking about the get-up-and-go this woman had, but it was her normal practice. Your mom is the same way. Okay, we understand that this woman was energetic, but what about the wife of today? What do you think you should look for in the woman? Ask yourself these questions: Does she chip in and help whenever there is a need inside the home? When the two of you visit her home, does she offer to help with meal preparation, help with the cleanup, or set the table? Does she keep her room neat and clean? Does she care that things are done right and that they are done right away instead of putting them off? Now, please understand that I am not talking about someone who is excessive, compulsive in these areas, but I am talking about a woman who is ready and eager to be of help. If she has this attitude before you are married, then she will have the same kind of attitude in the care and maintenance of your home after you are married. Look at your mom, and you will see an example of a woman who goes from morning to night without stopping. I don't know how she does it, but she does. I can't do it, but I admire her for her faithfulness and self-discipline to do it. You need to look for a woman like your mom. I realize that it is easy for a young man to fall head over heels in love with a woman, but I warn you again to be careful to evaluate a potential mate with your mind before your emotions blind your ability to use good logic. This part of your evaluation in the dating phase will guide you well in finding an excellent wife.

3) How the family should respond to her.

Verse 28a *"Her children rise up and bless her;"*

There is something about praise that lifts the spirits and spurs a person on to do more of the things that generated the praise. This woman, and hopefully your own wife someday, does a tremendous job of running and caring for the home, and she deserves to be told so. In fact, if you expect her to continue doing what she does so well, she requires praise. Oh, a woman may not come out and say as much, but inside she will be starving for

praise if she doesn't get it. She may not even realize she is hungry for praise, but if she doesn't get it on a regular basis, over time she may develop the attitude of "Who cares whether I do such a good job? What does it matter anyway?" Understand, your wife may not sit down and think this process through to its logical end, but her attitude may sooner or later show that she has come to this conclusion anyway.

All of this can be avoided if you will praise your wife on a regular basis. If you do this, your children will see what you do, and they will praise her too. Speaking of the children, please allow me to take another rabbit trail here. As I read and study Proverbs 31, one thing (among others) really stands out about the virtuous woman described there. It is this: since this portion of Scripture is primarily a list of abilities and **responsibilities**, it says nothing about relationships within the home except to say that she speaks with kindness and wisdom. It doesn't say that she loves her children or that they love her. What the text states is that her children say something like this to her, "Mom, you have done a tremendous job of managing our home. Congratulations." The text doesn't say, "Thanks mom, you have done a wonderful job of caring for our home, and I love you for it." No, it is simply "Good job mom." Now, I am not saying that this excellent wife did not love her children or that her children did not love their mom? Certainly not. All I am saying here is that the text doesn't say. We assume there was genuine, deep love between the family members, but the text doesn't comment about it at all. I will say this much though. If I don't respect another person, I won't normally go to him and praise him for a job well done. It is simply not human nature to do so. Therefore, we can assume that the children at least respected their mother enough to feel the need to tell her how good she did in the home. Keep in mind, though, that the excellent wife of Proverbs 31 is what a woman, Lemuel's mother, wanted other women to see in a good woman. Her focus was on managing the home, not family relationships.

Verse 28a-29 *"Her husband also, and he praises her, saying: Many daughters have done nobly, but you excel them all."*

Since Proverbs 31 does not deal with relationships inside or outside the home, we can rightfully look at this text purely from the standpoint of her **abilities** and **responsibilities**. As such, we can now understand that the approach this woman maintained toward her home was extremely valuable to her husband. If he was observant at all, he would have realized the benefit in everything she did and the good attitude she maintained. If he recognized this in her, he would certainly be thankful. Now, real thankfulness seeks an outlet. If you really appreciate your wife and all she does, then tell her. Son, when you marry, determine from the start that you will tell her how good she is and how well she does. Tell her that she is simply the best and that there is no other woman like her. Tell her that you appreciate her. It will go a long way toward strengthening your marriage in the years to come.

There was a time years ago when I started becoming discouraged about the deficiencies of your mom. I started dwelling on the things I didn't like about her, and it became a real stumbling block to me at the time. I got to the point where I didn't really care to come home because I would have to face those things AGAIN. Had that way of thinking gone unchecked, we may not be married today. Fortunately I realized the detrimental effects of thinking that way, and I started majoring on the things about her that I really liked and appreciated. It revolutionized my relationship with her. Today I look forward to coming home to be with her, and we enjoy doing things with each other much more than doing the same things with someone else. I am really fortunate that she has become my best friend. I am only sorry that it took me 25 years to discover that truth. Once I realized it though, I have been much happier and contented. Son, you can find this type of best friend relationship early in your marriage if you will major on her good points and praise her on a regular basis. You will really enjoy doing so after you establish the habit.

I may have mentioned this already, but allow me to take another rabbit trail for a few minutes. If you are like most men, you would love to have a woman like this as your own wife, and that is admirable. I hope you do, but if you married her, would she be the same excellent wife after several years? The reason I ask this question is basic. She will become what you make her. You might be asking yourself, "Dad, what in the world do you mean by that?" It is simply this: she will become or remain what you encourage her to become or remain. If you encourage and praise her, she will gladly continue doing the same things that made her an excellent wife in the first place, but if you take her for granted and are not grateful for all the hard work she does, she may come to the point where it does not matter to her any more. If that happens, she might abandon those good things that made her what she was when you married her. She may come to the point where she has no desire to care for the house or the kids or whatever. Son, I am merely saying that you need to praise, encourage, and thank her on a regular basis for all her hard work and sacrifice. This is what she needs to hear in order to keep on doing the same things for years to come. Tell her every day how much you love and appreciate her. It will really give her the boost she needs.

While I'm on this rabbit trail, there is one more thing you must keep in mind. If you do indeed want a wife like this excellent woman, then you need to work hard at being the same kind of man in the areas of character, industriousness, and fulfilling **responsibilities**. Nothing will pour water on the flame of her enthusiasm to excel in the home as much as a husband who is a careless, lazy slouch. You are to be the leader in your home, and you have heard numbers of times that everything rises or falls on leadership. This is true in the home as well. If you are the kind of man who has similar desires and goals for the home as your wife, the two of you will help each other succeed. But if she wants a neat, clean, and efficient home while you couldn't care less, in time, she will either become frustrated and defeated or else she will simply give up her attempts and resign herself to mediocrity. Son, make up your mind that you will be the kind of man who will complement the excellent wife you seek. She will help you in this area as you help her in the same area. You both will benefit when you complement each other in this way.

As you strive to be this kind of man for her, don't allow yourself to become a workaholic. She needs you there with her, and if you are always away at work in order to provide for her, you can do a great deal of damage to your relationship with her. Balance your work time with your time at home, and it will pay big dividends in the long run.

4) Things a bachelor should understand about women.

Son, remember these things when you look for a wife.

Verse 30 "Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised."

With charm alone, what you see is not what you get.

Do you remember seeing the girl in high school who all the guys wanted to date? This girl seemed to be able to charm any young man, and she seemed to get all the good dates. She seemed to be able to easily and comfortably worm her way into the heart of any boy she desired. She certainly was the envy of many of the other girls, but this kind of girl generally would dump one boy for another at the drop of a hat. She had charm alright, but the character trait of commitment and dedication seemed to be completely missing. The young man she dated on a certain day felt that she was his, and he thought she would be his forever. The only problem was that before long, she had abandoned him and chosen another boy who would lavish his attention upon her.

This is not the kind of woman you need to acquire. Instead, you should look for a woman who believes in commitment and dedication. Women like that are generally not the ones who have lots of dates or lots of boyfriends. No, they are average women with above average desires and aspirations. A good woman may have the ability to charm men, but they generally don't use that ability. What they do have is a large capacity to love one man and be dedicated totally to him. This aspect of a woman's ability to be committed is why Lemuel's mom said, *"Charm is deceitful"* and cannot be trusted. When you date, be aware of the way a woman may try to charm you. If she comes on too strong, break off the relationship. It is better to experience the minor hurt of breaking the relationship before marriage than to experience the devastation of a divorce after you have married her. You can tell if a woman is dedicated, and you need to be sure about her before you let your heart be drawn madly in love with her. By then, it is too late to do any serious evaluation or to respond wisely based upon what you find.

With beauty alone, what you get is not what you can keep.

Television and videos have done a great deal of damage to the way most men in America view women. Most men and young boys think that a beautiful body is the most important thing to look for in a woman, and sexual pleasures are the thing to be pursued. This is indeed what the world desires, but this is not what the godly man should seek. There is a rightful place for enjoying sexual pleasures, but that place is with your wife and with her alone.

I guess every young man has dreamed about marrying an absolutely gorgeous woman. You are a warm-blooded young man, and I'm sure you have felt exhilaration when a very beautiful woman pays attention to you. It is only natural. It has happened to all of us at some time or another. I'll admit that it is a thrill to look at a really beautiful woman, but it is a fleeting thrill. Beauty is nice, but if it is the primary thing upon which you intend to build a lasting relationship, that relationship is doomed to fail. What will you do when both of you start to grow old and the beauty starts to fade? What will you use to hold the marriage together then? If beauty was all that mattered, then there will be nothing left but regret when the beauty fades away. This is the very reason Lemuel's mom said, *"beauty is vain."* When we say that something is *vain*, we are implying that the thing we seek is **empty, unfulfilling**,

and of no lasting value in the long run. The beauty that drew you to her initially will last a short while, but when she gets older, you will see that the confidence you had in her beauty was a short-sighted and empty venture. Disaster awaits at the end of this kind of relationship.

