

Bible Study # 82
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The Writings Series—Proverbs 10—22:16

We are going through this series on the Writings and, particularly, here in the book of Proverbs. This evening we **are covering Proverbs 10 through 22:16, the central and main section of the book.**

As we started in the book of Proverbs, we found that the first nine chapters constitute a preface to the central and main section of the book. One of the things we noticed, as we went through the beginning part, is that most of the first nine chapters are in more of a discourse style. It's a little different than what we normally think of as a Proverb. A Proverb is usually a short one-sentence, concise, pithy statement that sort of sums up information. It makes a very concise, pithy statement usually by drawing some sort of contrast or comparison. The proverbs in this section are primarily proverbs as we normally think of them.

Proverbs 10:1, it opens, "The proverbs of Solomon...."

We noted at the beginning that the book of Proverbs divides into seven sections. The introduction, the first few verses, is the first section. The second section is a discourse on wisdom. Then the third section opens in Proverbs 10:1, "The proverbs of Solomon...."

There are three bodies of Proverbs. This third section (Proverbs 10 through 22:16) is the first body of Proverbs.

Proverbs 22:17, "Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise...." That begins the second body of Proverbs and continues down until the end of chapter 24.

We pick up the third body of Proverbs in Proverbs 25:1, "These also are proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied." There were two bodies of Proverbs that were proverbs of Solomon, and there were a collection of sayings of the wise ones (the sophreim), the wise men of Israel. Solomon wrote the bulk of it. Some of them were collections of other wise sayings. Then a couple of centuries later, in the time of Hezekiah, there were proverbs of Solomon that had not been included in the book, that the men of Hezekiah copied out and added to the book of Proverbs. So you wind up with these three bodies of Proverbs that we would describe as the third, fourth and fifth sections of the book.

The sixth sections would be chapter 30, the prophecy of Agur, and the seventh section, chapter 31, the prophecy of Lemuel, which is what we primarily term the discourse on the virtuous woman.

We are going through what is called the first body of Proverbs this evening. They are concise statements that express wise rules of conduct. There are warnings and lessons drawn from experience and there is moral reflection. There isn't any particular systematic order or logical sequence that is followed because like the very phases of human life for which they offer guidance, the proverbs are of a miscellaneous character. They are arranged in miscellaneous order, just as we go through life and encounter experiences in miscellaneous order.

The book of Proverbs was not so much directed at the wise that could appreciate the loftier motives of virtuous conduct, but at the simple that needed the lesson that, in that sense, honesty is the best policy. So many times the practical aspect of life is brought out here.

Proverbs 10:3, "The Lord will not allow the righteous soul to famish, but He casts away the desire of the wicked." We have a contrast between what God doesn't allow and what He does.

Verse 4, "He who deals with a slack hand becomes poor, but the hand of the diligent makes one rich."

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

If you look right here, there are three keys to prosperity that are brought out. God does not allow the soul of the righteous to famish. *The first key to prosperity is righteousness.* That's one of the reasons we've got economic problems as a nation. The solution to our economic problems is right here in Proverbs 10:3, 4 and 5. We can sit down and write President Bush a letter and tell him what he didn't include in his state of the union address. We could tell him what would solve all of the economic problems. The first thing is righteousness. We don't have a whole lot of that in this country, do we? That's a problem. Righteousness is the first key to prosperity.

Verse 4, "He who deals with a slack hand becomes poor, but the hand of the diligent makes rich." *The second key to prosperity is diligence, not being careless, not being lazy, but diligent.* Diligence carries the connotation of not only of hard work but also of being careful. Being slack, in a sense, means carelessness. It goes beyond

somebody who is lazy. It's somebody who is just careless with what they do. They are sloppy in their workmanship. So you have righteousness and diligence.

Verse 5 brings out the third key and that is taking advantage of opportunity. "He that gathers in summer is a wise son, but he who sleeps in harvest is a son who causes shame." If you gather in the summer, you are a wise son. Why? –Because that is when the crops are coming in. If you are sleeping through the harvest, if you don't take advantage of the opportunity when it presents itself, it will pass.

Any farmer knows that you harvest when the crop's coming in. We can't say we don't feel like it this week; we'll wait till next week. You're not going to eat—plainly and simply. The crop passes its peak. It begins to decay and deteriorate and the opportunity is no longer there. Any farmer knows you pick it when it's there. You have to go get it when it's ready.