I do not know the name of the particular person who said this, but Lifelovequotesandsayings.com shares this quote: "If a man is looking for a woman with a beautiful soul, then he will end up loving just one woman for the rest of his life, but if he is looking for a woman with a beautiful face and perfect curves, then all the women in the world cannot satisfy him. Real men don't fall in love with a woman's body, but they find beauty in a woman's heart and soul."

With the fear of the LORD, what you see is what you get, and what you get is what you keep.

We have already discussed the topic of the fear of the LORD in the commentary on Prov. 1:7 (chapter 4 of the commentary), so we will not repeat it here. Having and maintaining a genuine, biblical fear of the LORD is the single most important character trait of a good and godly woman. The woman God has prepared for you has beauty, but her beauty may be primarily on the inside where it really counts. Oh, she may be very pretty woman on the outside, but that will merely be icing on the cake. The woman you need is the one who has a genuine fear of the LORD, a beautiful attitude toward life, a beautiful confidence in the LORD, and a beautiful capacity to love one man. Everything she is and does will be driven by her love for the LORD. Son, she is out there somewhere, and at the right time, God will bring her across your path. When it happens, you will know. Mom and I have prayed often over the years that the LORD would make your wife-to-be every bit the excellent woman of Proverbs 31.

Son, once you gain a wife, this is what she needs from you.

Verse 31a *"Give her the product of her hands,"*

It should be obvious to anyone who reads Proverbs 31 that the excellent wife accomplishes many things of value and does many things that deserve a show of appreciation. I will agree that she is rewarded by good profits from her sewing business and wine from a well-producing vineyard. Yet there is much to be said for allowing her to keep what she gains and receive the praise heaped upon her by others who have been blessed by her. A wise husband will *give her the product of her hands*. After all, she did the work, and she deserves to keep the profits. The man who is the right kind of husband allows, no, encourages his wife to keep for herself what she has worked so hard to gain.

Keep in mind here that the excellent wife of Proverbs 31 was the wife of a wealthy man. He didn't need her income, and if he had taken it from her and placed it with his investments, he would not have realized that much increase. He could allow her to keep what she made and feel no financial pinch by doing so. When you marry, both you and she will share in the decisions regarding finances. Rightfully, everything you two own and all that is in your bank account is yours (plural) - that is, it is not yours or hers. It is yours (plural). It belongs to both of you. Even so, it is wise for a husband to allow, even encourage, his wife to keep some money she can use at her discretion. I am not talking about money just to blow, but there will be times when she wants to buy something she feels is necessary while you don't see the need. The freedom to go out with a girlfriend for lunch, etc. goes a long way toward keeping your wife contented, and she needs this kind of outlet from time to time. If finances are so tight that she cannot have any discretionary money, it puts an awful strain on her emotionally. It is to your benefit to find some of this kind of money for her even if she cannot generate it on her own.

Your mom does this very thing. She cleans one house a week, and what she makes is hers to spend as she sees fit. I am grateful that she helps with food, gasoline, and such as needed, but she still has some left over to buy the things she feels she needs. Although we both feel that everything we own is ours and not hers or mine, I am pleased to let her have and control (for the most part) the income she makes on her job. In fact, I encourage her to decide where it goes. I know I can trust her to use good discretion in what she buys, so I can trust her more than I can trust myself. If you haven't already learned a valuable truth, then now is a good time. Men usually are the big spenders in the home. They buy cars, boats, guns, etc. Women spend money, but they usually buy much less expensive items. Your mom has had to encourage me numbers of times to abstain from buying something I wanted and didn't really need. I am so grateful for her in this regard. She is indeed every bit *the excellent wife* in this matter, and I thank her for it.

When you marry, you would do well to give your wife some leeway in the matter of finances. For sure, you both will need to keep close tabs on finances so that you don't get heavily into debt, but at the same time, you would do

well to allow her to have some money that she can use at her discretion. She will feel better about it, and in the long run, you will have a more contented wife.

Verse 31b “*and let her works praise her in the gates.*”

It is good to allow your wife to reap the rewards from the work she does, but she deserves more than this. She has touched the lives of many people, and you should allow those people to freely express their appreciation publicly. The woman of Proverbs 31 was the wife of a king, and it would not have been unusual for a king to want all the glory and praise for himself. I guess a lot of men these days have the same kind of selfish attitude. Lemuel's mother said that the wise husband is different. He is ready and eager to *let her works praise her*. In fact, he encourages people to praise his wife for the good things she does. They realize all that she has done, and he realizes it too. In the same way good profits spur a businesswoman on to greater heights, so praise for a job well done will spur her on to do more of the things that generated the praise in the first place. I am sure that an excellent wife of today will respond much the same way.

The text encourages the husband of an excellent wife to allow her to be praised *in the gates*. In Solomon's time, this is where commerce and governmental business took place. It is one thing for people to praise her person to person, but it is entirely another to praise her publicly. When a woman affects people for good, she ought to be praised in a way that all of them can see. Public recognition is the best way. You would do well to allow her to receive that recognition without allowing yourself to feel slighted or intimidated. Son, you and I as husbands don't have to be the ones to receive all the recognition. Assuming your wife will be that excellent wife, she will be due ample doses of praise and thanks. Give her plenty of room to receive that praise. She will be the better for it, and you can stand behind her beaming from ear to ear in gratefulness that she is worthy of such praise.

In conclusion:

Now that we have examined the excellent wife as described in the text, what benefit is all of this to you? What benefit is it to any woman desiring to be like “*her*?” If you use it as a guide in selecting a **responsible** wife, it will direct you to a genuinely kind and godly woman who is a good housekeeper and manages her home well. If this is all you seek in a woman, then following this list is a good way to go, but if you want an affectionate wife and loving mother who is also a good housekeeper and manager of the home, then this list is somewhat deficient. Why do I say this? It is because Proverbs 31 is nothing more than a shopping list for a bachelor. It shows her **abilities** and **responsibilities** in and around the home. It does not deal with relationships. If you do choose a wife solely based upon the teachings of Proverbs 31, the woman may not be what you want when it comes to the family relationships. If you will remember, there is not one mention in the text about loving her husband or her children or about spending time with any of them. No, this list is solely dedicated to her **abilities** and **responsibilities**. OK, so what am I getting at? It is simply this: I recommend that you use this list of **abilities** and **responsibilities** to evaluate the woman you seek as a wife, but also look for a woman who will be a loving mother to your children and a best friend and intimate lover for you.

For you women reading this commentary, I hope you will understand that you don't need to feel guilty that you are not like her. Why? because you are not like her. You are not a queen, and you don't have numbers of servant girls available to perform duties around your house. Therefore you cannot compare yourself with her apples to apples. Grasp the truth that Prov. 31:10-31 majors on **responsibility**, and as you fulfill your responsibilities in and around the home, you can be “*her*” equal.

This passage is a poetic presentation of an excellent wife. It may be that this woman never existed, but was being shown as the epitome of an excellent wife. One thing is certain though. It is that this passage is a shopping list for a bachelor king seeking a good and godly queen. Use this guide with that in mind, and it will serve you well.

After going through this whole discussion, let's condense her abilities and responsibilities.

Her attitude

Toward God:

She fears the LORD & it drives everything she does (v. 30)

Toward her husband:

She is trustworthy (v. 11a) and dedicated (v. 12)

She dresses to enhance her husband's reputation (v. 23)

Toward herself:

She is satisfied with who she is and what she has accomplished (v. 18)

She has strong character and is dignified (v. 25a)

Toward others:

She is compassionate & shows it by helping the poor and offering to help the needy (v. 20)

She speaks with wisdom (v. 26a)

She attempts to teach others kindness, and does it in a kind way (v. 26b)

Toward the future:

She has a bright outlook toward the future (v. 25b)

Her Spending

She has learned to spend and save wisely & can be trusted to conserve money. (v. 11b)

She is a calculating (v. 16a) and careful shopper (v. 13a)

She invests wisely for the future (v. 16b)

Her work ethics

She is an early riser (v. 15a)

She loves to work with her hands (v. 13b)

She doesn't have a lazy bone in her body (v. 27b)

She works out regularly but not to the point of overdoing it (v.17)

Sewing

She makes her own thread (v. 19)

She makes clothes for her family and is fully prepared for the winter season (v. 21)

She makes her own clothes & they look sharp (v. 22)

She sews to generate income (v. 24)

She believes in making clothes that are quality (vv. 21c, 22b)

Caring for the home

She runs her home well and is an excellent manager (v. 27a)

She likes variety in her meals (v. 14)

As manager, she oversees the preparation of meals (v. 15b)

As manager, she gives daily job assignments to her servant girls & follows up on them (v. 15c)

OK, so we have a list of qualities according to Lemuel's mother. How does that help you find an excellent wife of your own in the 21st century? Since the list is not necessarily user friendly in reference to the women of today, allow me to paraphrase and further condense these qualities to where you can use them to examine the woman you will someday consider as a potential wife. Here are some questions you must ask yourself.

1) **Is she godly?** Does she have a sound, biblical fear of the LORD, and does she show it by avoiding sinful practices? Does she love the LORD with all her heart, and does she show it by doing good whenever

and wherever she can? In short, does she love the LORD, is she a morally pure woman, and is she glad to be that way? This is the first and most important character quality you should look for in a woman.

2) **Is she trustworthy and dedicated?** This can be seen by the way she relates to her church, her family, and her friends. Is she faithful to church, and does she faithfully serve there? Does she love and respect her parents, and is she good to them? Is she faithful to her friends, and does she do good by them? These things are important because when you marry her, she will most likely treat you and your children the same way she treats these.

3) **Is she compassionate?** Is she quick to help when a need arises in the life of another? Is she ready to give an encouraging word, supply a meal for a needy family, or provide some need when others are going through serious difficulties? If she is compassionate, she will not wait for someone else to offer a helping hand.

4) **Does she speak with wisdom, and when she speaks, does she say it in a kind way?** Does she like to share what she knows with others who are willing to learn? Does she do it in a kind and gentle way? You might find her teaching a Sunday School class at church, but then again, she may not enjoy speaking in front of a large group of people. Is she patient, or does she have a temper? She should be gentle but firm when the need arises.

5) **Does she maintain a good outlook toward the future and have a strong sense of self-worth?** Does she look forward to what lies ahead, or does she fear what tomorrow may bring? Has she accomplished things worth doing, and is she pleased with what she has accomplished? Does she fall apart when she faces setbacks, or does she use those events as a learning tool for the next time she faces a similar situation?

6) **Does she have strong character, and does she dress in a way that is dignified and displays good character?** This doesn't mean she will never dress casually, but does she dress for the occasion in a way that makes her look sharp and draws attention to her person, not her body? Once she is married, she will dress in a way that will enhance the reputation of her husband and not herself.

7) **Has she learned how to handle money well?** Is she a careful spender, and does she know how to save? Hopefully she is not an impulsive buyer, but is a calculating and careful shopper. Does she save some of her income regularly, and does she invest wisely for the future?

8) **Is she an early riser, and does she love to work with her hands?** If she is the right kind of woman, she won't have a lazy bone in her body. She will work out regularly in order to be strong so that she can not only feel good but have the strength to accomplish all that she requires of herself each day.

9) **Does she manage her part of the home well?** She may not have servant girls, but does she utilize her servants well (i.e. the clothes washer and dryer, timed baking oven, programmed coffee maker, etc.). Is her home neat and clean, and it is decorated nicely within her financial means?

10) **Is she a good cook, and does she know what constitutes nutritious and tasty meals?** Does she cook with variety to make her meals interesting, or does she believe in serving the same old menus month after month?

11) **Does she take her responsibility to clothe the family seriously?** She may not know how to sew, but does she know where to shop in order to find quality clothes for the family at prices within the family's financial means? If she plans ahead, she will not wait until a need arises, but will purchase clothing before the season changes arrive. They are less expensive that way.

12) In regard to her own clothes, **is she a sharp dresser with an eye for quality?** Does she dress in a dignified way that draws attention to her inner strength and character, and does she strive for quality in her dress and everything else she does?

So then, this is your list of practical things to look for in a perspective wife. Choose well, and I'll be praying for you.

A practical example of an excellent woman.

Before we conclude this discussion, I would like us to look at a woman in the Scriptures who conveys many of the attributes of the excellent wife (virtuous woman KJV). I touched on her above, and her name is Ruth. Follow along as we look at the book of Ruth and see the kind of virtuous woman she was.

She was a Gentile who married into a Jewish family. When her own husband and her mother-in-law's husband died, the two women traveled to Naomi's home country of Israel. Initially, Naomi tried to persuade Ruth to go home to her Gentile family and find another husband, but Ruth was fiercely loyal to Naomi and refused. Instead, she is quoted as saying in Ruth 1:16-17,

"Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the LORD do to me, and worse, if anything but death parts you and me."

As soon as they arrived in Naomi's home town, one of the two women needed to go into the fields and glean some grain so they had something to eat. Without hesitation, Ruth volunteered, rather, begged to go. Ruth 2:1-3 tells the story,

"Now Naomi had a kinsman of her husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz. And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, 'Please let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after one in whose sight I may find favor.' And she said to her, 'Go, my daughter.' So she departed and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers; and she happened to come to the portion of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech."

Once she had found a field grain, the owner, Boaz himself, spoke to her and invited her to glean from his fields and not go to others. He did so because he had already heard about the way she was devoted to God and to her mother-in-law, and he had heard folks talk about the way she was a pure and lovely woman. The narrative goes like this in Ruth 2:4-13.

Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem and said to the reapers, "May the LORD be with you." And they said to him, "May the LORD bless you." Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, "Whose young woman is this?" The servant in charge of the reapers replied, "She is the young Moabite woman who returned with Naomi from the land of Moab. And she said, 'Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.' Thus she came and has remained from the morning until now; she has been sitting in the house for a little while." Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Listen carefully, my daughter. Do not go to glean in another field; furthermore, do not go on from this one, but stay here with my maids. Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them. Indeed, I have commanded the servants not to touch you. When you are thirsty, go to the water jars and drink from what the servants draw." Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground and said to him, "Why have I found favor in your sight that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?" Boaz replied to her, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband has been fully reported to me, and how you left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and came to a people that you did not previously know. May the LORD reward your work, and your wages be full from the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to seek refuge. Then she said, "I have found favor in your sight, my LORD, for you have comforted me and indeed have spoken kindly to your maidservant, though I am not like one of your maidservants."

She worked hard and brought home ample grain for the two of them, and as soon as Naomi heard that she had gone to the field of Boaz, Naomi formulated a plan. She said this in Ruth 3:1-5,

Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you? Now is not Boaz our kinsman, with whose maids you were? Behold, he winnows barley at the threshing floor tonight. Wash yourself therefore, and anoint yourself and put on your best clothes, and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. It shall be when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies, and you shall go and uncover his feet and lie down; then he will tell you what you shall do." She said to her, "All that you say I will do."

To make a long story short, Ruth ended up marrying Boaz, securing Naomi's future and bearing a son who was in the line of Christ. It was a very happy ending to an otherwise tragic situation. Near the end of the story, Boaz made a wonderful statement about her in Ruth 3:11 where he said,

"Now, my daughter (Ruth), do not fear. I will do for you whatever you ask, for all my people in the city know that you are a woman of excellence."

The Hebrew word for excellence used here is the same as the excellent wife (woman of virtue - KJV) in Proverbs 31:10. Ruth was indeed a model of the Excellent Woman in Proverbs 31.

Now, what can we learn about Ruth that will help you find *an Excellent Wife*? Let's list her character traits in order to make them more visible and understandable.

- 1) **She was trustworthy and dedicated.** She was fiercely loyal to her mother-in-law. She was there for Naomi no matter where they moved and no matter how severe the circumstances. Naomi could depend upon her without reservation. This kind of dedication spilled over to her relationship with her husband Boaz. This is exactly the kind of woman you need for a wife.
- 2) **She was unflinchingly loyal to Jehovah.** Once she was converted, there was no going back to her former gods. She did not waver in her faith, and it only took a short time for her reputation as a woman of faith to be reported to the whole region of Israel. This is the greatest character quality any woman could have, and Boaz recognized it in her.
- 3) **She was willing to work with her hands.** She took the brunt of the load so that Naomi did not have to do the work. She was not lazy. She kept at the job until it was done for the day. Ruth was much like Rebecca in Genesis 24:10-27 where Rebecca watered all of Abraham camels. This was hard work, but she didn't mind doing it because it was just the kind of hard worker she was.
- 4) **She was a caring and compassionate woman.** She shared all that she had with her mother-in-law. In general, she was willing to help those in need.

This concludes the discussion of the excellent wife, but before we move to the next topic, I would like to say something to the women who may be reading this commentary. It should now be evident that the passage on the excellent wife deals with her *abilities* and *responsibilities*, nothing more and nothing less. As such, it should help women realize that they do not need to feel guilty that they are not like *"her."* Ladies, you can be like her in *abilities* and *responsibilities*. You should not be expected to clean the house, do the dirty laundry, care for young children, do the cooking, be at the sports game of the kids, help those in need, plant a garden, buy property, run a clothing business, and make your own wine all in the same day. There simply aren't enough hours in a day. Please realize that you don't have lots of servants to whom you can assign all the mundane work of cooking, cleaning, and manual labor, nor do you have the finances to buy real estate. You simply are not royalty and should not be expected to do all of the things that royalty does. This is not a put down. Rather, it is a reality check that should remove any guilt about the fact that you cannot do all of the things most people perceive *"she"* did. You can, though, fulfill your *responsibilities* in and around the home equally as well as *"she"* did in her home. If you will be a *responsible* wife, you can compare very, very favorably. If you provide your family with the clothing they need, don't feel guilty because you can't sew. If you keep fruits and vegetables available for your family to consume, don't feel

guilty because you don't have a vineyard. I repeat that since you don't have servants at your disposal, you don't need to beat yourself up because you cannot keep house, care for the kids, be at the kids' sports functions, take care of the laundry, etc. and still do all of the extra things "she" did after she delegated all of the menial tasks to her servants. Once you see this passage from the standpoint of **responsibility**, you should feel much better about who you are and what you can accomplish in and around your home. I don't share this to give you license to lay aside your responsibilities, but I give it so that you don't have to feel guilty about the fact that you can't do all of the things "she" supposedly did in a day. You most likely don't have the means, and that's okay. Make the most of what you do have. The LORD will reward you for it, and if your husband is who he should be, he will appreciate you for it too.

The Negative aspect of drinking alcoholic beverages

[Return to Index](#)

Avoid alcohol because it will hurt you.