That's a lesson of life and it applies to everyone. You don't have to be a farmer for that to work for you. You have to take advantage of opportunities when they present themselves because they don't continue forever. Here you have three keys. If you look at it, would you say that this would explain a lot of problems in terms of the American economics: 1) a lack of righteousness, 2) a lack of diligent workmanship and 3) not taking advantage of opportunity, not having an entrepreneurial spirit, not stepping out and seizing the moment?

It's amazing and very simple. It's buried right here. Really, what you have is important keys to life. It certainly would make a vast difference in this country if just these three keys were applied. There's an awful lot that is packed in here, an awful lot of wisdom. Solomon wrote it 3,000 years ago; here we are 3,000 years later and still haven't figured out things that we have access to right here.

Verse 8, "The wise in heart will receive commands, but a prating fool [a fool of lips] will fall." One characteristic of someone who is wise is that they will listen. A fool is just mouthing off. He's sounding off and is going to fall flat on his face. Nobody can tell him anything. He never stops talking long enough to listen. "The wise in heart will receive commands." They will listen. You can give them instruction. Someone who is wise is not a "know-it-all."

When you run into someone who thinks he knows everything, the one thing you can be sure of is, he doesn't. One of the things he doesn't know is that he doesn't know everything.

Someone like that is headed for trouble. We can all save ourselves a lot of trouble if we listen to what somebody else has to say.

Let's notice some admonitions about the tongue. Verse 11, "The mouth of the righteous is a well of life, but violence covers the mouth of the wicked." We see some things right here about the use of the tongue, things that we should and shouldn't say.

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

Verse 13, "Wisdom is found on the lips of him who has understanding, but a rod is for the back of him who is devoid of understanding."

Verse 18, "Whoever hides hatred has lying lips, and whoever spreads slander is a fool."

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

Verse 20, "The tongue of the righteous is choice silver; the heart of the wicked is worth little."

Verse 21, "The lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for lack of wisdom."

Verse 31, "The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom, but the perverse tongue will be cut out."

Verse 32, "The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable, but the mouth of the wicked what is perverse."

There are several basic admonitions about the tongue. There is an awful lot packed in here about the tongue.

Proverbs 11:1, "A false balance is an abomination to the Lord, but a just weight is His delight." God is concerned with fairness and equity in our relationships and dealings and certainly in our business dealings. God is concerned that we deal with one another in a fair and equitable way.

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

When the day of God's wrath comes, when the day of the Lord comes, we read in Isaiah (Isaiah 2:18-21) about people casting their gold to the moles and the bats because it is not able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath. "Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death." That's the key. We have to get our priorities straight.

Verse 13, "A talebearer reveals secrets, but he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter." There's a time to hold our peace. Some people just go around telling everything they know and a lot they don't know. But someone who is of a faithful spirit, someone who really has some integrity and is a faithful friend, is not going to spread a lot of rumors and gossip.

We have some things about wise counsel.

Verse 14, “Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety.” It shows the wisdom of a multitude of wise counsel. In Proverbs 12:5, it shows the importance of the source of the counsel. It is not just counsel; it is wise counsel.

Proverbs 12:5, “The thoughts of the righteous are right, but the counsels of the wicked are deceitful.” You don’t want the counsel of the wicked. “...in the multitude of counselors there is safety,” but you want wise counselors and right counselors. When it says, “in the multitude of counselors there is safety,” that is talking about the fact that you get input from several different people, and different ones are going to notice different things. You can gain some insight.

This verse can sometimes be misapplied by people who go from one person to another, sort of telling their side of the story until they get the story right, and then finds someone who will agree with him. That’s not what it means to have a multitude of counselors. Normally, the context of a multitude of counselors, you have several that you are talking to at the same time. They are all aware of the same information and there’s room for an interchange of information. There are insights that different ones have and they stimulate one another.

Verse 15, “He who is surety for a stranger will suffer for it, but one who hates being surety is secure.” It’s talking about somebody obligating themselves for other’s debts.

Verse 16, “A gracious woman retains honor, but ruthless men retain riches.”

Verse 17, “The merciful man does good for his own soul, but he who is cruel troubles his own flesh.”

Proverbs 12:10, “A righteous man regards the life of his animal, but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.” Mercy and kindness is an attribute of character. A righteous man regards the life of his animal. He is not going to mistreat even a dumb animal. It reveals something about the character of a person. When you find somebody who has a streak of cruelty in them—if they are cruel and uncaring and mistreat a dog or a horse or something like that—they will turn around and mistreat people, too. They have that lack of any sense of responsibility or have that lack of kindness. “A righteous man regards the life of his animal...” He is going to make sure that it’s taken care of. He will make sure that it is fed and watered and is not going to mistreat it. That is, in one sense, a minor point, but it is sort

of an interesting observation in terms of human character.