We have seen the positive reasons why believers should abstain from drinking alcoholic beverages. Now we will look at the negative aspects of getting drunk. We have already discussed Proverbs 20:1 which states, "*Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.*" It is essential to understand that strong drink can and will make a fool of you if you choose to ingest it. It will deceive you into thinking you can control it, but be assured that it will adversely affect you. If you are not extremely disciplined, it will make a fool of you, and you will become stone drunk. In the end, it will certainly "mock" you. That's right, strong drink will sit back as it were and laugh in your face if you are foolish enough to drink the stuff. Oh, it may be fun at the beginning, but vomiting all over yourself and enduring a whopping headache will more than make up for the fun at the beginning. Son, you have never tried alcoholic beverages and I applaud you, but you have told me of the sailors who have returned to the ship totally wasted.

Consider Proverbs 23:29- 35. It states,

²⁹ Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaining? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? ³⁰ Those who linger long over wine, those who go to taste mixed wine. ³¹ Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly; ³² at the last it bites like a serpent and stings like a viper. ³³ Your eyes will see strange things and your mind will utter perverse things. ³⁴ And you will be like one who lies down in the middle of the sea, or like one who lies down on the top of a mast. ³⁵ 'They struck me, but I did not become ill; they beat me, but I did not know it. When shall I awake? I will seek another drink.'"

Avoid alcohol because of how it will affect your mind and body

It is obvious who the "who" is in the passage above. It is the guy who has ingested so much alcohol that he is, as they say, drunk as a skunk. Verses 29-30 describe the ways in which a man is manipulated by alcohol. The words in blue are Strong's definitions or dictionary definitions.

"*woe*" = Strong's says the word means **troubles**; the dictionary defines *woe* as **a condition of deep suffering from misfortune, affliction, or grief.**

"*sorrow*" = Strong's says the word means **regrets; exclamation of pain—indicates desire or uneasiness**; the dictionary defines the word as **a deep distress and regret (as in the loss of something loved).**

"*contentions*" = fights and arguments,

"*complaining*" – griping about your troubled situation,

"*wounds without cause*" – hurting yourself or being hurt by others unnecessarily and without good reason,

"*redness of eyes*" – bloodshot eyes and blurred vision.

So, who does alcohol hurt? The answer is obvious. *Those who linger long over wine, those who go to taste mixed wine.* Yes, it is the guy who could not stop at one drink. In fact, he could not stop. He drank until the alcoholic content took complete control of him. The text doesn't say whether it took 10 minutes or all day to get drunk. Wine, I

am told, takes a longer time to make a man drunk than whisky. This is because whisky has a much, much higher alcoholic content than does wine. It is really immaterial how a man gets drunk. The problem is that he does become drunk, and anyone who gets truly drunk will experience the same detrimental effects on his mind and body. Isaiah 5:11 sums up drinking when it says, *“Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them!”* Indeed this is the “who” in Prov. 23:29.

The command to abstain

Verse 31 of our text advises men not to drink alcoholic beverages, and it gives several reasons why. It says, *“Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly;”* Strong’s Concordance indicates that the Hebrew word for “look on” means “to look at, gaze at.” Literally, it means *to stare at with desire, to long to make it your own*. So then, when the text says *“Do not look on the wine”* it means don’t develop a longing for it. The instruction is as simple as that – no argument, case closed.

The text says that we should not desire wine *“when it goes down smoothly”*. Some might say, “Yeah, but it’s so satisfying to drink and feels so good.” It may be a pleasurable experience at the time, but remember what will happen in the end. It will deceive you, and you could become drunk. I have seen numbers of men called winos, so I know that wine drinkers can become thoroughly drunk. Even if the Bible said nothing about the detrimental effects of drinking alcoholic beverages, I would shy away from them based simply upon the ruined lives I have seen over the years. I had a close friend in junior high school. I will call him Bob although that was not his name. His dad was a heavy drinker. He invited me to go along on a couple of hunting trips to New Mexico, and during most of the time, including the drive there and back, Bob’s dad was drinking. I remember one trip where his dad and uncle purchased six 24 can cases of beer and proceeded to polish them all off in just a few days. Bob’s dad died several years ago from cirrhosis of the liver. Last I heard, Bob drinks too. It is so unfortunate. There are numbers of men and women like Bob’s dad who will most likely never have the ability in and of themselves to kick their addiction to alcohol and put their lives back together again. The safest way for you and me is to simply abstain from drinking and find satisfaction in more constructive ways. As an added note, my pastor has stated from the pulpit that the number of automobile accidents caused by social drinkers far exceeds those caused by people who are totally drunk. It just makes good sense, then, to abstain from alcoholic beverages.

What it will make you do

Verses 32-34 state, ³² *at the last it bites like a serpent and stings like a viper.* ³³ *Your eyes will see strange things and your mind will utter perverse things.* ³⁴ *And you will be like one who lies down in the middle of the sea, or like one who lies down on the top of a mast.*

Notice the words *at the last it bites like a serpent and stings like a viper*. When a venomous snake bites a man, it injects poison into his body, and it doesn’t take long before the man is either sick, paralyzed, or dead. The same type of thing happens with alcohol. Oh, there is no breaking of the skin by a fang, but the alcohol does get under the man’s skin and into his blood stream. Alcohol is a drug, and if a man drinks enough, his blood alcohol level will reach a high enough concentration to where it literally takes control of him. Then, when the drinking has stopped, or when he has ingested enough alcohol that it has taken control, he responds in rather predictable ways. At that point, it has literally sunk its teeth into the man and will not let go of him until it has finished its work. Hollywood makes it look humorous to see a man stumble and slur his words while making an absolute fool of himself, but humorous as it may seem, it is tragic. Even so, many unregenerate men get drunk over and over again, and his friends probably think it is cute. Let him do as he will, but it is never appropriate for a believer in Jesus Christ to allow himself to lose control of his faculties in this fashion. We are ambassadors of Christ, and as such, we have a **responsibility** to show the world that we are different. The best way to keep alcohol from getting its teeth into you is to abstain, totally.

Verse 33a *“Your eyes will see strange things,”*

When the blood alcohol content rises to a sufficient level, tunnel-vision starts to develop. A man would then only be able to see a small portion of any scene, and everything in the peripheral vision will be blacked out. People who drive while drunk do not see what is going on around them, and as a consequence, many cars are wrecked and many innocent people hurt or killed. Sometimes they wreck because they see things that simply are not there. I

wouldn't say they hallucinate, but the effect is the same. They see all sorts of things that simply do not exist because the alcohol is controlling them. These effects are commonly understood by the average person.

How it will affect your thinking

Verse 33b *"and your mind will utter perverse things."*

Alcohol will not only make you see things that are not there, but it will also mess with your mind. I understand that one of the first things to go is a person's inhibitions. The timid man becomes bold, and the bold man becomes obnoxious. A man's morals depart right along with his inhibitions. A drunk will do and say things that are totally perverse, things he would never think of saying or doing if he were in control of his faculties. Later, when he is sober and people tell him what he has done or said, he cannot believe he would do such a thing. The sad reality, though, is that he did indeed do them. It only takes one time of doing something like this to totally ruin your testimony for Christ, so it is the better part of wisdom to determine that you will never do that.

Once drunk, a man will abandon good morals, and he will not see anything wrong with committing sexual perversion or any other perversion for that matter. Although Hebrews calls Lot a just or righteous man, he made a grave mistake when he took wine along with him as he fled from Sodom. Once he and his daughters were safely situated in a cave far from Sodom, the following story unfolded. Genesis 19:30-38 states,

³⁰ Lot went up from Zoar, and stayed in the mountains, and his two daughters with him; for he was afraid to stay in Zoar; and he stayed in a cave, he and his two daughters. ³¹ Then the firstborn said to the younger, "Our father is old, and there is not a man on earth to come in to us after the manner of the earth. ³² Come, let us make our father drink wine, and let us lie with him that we may preserve our family through our father." ³³ So they made their father drink wine that night, and the firstborn went in and lay with her father; and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose. ³⁴ On the following day, the firstborn said to the younger, "Behold, I lay last night with my father; let us make him drink wine tonight also; then you go in and lie with him, that we may preserve our family through our father." ³⁵ So they made their father drink wine that night also, and the younger arose and lay with him; and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose. ³⁶ Thus both the daughters of Lot were with child by their father. ³⁷ The firstborn bore a son, and called his name Moab; he is the father of the Moabites to this day. As for the younger, she also bore a son, and called his name Ben-ammi; he is the father of the sons of Ammon to this day."

Once Lot was drunk, what morals he had before this event were overridden by alcohol. In this condition, twice he took part in sexual incest that he would most likely never have done had he been in control of his mind. Unfortunately, once the deeds were done and Lot had sobered completely, there was no way to go back and undo what had been done. It was simply too late. At that point, he simply had to live with the consequences of his sin and make the best of a bad situation. Son, be on your guard because even professing believers can succumb to this sin.

What happened to Lot has happened to untold numbers of other men and women. I'm not talking here about the incest but the loss of his ability to think clearly. Hosea 4:11 states, *"Harlotry, wine and new wine take away the understanding."* I realize this verse is talking primarily about the ability to honestly evaluate the consequences of one's actions and thoughts, but I feel it also includes a loss of the ability to think clearly. Alcohol takes over, and logic goes out the window.

Lot was not the only one in Scripture to be deceived by alcoholic drinks. Noah fell prey to the same fate, and it created a serious problem while he was drunk. Genesis 9:18-27 state,

²¹ He (Noah) drank of the wine and became drunk, and uncovered himself inside his tent. ²² Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. ²³ But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it upon both their shoulders and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were turned away, so that they did not see their father's nakedness. ²⁴ When Noah awoke from his wine, he knew what his youngest son had done to him. ²⁵ So he said, "Cursed be Canaan; A servant of servants He shall be to his brothers." ²⁶ He also said,

"Blessed be the LORD, The God of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant. ²⁷ May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant."

None of this would have happened if Noah had had the self-discipline to avoid overindulging, but this is a perfect example of how alcoholic beverages can and will deceive even an otherwise good and godly man into thinking he can control his appetite. In the end, it took complete control of him.

Alcohol will also take away your sense of balance. Psalms 107:27 states, *"They reeled and staggered like a drunken man..."*. Isaiah 19:14c states, *"...as a drunken man staggers in his vomit."* Then too, Job 12:25 states, *"They grope in darkness with no light, and He makes them stagger like a drunken man."* You certainly should not encourage your friends to drink. Habakkuk 2:15 states, *"Woe to you who make your neighbors drink, who mix in your venom even to make them drunk so as to look on their nakedness!"*

Although I have never made a practice of drinking alcoholic beverages for enjoyment, those who do must enjoy it or they would not drink. Eccl. 16:18-19 states, *¹⁸ Through indolence the rafters sag, and through slackness the house leaks. Men prepare a meal for enjoyment, and wine makes life merry, and money is the answer to everything.* There is no need to belabor this point, but when it comes to a choice between enjoyment and following the LORD, choosing the most **responsible** way is always the better choice.

How it will affect your decision-making

It will make you do things you would never do if you were sober. Verse 34 of our text states, *"And you will be like one who lies down in the middle of the sea, or like one who lies down on the top of a mast."* Can you imagine someone so foolish as to try to take a nap while floating in the ocean, or laying down on the top of a 400-foot-high radio tower. No one in their right mind would do such a thing, but that is just the point – a drunk is not in his right mind. He is what others call "plastered." He is so out of it that he doesn't feel any sense of danger or fear. He will do things that only an insane man would do. Consequently, he will experience a lot of physical hurts. It is foolish and senseless to put yourself in this kind of position. Wisdom teaches that we should be in complete control of our mental faculties during every waking moment of the day. It only makes good sense.

This is what Lemuel's mother was describing when she said, *^{31:4} It is not for kings, O Lemuel, It is not for kings to drink wine, or for rulers to desire strong drink, ⁵ lest they drink and forget what is decreed, and pervert the rights of all the afflicted."* He simply could not think straight to judge a legal case if he were drunk.

How it will affect your body.

Verse 35 *"They struck me, but I did not become ill; they beat me, but I did not know it"*.

Once the drunk has become sober and can think clearly again, he will ask how he got the cuts and bruises. Prov. 26:9 states, *"Like a thorn which falls into the hand of a drunkard, so is a proverb in the mouth of fools."* When a drunken man is injured, he most likely won't even feel it, and when he is told about the incident later, he will respond something like this: "I don't remember anything about that." His statement will be a true one. You see, at the time of the incident, he was so drunk that he was totally oblivious to what others were doing to him or what he was doing to himself. He will have no recollection of what happened during the time he was drunk. Of course, by the time he sobers up, the things he has done are history and his reputation will have been ruined.

How a drunk will respond when he is sober again.

Verse 35b *"When shall I awake? I will seek another drink."*

One of the characteristics of a true drunk is that once he sobers up, the first thing he will do is look for another drink. He is totally addicted to the stuff, and he does not have enough willpower within himself to whip his addiction. Apart from the saving grace of Jesus Christ, most men do not have within them the ability or self-discipline to conquer addiction to alcohol once it gets its hold on them. Son, I hope you never allow yourself to become subservient to alcoholic drinks. I pray you won't.

The conclusion on drinking alcohol

In almost any situation, it is much better to know “**why**” you should not do a certain thing than to merely know that you should not do it. Most people have some idea of the adverse effects of drunkenness, but few think about the positive aspects of abstaining (you do remember the aspect of **responsibility**, don’t you?). You now know better. The only question remaining is this—will you abstain and remain that way for the rest of your life? I certainly hope so.

It is important for you to determine once and for all that you will not drink, but it is equally as important to part company with those who do. You should not have any close friendships with people who drink. Prov 23:19-25 states,

“¹⁹ Listen, my son, and be wise, and direct your heart in the way. ²⁰ Do not be with heavy drinkers of wine, or with gluttonous eaters of meat; ²¹ for the heavy drinker and the glutton will come to poverty, and drowsiness will clothe one with rags. ²² Listen to your father who begot you, and do not despise your mother when she is old. ²³ Buy truth, and do not sell it, get wisdom and instruction and understanding. ²⁴ The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice, and he who sires a wise son will be glad in him. ²⁵ Let your father and your mother be glad, and let her rejoice who gave birth to you.”

This verse is not saying that you cannot be friendly with those who drink, but you should not make them part of your inner circle of friends. Otherwise, how could you lead them to Christ?

As we conclude this discussion on alcoholic beverages, I cannot stress enough the aspect of **responsibility**. I don’t drink because I am **a responsible person**, and I choose to indulge or abstain from numerous things based upon the fact that I am **a responsible person**. You and I must do so because we are disciples of Jesus Christ, and the LORD requires us to live in a good and godly manner as a testimony before other believers and before lost and dying men and women. We need to be an *epistle...known and read of all men* (2 Cor. 3:2). It is our **responsibility**, and it is our privilege.

To sum up the whole issue of drinking alcoholic beverages, I won’t drink them because Prov. 20:1 says that *whoever is intoxicated by it is not wise*. I want to be wise and continue being wise for the rest of my life. Since I want to be a good and godly follower of Christ, those things must be avoided or abandoned. It is as simple as that.

Chapter 17

[Return to Index](#)

An overview of the logic in Proverbs 10 through 29

We have discussed all of chapters 1-9 and 30-31, and many of the verses in chapters 10-29 have been included in those discussions. Since most of chapters 10-29 are random verses, there seems, at a casual glance, to be no order or logic in their presentation. Several good men have done topical studies covering these verses, so I will not repeat the good work they have done. I will, though, attempt to explain the logic of these chapters.

For years, it seemed to me that there was no logic to the way the verses in chapters 10-29 were arranged. Until recently, I simply imagined Solomon putting all of the verses into a large bucket, so to speak, and then tossing them from the bucket onto the pages of text with one hard swing. I have tried many different ways to determine some logic in their placement, and I finally found a way to make their order clear. I built an Excel spreadsheet with verse numbers going down the left column and chapter numbers going across the top row. Each cell represents a verse and was given a color depending upon the type of logic that particular verse contained. As I populated the sheet, the logic of the chapters started to become evident.

I chose **RED** to indicate a verse that presents an inverse parallel. By that, I mean that the verse says something like, “This is good, but that’s bad,” or “This is undesirable, but that is desirable.” An example is Prov. 10:7 which says, *“The memory of the righteous is blessed, but the name of the wicked will rot.”* I’m sure you get the idea.

GREEN indicates a verse that contains a similar parallel. This kind of verse reads something like, “This is good, and that is good too,” or “This is bad, and that is bad too.” A good example is Prov. 10:23. It says, *“Doing wickedness is like sport to a fool, **and** so is wisdom to a man of understanding.”*

GRAY indicates a verse that is more of a continual thought than a truth in parallel form. This kind of verse says something like, “This is good, and it works well,” or “This is a good. Doing what it teaches will work well for you.” A good example is Prov. 16:24 which reads, *“Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.”*

Please understand something here. I want you to gain a practical understanding of Proverbs. Therefore, I have taken the liberty of choosing general classes of verse parallels in these chapters even though a deeply technical analysis of these chapters would categorize them differently. My goal here is to help you see how these chapters are laid out and how the different sections of chapters 10-29 were determined by Solomon. The content of each group of chapters will become clear as you view the color indicators and see the spreadsheet as a whole.

On the following pages you will see sections of the spreadsheet dealing with the different sections of these chapters as a whole.

(Chapters 10-15)

	10	11	12	13	14	15
1	RED	RED	RED	RED	RED	RED
2	RED	RED	RED	RED	RED	RED
3	RED	RED	RED	RED	RED	GRAY
4	RED	RED	RED	RED	RED	RED
5	RED	RED	RED	RED	RED	RED
6	RED	RED	RED	RED	RED	RED
7	RED	GREEN	RED	RED	GRAY	RED
8	RED	GREEN	RED	RED	RED	RED
9	RED	RED	BLACK	RED	RED	RED
10	RED	GREEN	RED	RED	GREEN	GRAY
11	RED	RED	RED	RED	RED	GRAY
12	RED	RED	RED	RED	RED	RED
13	RED	RED	RED	RED	GREEN	RED
14	RED	RED	GREEN	GRAY	RED	RED
15	RED	RED	RED	RED	RED	RED
16	RED	GREEN	RED	RED	RED	BLACK
17	RED	RED	RED	RED	GREEN	RED
18	GREEN	RED	RED	RED	RED	RED
19	RED	RED	RED	RED	GREEN	RED
20	RED	RED	RED	RED	RED	RED
21	RED	RED	RED	RED	RED	RED
22	GREEN	BLUE	RED	RED	RED	RED
23	RED	RED	RED	RED	RED	GREEN
24	RED	RED	RED	RED	RED	GRAY
25	RED	GREEN	RED	RED	RED	RED
26	YELLOW	RED	RED	RED	GRAY	RED
27	RED	RED	RED	RED	GRAY	RED
28	RED	RED	GREEN	RED	RED	RED
29	RED	GREEN	RED	RED	RED	RED
30	RED	GREEN	RED	RED	RED	GREEN
31	RED	BROWN	RED	RED	RED	GRAY
32	RED	RED	RED	RED	RED	RED
33	RED	RED	RED	RED	RED	GREEN
34	RED	RED	RED	RED	RED	RED
35	RED	RED	RED	RED	RED	RED

This chart shows the logic of chapters 10 through 15. You will quickly see that the vast majority of verses are colored in **RED**. There are a few verses with other types of logic, but by far the majority are **RED**.