There are a number of things that we find concerning the use of the tongue.

Verse 13, “The wicked is ensnared by the transgression of his lips, but the righteous will come through trouble.”

Verse 15, “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise.” This is an important point. It would make a good Bible study to go through the book of Proverbs and look up the word “fool” in a concordance. Then go through every place in Proverbs that mentions “fool” to see what one is because that’s a good list of things not to be. One characteristic of a fool is that he is right in his own eyes. You can never tell him anything.

“He who heeds counsel is wise.” Over and over, Proverbs emphasizes the importance of this principle. “Right in his own eyes”—this know-it-all-mentality or this sort of thing where somebody isolates himself and has his own mind made up and won’t listen to anybody else. “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise.” –A very important principle.

Verse 17, “He who speaks truth declares righteousness, but a false witness, deceit.”

Verse 18, “There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, but the tongue of the wise promotes health.”

Verse 19, “The truthful lip shall be established forever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment.” We see a contrast here.

Proverbs 13:3, “He who guards his mouth preserves his life, but he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction.” We find that there is a way that the tongue can be used that is of value and leads to life and a wrong use that leads to destruction.

We also see a lot of keys in Proverbs 12 and 13. In fact, let’s notice, and we will find **seven keys to sound financial management** given in Proverbs 12 and 13.

Proverbs 12:11, “He who tills his land will be satisfied with bread, but he who follows frivolity [KJV, “vain persons”] is devoid of understanding.” The first thing we see is working steadily at a job contrasted to following after the “high rollers”—the people who have some sort of get-rich-quick scheme. The first key to prosperity is just **working hard and steadily**. “...he who follows frivolity [vain persons] is devoid of understanding.” You always have somebody coming down, and he has some big get-rich-quick scheme. Well, if he was going to

get rich that quick, why hasn't he already done it? Why isn't he living on easy street?

This reminds me. I believe it was in the parking lot at Wal-Mart. We came back to the car and there were these cards that were up on the windshield. They were trying to interest you to call this telephone number. It said, "Would you like to earn \$10,000 a month?" The way the card was written out, they had the number to fill in. It was a cheaply produced thing to begin with. This sort of disreputable-looking guy was going around the parking lot and was sticking these cards on the windshields. Obviously, he wasn't earning \$10,000 a month or anything close to it. He probably hadn't earned \$10,000 in the last year. He was doing this instead of just sticking with something and being productive.

Proverbs 12:24, "The hand of the diligent will rule, but the slothful will be put to forced labor." A second key is **diligence**; working steadily at a sensible job and being diligent.

Verse 27, "The slothful man does not roast what he took in hunting, but diligence is man's precious possession." It warns us about being wasteful. It shows the importance of **utilizing what you have and not letting it waste**. So here's the third key.

Proverbs 13:4, the fourth key is, "The soul of a sluggard desires, and has nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made rich." Here we have a contrast between a lazy dreamer and a **diligent doer**. Some people always have these big ideas, but they never really get down to it.

Verse 11, the fifth key is, "Wealth gained by dishonesty will be diminished, but he who gathers by labor will increase." It's sort of another way of saying, "**easy come; easy go**." It's the way we go about it.

Verse 18, "Poverty and shame will come to him who disdains correction, but he who regards reproof will be honored." A very important sixth key to success is **taking correction and instruction**.

Verse 23, the seventh key is, "Much food is in the fallow ground of the poor, and for lack of justice there is waste [KJV, "is destroyed for want of judgment"]." -**Waste and lack of good management skills**. Lack of judgment is often a major cause of poverty. It's not that there wasn't anything, but it's destroyed for lack of judgment. The analogy would be like a farmer who has a pretty good harvest but doesn't properly store it. He was careless and it rotted and decayed. He didn't get out and pull out the bad ones, so pretty soon the decay spread through the whole pile. The whole bunch of potatoes or apples or

whatever, began to decay because he was not diligent in the way that he did it. It was destroyed for lack of judgment.

We see a number of basic, very commonsense principles: working steadily at an occupation, being diligent, utilizing what you have, not letting it waste, not being a lazy dreamer, being a diligent doer, not having an "easy-come, easy-go" approach, being able to take correction and instruction, being careful and managing well, trying to use good judgment with what we have. Let's notice a couple of verses in Proverbs 13 that make an interesting contrast.

Proverbs 13:12, "Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but when the desire comes, it is a tree of life."

Verse 19, "A desire accomplished is sweet to the soul, but it is an abomination to fools to depart from evil."

"Hope deferred makes the heart sick" is quite a contrast with "a desire accomplished is sweet to the soul." Frustration is perhaps the greatest cause and ultimately the root of a lot of anger, rage and depression, as well. At the root of those, you usually find frustration.

Verse 19, frustration is the opposite of what is described in, "The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul." People can waste their energies on things that they don't have control over. People can waste a lot of time, effort and energy on trying to change somebody else. They get their hopes up, and those hopes keep getting dashed down. "Hope deferred makes the heart sick." Your hope has to be based on reality; otherwise, you are setting yourself up to stay upset and heartsick all the time.

This is something that often happens. For instance, this is part of the emotional and psychological toll that is taken in an alcoholic family. "Hope deferred makes the heart sick." Promises are made over and over. 'I won't do it again; next time will be different,' and there isn't any solid basis for having that hope. Unrealistic hopes are gotten up and they are continually deferred—they are continually put off. Hope is deferred.

The key is: "The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul." We have to set our goals. We have to focus our energy and our attention on the things we can do something about—not dissipate our energy and our effort in things we don't have control over. Because if you don't have any control over it, it doesn't matter how hard you strain and how much effort you put out, you can't do it. There's a great deal of peace that comes from recognizing and accepting our limits

and turning it over to God because in turning loose of the things that we don't have power over and concentrating our energy and our effort on what we do have some power over, then we can have the desire accomplished. We can set a goal and achieve it; that's sweet to the soul.

Verse 20, "He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed." The people we associate with and whom we spend our time with is a matter of importance. But you can carry it down to entertainment—the television shows we watch and the books we read—because, in that sense, it is something we are spending time (sometimes hours) with. Being a constant companion of fools (the things that we spend our time taking into our mind) will affect us in a negative way. "He who walks with wise men will be wise."

Verse 24, there is an important principle on childrearing, "He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly [KJV, "early"]." This is an important principle.

Proverbs 14:1, "Every wise woman builds her house, but the foolish pulls it down with her hands." A woman, by her actions, has the ability to contribute very, very much to the strength and stability of the home or to pluck it down and tear it up. There's an awful lot that can be done. This is a big part of the difference between a wise woman and a foolish woman.

Verse 7, "Go from the presence of a foolish man, when you do not perceive in him the lips of knowledge." When you figure out that somebody has nothing of value to contribute, don't hang around with that person because ultimately the company we keep is pretty important. That is a principle that's been recognized for a long time. The company we keep is of a great deal of importance because it rubs off on us and affects us.

Proverbs 14:9, What is a fool? One of the definitions is given here, "Fools mock at sin, but among the upright there is favor." In other words, a fool is someone who takes sin lightly, who considers sin a joke. God says that's a fool—somebody that has an attitude that treats sin as a joke. God says that person is a fool.

Verse 12, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death." There are a lot of things that seem right. We can't afford to follow our own feelings. "There is a way which seems right unto a man." A lot of times people get themselves into problems because they follow the way that seems right to them. If you can't follow the way that seems right to you,

then what can you follow? You follow the way that God defines as right.

There's an old country song, "How can something that feels so right be so wrong." Well, the way that it can be wrong is because "there's a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death." That's how something can feel right and be wrong. It's a matter of what we are going to follow.

Everybody follows something. We follow our own feelings and emotions, the opinions of other people around us, the crowd or we follow God's Word. Everybody follows something, and the only sure guide is the Word of God because God knows. If you follow God, He's not going to mess you up. He just won't do that. But we can.

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9)? The heart is deceitful. We kid ourselves. That's what it means. The primary ingredient of human nature is self-deceit. We get tangled up in things and it's hard to be honest with ourselves about what we are doing or why we are doing it.

Have you ever noticed that if you really want to do something, you can find a thousand reasons as to why it's a good idea; if you don't want to do something, you can find all kind of excuses as to why you can't, why you shouldn't and why it probably won't work. We start out, but just because of our feelings, we don't want to go.