These chapters mention the LORD 20 times. The 4 times He is mentioned in chapter 10, the verses teach that good will come to those who follow Him. The 2 times he is mentioned in chapter 11 show His attitude toward good and evil. The 2 times He is mentioned in chapter 12 show His attitude toward men in general. The LORD is not referenced at all in chapter 13. The 3 times He is mentioned in chapter 14 teach about the fear of the LORD. And finally, the 9 times He is mentioned in chapter 15 teach either about how the LORD judges people or about the fear of the LORD.

Most of chapters 10 through 15 teach about the blessings that will come to the one who does good and the hurts or losses that will come upon those who choose to do evil.

Legend:

- RED** is an inverse parallel
- GREEN** is a similar parallel
- GRAY** is a continual thought
- BLACK** is "better than"
- BLUE** is "As this, so is that"
- Light YELLOW** is "Like this, so is that"

(Chapters 16-22)

	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
1	RED	BLACK	GRAY	BLACK	LIGHT GREEN	GRAY	BLACK
2	RED	GRAY	GRAY	DARK GREEN	LIGHT GREEN	RED	GRAY
3	LIGHT GREEN	RED	DARK GREEN	LIGHT GREEN	RED	GRAY	RED
4	GRAY	DARK GREEN	DARK GREEN	RED	BLUE	GRAY	GRAY
5	GRAY	DARK GREEN	BROWN	DARK GREEN	RED	RED	RED
6	DARK GREEN	DARK GREEN	DARK GREEN	RED	RED	GRAY	GRAY
7	GRAY	BLUE	DARK GREEN	BLUE	GRAY	GRAY	DARK GREEN
8	BLACK	GRAY	LIGHT GREEN	GRAY	GRAY	RED	GRAY
9	RED	BLACK	DARK GREEN	GRAY	GRAY	BLACK	GRAY
10	GRAY	GRAY	BLUE	GRAY	GRAY	GRAY	GRAY
11	GRAY	BROWN	LIGHT GREEN	GRAY	GRAY	RED	GRAY
12	GRAY	GRAY	RED	RED	GRAY	GRAY	RED
13	DARK GREEN	GRAY	DARK GREEN	GRAY	YELLOW	GRAY	GRAY
14	RED	BROWN	RED	RED	LIGHT GREEN	DARK GREEN	GRAY
15	LIGHT GREEN	GRAY	DARK GREEN	DARK GREEN	RED	RED	RED
16	BLACK	GRAY	GRAY	RED	DARK GREEN	GRAY	GRAY
17	LIGHT GREEN	DARK GREEN	GRAY	LIGHT GREEN	RED	DARK GREEN	GRAY
18	LIGHT GREEN	GRAY	GRAY	LIGHT GREEN	LIGHT GREEN	DARK GREEN	GRAY
19	BLACK	DARK GREEN	DARK GREEN	GRAY	GRAY	BLACK	GRAY
20	DARK GREEN	DARK GREEN	BROWN	GRAY	GRAY	RED	GRAY
21	DARK GREEN	DARK GREEN	LIGHT GREEN	RED	GRAY	GRAY	GRAY
22	RED	RED	LIGHT GREEN	DARK GREEN	YELLOW	GRAY	GRAY
23	LIGHT GREEN	GRAY	RED	GRAY	DARK GREEN	GRAY	GRAY
24	GRAY	RED	RED	RED	GRAY	GRAY	GRAY
25	RED	LIGHT GREEN	GRAY	RED	GRAY	GRAY	GRAY
26	GRAY	BROWN	GRAY	GRAY	GRAY	GRAY	GRAY
27	GRAY	DARK GREEN	GRAY	GRAY	GRAY	BLUE	GRAY
28	DARK GREEN	GRAY	GRAY	DARK GREEN	DARK GREEN	RED	GRAY
29	GRAY	GRAY	GRAY	DARK GREEN	DARK GREEN	GRAY	GRAY
30	DARK GREEN	GRAY	GRAY	GRAY	DARK GREEN	GRAY	GRAY
31	GRAY	GRAY	GRAY	GRAY	GRAY	RED	GRAY
32	BLACK	GRAY	GRAY	GRAY	GRAY	GRAY	GRAY
33	RED	GRAY	GRAY	GRAY	GRAY	GRAY	GRAY

This chart shows the logic of chapters 16 through the first half of chapter 22. As you can see, there is an obvious change in verse type presentation from what you saw in chapters 10-15. Notice the verses in light **GREEN**. These use the word “and” or insinuate the same, and the second half of the verse enhances and/or supports the thought of the first half of the verse. Prov. 16:3 is a good example. It says, “*Commit your works to the LORD and your plans will be established.*” The verses in dark **GREEN** are the same type of “AND” logic you saw in the chart of chapters 10-15.

Notice also that a lot of the verses are **GRAY**. They present a continual thought rather than a parallel thought. Prov. 16:4 is a good example when it states, “*The LORD has made everything for its own purpose, even the wicked for the day of evil.*” Take the time to examine the chart to the left.

The LORD is mentioned 11 times in chapter 16. These verses either show how the LORD is in control of a man’s way or how there is reward in following the LORD. Interestingly enough, the LORD is referenced 9 times in the first 11 verses. The LORD is only mentioned 1 time in chapter 17. There it can be seen how God evaluates a man’s motives. The LORD is mentioned 2 times in chapter 18. It is seen there that there is safety and blessing in the LORD. The LORD is mentioned 5 times in chapter 19. The fool hates Him, but those who live a good and godly life find blessings and security. The LORD is mentioned 6 times in chapter 20 and 5 times in chapter 21. All deal with the LORD being in control. The LORD is mentioned 5 times in 22:1-21. There He is creator, judge, and trusted One.

Legend:

- RED** is an inverse parallel
- Dark **GREEN** is a similar parallel
- Light **GREEN** is a similar thought reworded
- GRAY** is a continual thought
- BLACK** is “better than”
- BLUE** is “As this, so is that”
- BROWN** is “As this, so is that”
- Light **BLUE** is “Much more” or “Much less”
- Dark **YELLOW** is “Do not”

(Chapters 22-25-)

	22	23	24	25
1		Yellow	Yellow	Gray
2		Yellow	Yellow	Red
3		Yellow	Gray	Blue
4		Yellow	Gray	Green
5		Yellow	Green	Green
6		Yellow	Green	Yellow
7		Yellow	Gray	Yellow
8		Yellow	Gray	Yellow
9		Yellow	Green	Yellow
10		Yellow	Green	Yellow
11		Yellow	Green	
12		Yellow	Green	
13		Yellow	Gray	
14		Yellow	Gray	
15		Yellow	Yellow	
16		Yellow	Yellow	
17		Yellow	Yellow	
18		Yellow	Yellow	
19		Yellow	Yellow	
20		Yellow	Yellow	
21		Yellow	Yellow	
22	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	
23	Yellow	Pink	Gray	
24	Yellow	Pink	Gray	
25	Yellow	Pink	Gray	
26	Yellow	Pink	Gray	
27	Yellow	Pink	Gray	
28	Yellow	Pink	Yellow	
29	Gray	Pink	Yellow	
30		Pink	Pink	
31		Pink	Pink	
32		Pink	Pink	
33		Pink	Pink	
34		Pink	Pink	
35		Pink		

In the second half of chapter 22 through the first half of chapter 25, we see another obvious change in verse type presentation. You will notice that the majority of the verses in this section are colored in dark **YELLOW**. The essence of this type of verse or group of verses is “Do not” do a particular thing. The groups of verses may contain one verse or many verses. Prov. 23:4-5 are good examples of this verse type. It states, *“Do not weary yourself to gain wealth, cease from your consideration of it. When you set your eyes on it, it is gone. For wealth certainly makes itself wings like an eagle that flies toward the heavens.”*

In this section, Prov. 24:30-34 teaches how to avoid becoming a lazy man while Prov. 6:6-11 teaches how to overcome being a lazy man. See chapter 12 of this commentary for a full discussion of the comparison between these two paragraphs.

Also included in this section is Prov. 23:30-35 which teaches the negative aspects of consuming alcoholic beverages while Prov. 31:1-9 teaches the positive aspects of not consuming alcoholic beverages. See chapter 16 of this commentary for a full discussion of this topic.

The second half of chapter 22 mentions the LORD one time. There He is an avenger. Chapter 23 references the LORD 1 time, and it teaches that we are to have a biblical fear of the LORD. Chapter 24 mentions the LORD 2 times. These verses teach that we are not to be ungrateful or rebellious. The first half of chapter 25 does not reference the LORD.

Legend:

- RED** is an inverse parallel
- Dark **GREEN** is a similar parallel
- GRAY** is a continual thought
- BLUE** is “As this, so is that”
- Dark **YELLOW** is “Do not”
- PINK** is a complete paragraph of thought

(Chapters 25-26)

	25	26
1		Light Yellow
2		Light Yellow
3		Light Green
4		Light Yellow
5		Light Yellow
6		Gray
7		Light Yellow
8		Light Yellow
9		Light Yellow
10		Light Yellow
11	Light Yellow	Light Yellow
12	Light Yellow	Gray
13	Light Yellow	Gray
14	Light Yellow	Blue
15	Dark Green	Gray
16	Gray	Black
17	Gray	Light Yellow
18	Light Yellow	Light Yellow
19	Light Yellow	Light Yellow
20	Light Yellow	Light Yellow
21	Gray	Light Yellow
22	Gray	Light Yellow
23	Dark Green	Light Yellow
24	Black	Light Yellow
25	Light Yellow	Light Yellow
26	Light Yellow	Light Yellow
27	Gray	Light Yellow
28	Light Yellow	Light Yellow

Here in the second half of chapter 25 through chapter 26, we see another obvious change in verse type presentation. You will notice that the majority of the verses in this section are colored in light YELLOW. These yellow verses say in essence, "Like this, so is that." A good example is Prov. 25:11. It reads, *"Like apples of gold in settings of silver is a word spoken in right circumstances."*

The LORD is mentioned only once in the second half of chapter 25, and it shows how the LORD rewards generosity to your enemy. Chapter 26 does not reference the LORD.

Legend:

- Dark GREEN is a similar parallel
- BLUE is "As this, so is that"
- Dark YELLOW is "Do not"
- Light YELLOW is "Like this, so is that"
- BLACK is "better than"
- GRAY is a continual thought

(Chapters 27-29)

	27	28	29
1	Yellow	Red	Gray
2	Gray	Red	Red
3	Red	Yellow	Red
4	Red	Red	Red
5	Black	Red	Gray
6	Red	Black	Red
7	Red	Red	Red
8	Yellow	Gray	Red
9	Blue	Gray	Gray
10	Yellow	Red	Red
11	Gray	Red	Red
12	Red	Red	Gray
13	Green	Red	Gray
14	Gray	Red	Gray
15	Light Green	Yellow	Red
16	Light Green	Red	Red
17	Brown	Gray	Gray
18	Green	Red	Red
19	Brown	Red	Gray
20	Gray	Red	Gray
21	Light Green	Gray	Gray
22	Gray	Gray	Green
23	Pink	Black	Red
24	Pink	Gray	Gray
25	Pink	Red	Red
26	Pink	Red	Red
27	Pink	Red	Green
28	White	Red	White

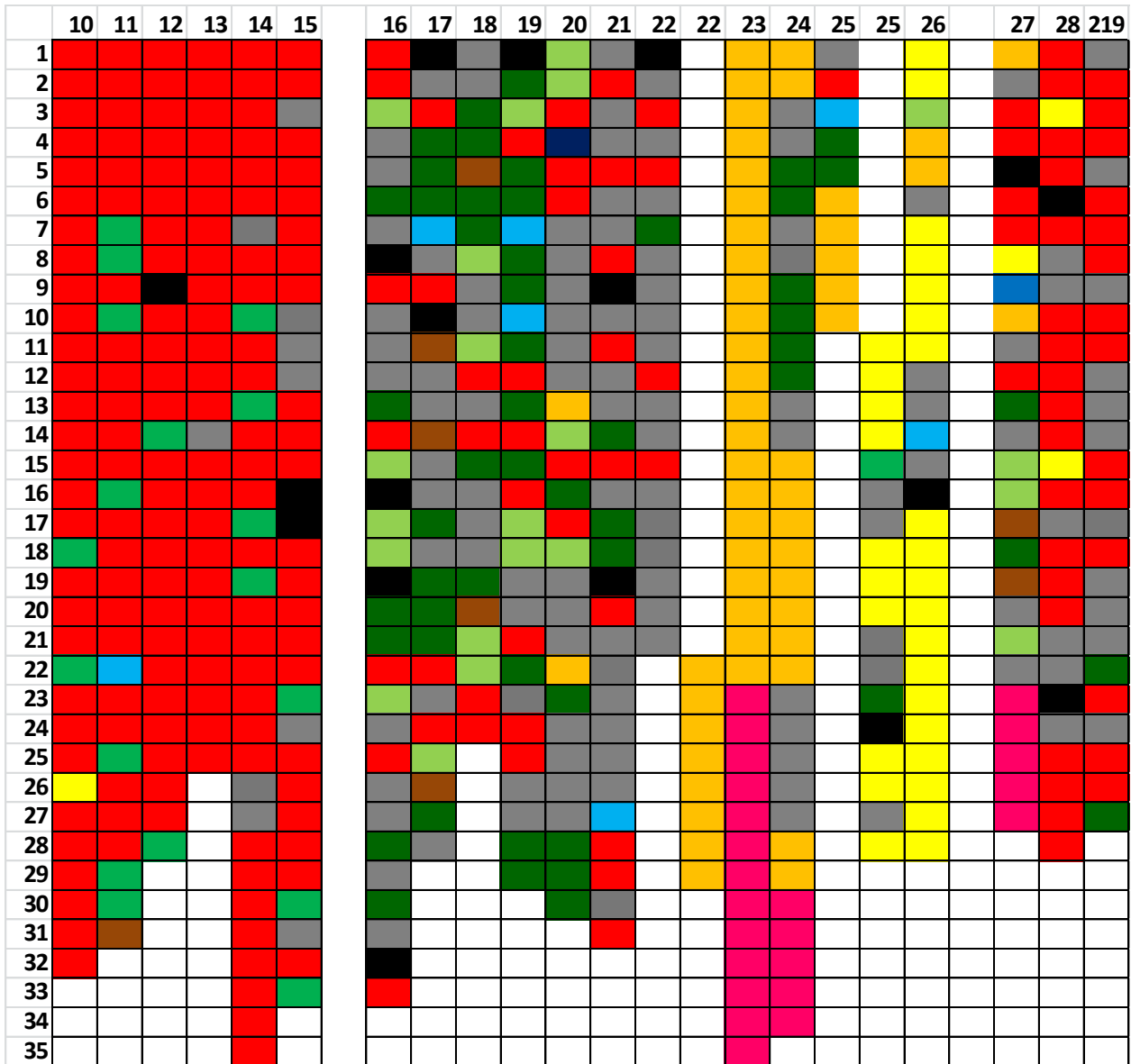
Here in chapters 27-29 we have a mix of all different kinds of verse logic. In chapter 27:1-22, the main thrust is that we should be the right kind of person from the heart and interact with others in a godly manner. Verses 23-27 teach the best way to invest your funds. Chapter 28 teaches the fallacy of selfish, prideful, greedy, or oppressive conduct compared to good and godly living. Every time I read chapter 29, it appears to me that, in general, the verses deal with rulers and the populace.

The LORD is not referenced in chapter 27. He is mentioned 2 times in chapter 28 and 3 times in chapter 29. There we learn that He is the Creator. Seeking the LORD and trusting in Him brings great reward.

Legend:

- RED** is an inverse parallel
- Dark **GREEN** is a similar parallel
- GRAY** is a continual thought
- BLACK** is "better than"
- BLUE** is "As this, so is that"
- BROWN** is "As this, So is that"
- Dark **YELLOW** is "Do not"
- Light **YELLOW** is "Like this, so is that"
- PINK** is a complete paragraph of thought

Now that we have looked at each section of chapters 10-29, the next page will show you a bird's eye view of all of the sections and how they relate to each other. There are a lot of verses here, and I have done my best to accurately designate each verse parallel type by a practical look at what it is teaching.