I was talking with someone on the Sabbath and they mentioned not having been here the previous week. They said, "Well, every time I started to go outside it was raining." Yes, it was. I noticed that when I left on the way over to services and I noticed it all the way back home. Yes, I noticed the same thing. It surely was. The point is that if you want to do something, you do it. You find a way to do it. You get an umbrella or if you don't have an umbrella, you put a newspaper over your head. If you don't do that, well, just get wet and you'll probably dry off. You are not sugar or salt and you are probably not going to melt right there in the driveway. If there were something that you really wanted to do, would a little bit of rain keep you from doing it?

The point is that we kid ourselves a lot of times about our motives. We kid ourselves about what we are doing and why we are doing it. It's an important principle to realize that, "There's a way that seems right to a man, but the ends thereof are the ways of death."

Verse 23, "In all labor there is profit, but idle chatter leads only to poverty." You have been

around people who are always sounding off about what they are going to do. They have these great plans and are going to do this or that, but they never do any of them. “In all labor there is profit.” If you just find a job and stick to it, you can make some headway. But do you spend all your time standing around talking about this big deal, that big deal and this other thing? You have all these big plans, but you never actually do anything. It doesn’t matter what you specifically do in terms of a job. “In all labor there’s profit.” If you just get out there and work, you can make a living doing a whole lot of things. But you are not going to make a living just standing around shooting your mouth off about all these big plans and big ideas that never get off the drawing board.

Verse 26, “In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence, and His children will have a place of refuge.” It’s sort of an interesting tie in—“...a place of refuge [a place of safety]...” and, “In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence....”

Verse 27, “The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to avoid the snares of death.”

Verse 29, “He who is slow to wrath has great understanding, but he who is impulsive [KJV, “of hasty spirit”] exalts folly.” If you go “flying off the handle,” losing your temper, you are just heading for trouble. If you are slow to wrath and just hold your temper, you are showing some understanding.

Verse 30, “A sound heart is life to the body, but envy is rottenness to the bones.” It can make a big difference.

Verse 31, “He who oppresses the poor reproaches his Maker, but he who honors Him has mercy on the needy.” If we are really conscious of the fact that we are accountable to God, then it’s going to carry through in the way we treat our neighbor. You are not going to take advantage of somebody because you can. If we really have the fear of God, we understand that we are accountable for what we do. It doesn’t matter how much power we have; if we have the fear of God, we realize that we are accountable for what we do and the way we treat everybody and everything. There is a sense of responsibility and accountability; we are not going to take advantage of somebody. We wouldn’t cheat somebody or mistreat somebody because we know that we are ultimately accountable to God.

Verse 34, “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.” This is a very important concept that this nation needs to understand and doesn’t. Righteousness is what

exalts a nation. Sin is a reproach to any people, and that’s the situation that we find that is so rampant in our society.

Proverbs 15:1, “A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” That is a very important key to avoiding strife and contention.

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

Proverbs 16:2, “All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirits.” People think that their ways are clean in their own eyes. People get really defensive about what they are doing and defend that, but God weighs the spirits.

Verse 3, “Commit your works to the Lord, and your thoughts will be established.”

Verse 6, “In mercy and truth atonement is provided for iniquity [KJV, “By mercy and truth iniquity is purged”]; and by the fear of the Lord one departs from evil.” That’s the way to get rid of sin.

A lot of times, the fear of the Lord is what gets people started. I remember back when I came into the Church—and I think a lot of you do, too, (particularly, years ago)—sometimes the thing that got us motivated to start keeping the Sabbath or to start doing some of these things was we read some of those booklets on prophecy. We saw some of those graphic drawings that Basil Wolverton had in some of those things. It scared us to death, and we thought we had better hurry up and do something. Well, by the fear of the Lord, men depart from evil. What usually gets us started is that we are scared not to get started. Now, that doesn’t mean that it totally remains your motive. But many times, if there wasn’t a little bit of a healthy fear, we never would have actually gotten around to doing it because it’s often inconvenient.

Verse 24, “Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the bones.” Honey tastes good and it’s good for you. So it’s not only a little bit of advice about diet, but it’s compared to what we say—“Pleasant words.” When we say something nice to somebody, it’s pleasant to them to receive it, and it does them good. It’s helpful.

Verse 25, “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.” God thought this was so important that He put it twice in the book of Proverbs. That’s important! We just got through reading it in Proverbs 14:12. If God thinks something is very important, He repeats it. It wasn’t because He stutters, and it wasn’t because He was absentminded and forgot

He had just inspired it a couple of pages ago. If He repeats it (I figure God doesn't repeat a whole lot of things), it must be because He wants to emphasize it.