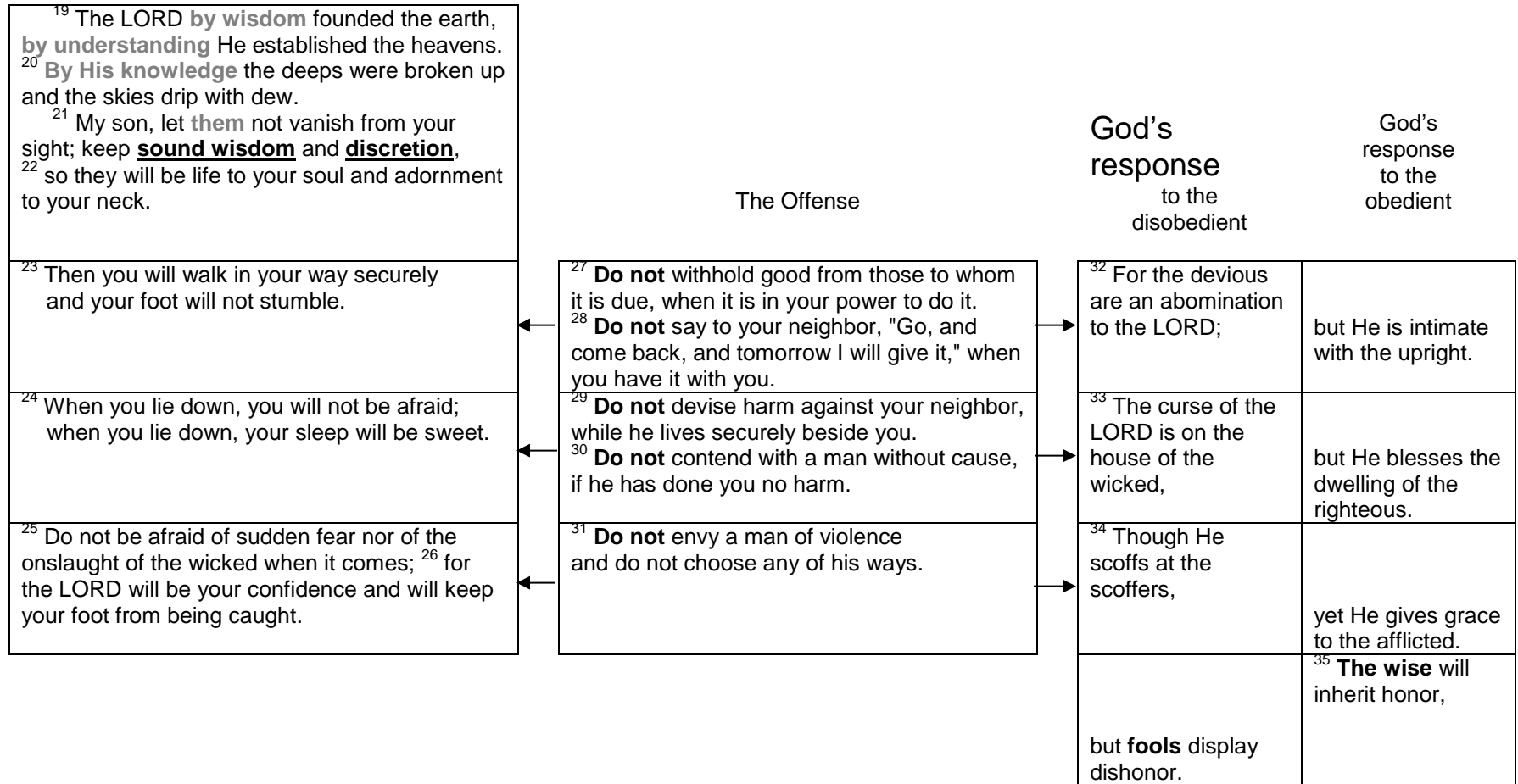


See Appendix on the following pages.

³ How blessed is the man who finds **WISDOM** and the man who gains understanding. ¹⁴ For her profit is better than the profit of silver and her gain better than fine gold. ¹⁵ She is more precious than jewels; and nothing you desire compares with her.

The Attitude	The right kind of heart attitude	Performing these unto the LORD	The Attitude	
Learning to do good	¹ My son, do not forget my teaching, But let your heart keep my commandments; ² For length of days and years of life , and peace they will add to you.	⁷ Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and turn away from evil . ⁸ It will be healing to your body, And refreshment to your bones.	Learning to avoid evil	¹⁶ Long life is in her right hand;
Giving of myself	³ Do not let kindness and truth leave you; Bind them around your neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart . ⁴ So you will find favor and good repute In the sight of God and man.	⁹ Honor the LORD from your wealth, And from the first of all your produce; ¹⁰ So your barns will be filled with plenty, And your vats will overflow with new wine.	Giving of my possessions	In her left hand are riches and honor .
Trusting God to direct me.	⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart , And do not lean on your own understanding. ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight .	¹¹ My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD , Or loathe His reproof, ¹² For whom the LORD loves He reproves, Even as a father, the son in whom he delights .	Trusting God to correct me.	¹⁷ Her ways are pleasant ways and all her paths are peace . ¹⁸ She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, and happy are all who hold her fast.

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Chapter 30

What Agur saw them doing
(Show them what they are doing)

Why they did these
thing (Show then
the root causes)

What they needed to understand
(Show them why they need to change)

Disrespect for Parental Authority	<p>¹⁻⁴ The words of Agur the son of Jakeh, the oracle. The man declares to Ithiel, to Ithiel and Ucal: Surely I am more stupid than any man, and I do not have the understanding of a man. Neither have I learned wisdom, nor do I have the knowledge of the Holy One. Who has ascended into heaven and descended? Who has gathered the wind in His fists? Who has wrapped the waters in His garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is His name or His son's name? Surely you know! Surely you know!</p>	<p>¹¹ There is a kind of man who curses his father and does not bless his mother.</p>	<p>¹⁵⁻¹⁷ The leech has two daughters, "Give," "Give." There are three things that will not be satisfied, four that will not say, "Enough": Sheol, and the barren womb, earth that is never satisfied with water, and fire that never says, "Enough." The eye that mocks a father and scorns a mother, the ravens of the valley will pick it out, and the young eagles will eat it</p>
Distorted view of Sin	<p>⁵⁻⁶ Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His words or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar.</p>	<p>¹² There is a kind who is pure in his own eyes, yet is not washed from his filthiness.</p>	<p>¹⁸⁻²⁰ There are three things which are too wonderful for me, four which I do not understand: The way of an eagle in the sky, the way of a serpent on a rock, the way of a ship in the middle of the sea, and the way of a man with a maid. This is the way of an adulterous woman: She eats and wipes her mouth, And says, "I have done no wrong."</p>
Disgusting Pride and arrogance	<p>⁷⁻⁹ Two things I asked of You, do not refuse me before I die: Keep deception and lies far from me, give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is my portion, that I not be full and deny You and say, "Who is the LORD?" or that I not be in want and steal, and profane the name of my God.</p>	<p>¹³ There is a kind--oh how lofty are his eyes! and his eyelids are raised in arrogance.</p>	<p>²¹⁻²³ Under three things the earth quakes, and under four, it cannot bear up: Under a slave when he becomes king, and a fool when he is satisfied with food, under an unloved woman when she gets a husband, and a maidservant when she supplants her mistress.</p>
Destructive and critical spirit	<p>¹⁰ Do not slander a slave to his master, or he will curse you and you will be found guilty.</p>	<p>¹⁴ There is a kind of man whose teeth are like swords and his jaw teeth like knives, to devour the afflicted from the earth and the needy from among men.</p>	<p>²⁴⁻²⁸ Four things are small on the earth, but they are exceedingly wise: The ants are not a strong people, but they prepare their food in the summer; the shephanim (conies) are not mighty people, yet they make their houses in the rocks; the locusts have no king, yet all of them go out in ranks; the lizard you may grasp with the hands, yet it is in kings' palaces.</p>

Conclusion and plea for repentance

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<p>²⁹⁻³¹ There are three things which are stately in their march, even four which are stately when they walk: The lion which is mighty among beasts and does not retreat before any, the strutting rooster, the male goat also, and a king when his army is with him.</p>	<p>32-33 If you have been foolish in exalting yourself or if you have plotted evil, put your hand on your mouth. For the churning of milk produces butter, and pressing the nose brings forth blood; so the churning of anger produces strife.</p>
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Chapter 30 In a Nutshell

	The Condition of These Boys	The Cause of Their Condition	The Cure for Their Condition
Problem with Parental Authority	Verses 1-4 They see Dad as stupid now that they have grown smarter than him.	Verse 11 They have no respect for their parents and are vocal about it.	Verses 15-17 They need to realize that their rebellion will come to an abrupt end someday.
Problem with Sin and God	Verses 5-6 They feel they are spiritual leaders.	Verse 12 They do not see themselves as sinners or recognize a need to repent.	Verses 18-20 They need to recognize their own sin as readily as they recognize the sin of an adulterous woman.
Problem with Pride	Verses 7-9 They expect the best and the most of everything.	Verse 13 They are proud and arrogant and see themselves as better than everyone around them.	Verses 21-23 They need to realize that people around them cannot bear up under them any more than they can bear up under the four people mentioned in this example.
Problem with Being Critical and Destructive	Verse 10 They are critical of others and slander them.	Verse 14 They are critical of other people and seek to destroy those they feel do not deserve to live.	Verses 24-28 They need to recognize that there is some value in every living thing, including those people that they are attempting to destroy.

The Conclusion of the Whole Matter

Verses 29-31 Some animals and some people are stately, but you guys are not among them.	Verses 32-33 Repent and turn away from your sin before the results catch up with you.
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Proverbs 9:1-6 (God's Best)

¹WISDOM has built her house,
 she has hewn out her seven
 pillars;
²she has **PREPARED** her
 food,
 she has mixed her wine;
 she has also set her table;

³she has sent out her maidens,
 she **CALLS** from the
**TOPS OF THE HEIGHTS OF THE
 CITY:**

⁴"Whoever is **NAIVE**, let him turn in here !"

To him who lacks **UNDERSTANDING** she says,

⁵ "Come, eat my food, and
 drink of the wine I have mixed.

⁶ **Forsake** your folly and **LIVE**, and
proceed in the way of understanding."

Proverbs 9:13-18 (Satan's imitation)

¹³ The **WOMAN OF FOLLY**
 is **BOISTEROUS**,
 she is **NAIVE**,
 and **KNOWS**
 NOTHING.

¹⁴ She sits at the doorway of her house,
 on a seat by **THE HIGH PLACES OF THE
 CITY,**
¹⁵ **CALLING** to those who pass by,
 who are making their paths straight:

⁴"Whoever is **NAIVE**, let him turn in here !"

To him who lacks **UNDERSTANDING** she says,

¹⁷ **STOLEN** water is sweet; and
 bread eaten in **SECRET** is pleasant."

¹⁸ But he **DOES NOT KNOW**
 that the **DEAD** are there,
 that her **GUESTS** are in the depths of Sheol.

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