Verse 31, "The silver-haired [KJV, "hoary head"] is a crown of glory, if it is found in the way of righteousness." The term "hoary" is derived from an old English word that means "white." That's where we get the term "hoarfrost." White hair, in other words, is a sign of age. "White hair is a crown of glory, if it is found in the way of righteousness." –Somebody who has the white hair of age and experience and is doing what he should do.

If it is found in the way of righteousness, if they are living and setting an example of a godly way of life, it is a crown of glory, and that's something that should be honored. It points them out as an individual who's lived life and has experience; that's something to honor. Now, when somebody has lived a full life and they still haven't gotten their act together, then that's not much of a crown of glory. If somebody has the mark of age and experience and still hasn't learned anything, that's not a crown of glory. It's important that as we get older, we should learn and grow in wisdom.

Verse 32, "He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city." Self-control is pointed out as being something that is of vital importance. To really control oneself is one of the hardest things. Strong self-control is brought out here. If you can rule your own spirit, you're better than he that takes a city. If you can control yourself, that is a harder job and it takes greater effort.

Proverbs 17:10, "Reproof is more effective for a wise man than a hundred blows on a fool." Part of the difference between a wise man and a fool is a wise man is not a know-it-all. He's someone to whom you can tell something. One word of correction, one admonition is going to enter into his heart. He's going to take it and think about it more than if you took out a fool, tied him to a post and gave him 100 lashes. He wouldn't get the point as much as just giving a wise man an admonition. One thing that we can use to help us determine how wise we are, as opposed to how foolish we are, is how easily will we learn a lesson? How stubborn are we about correction? To what extent do we get the point? And are we tuned in to it?

Verse 12, "Let a man meet a bear robbed of her cubs, rather than a fool in his folly." If you meet a bear robbed of her whelps, at least you can predict what she's going to do. It's not going to

be good, but it's predictable. There's no telling what a fool is going to do. At least with a bear, she's mad and you had better try and get out of her way. So you're better off meeting the bear that's all riled up, rather than a fool in his folly because there's just an element of unpredictability there.

Proverbs 17:17, we are told about a friend, "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." "A friend loves at all times." That's really the definition of a real friend. It's not hard to have friends during the good times. The prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32) got the money and left home. He showed up there, and it was sort of like, "All the drinks are on me." He had a lot of friends. Everybody in the bar was his buddy. But when he ran out of money and was "hard up" and "down-and-out," where were those friends? Where were his old drinking buddies? They weren't anywhere around.

It's interesting. He found out, when it was all said and done, the one friend he had was his father. His father was the one who loved him at all times. He was the one he didn't think understood him. He left home and thought he knew it all. And if there was one person who didn't understand him, he knew it was his dad.

Probably, in his estimation at that time, he thought his dad was one of the dumbest people that he had ever met. 'This old guy is so "out of it" and I just can't even stand to stay around here any longer. I am going to go into town and, boy, I have all these friends and buddies.' He thought he knew all about friendship. And he thought he didn't have anything in common with his dad. He never thought of his dad as being his friend. But you know, a friend loves at all times. When he was down-and-out and nobody else wanted him, who was it that received him back with open arms? Who was the friend that loved him at all times? This is an important lesson!

When things are going well for you, you'll find there are a lot of people who want to be your buddy. They want to be your friend. If you are "on the way up," you'll find people want to hang onto your coattails; they like that. But your real friends are the ones who are your friends regardless. They are not your friends because you are in power, because you have money or because you are in a position to do something for them. It's a vast difference.

Proverbs 17:17, "A friend loves at all times...."

How do you have friends like that?

Proverbs 18:24, well, "A man who has friends must himself be friendly, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." So a friend

loves at all times, and a man that has friends must show himself friendly. If we want to have that sort of relationship with others, if we want others to be a true friend to us, we have to be a true friend.

Proverbs 17:28, “Even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace; when he shuts his lips, he is considered perceptive.” He’s better off if he will just keep his mouth shut. Then nobody will know he’s a fool, and that will at least have its advantages.

Proverbs 18:2, “A fool has no delight in understanding, but in expressing his own heart.” Verse 4 is an interesting statement, “The words of a man’s mouth are deep waters; the wellspring of wisdom is a flowing brook.”

Verse 6, “A fool’s lips enter into contention, and his mouth calls for blows.”

Verse 7, “A fool’s mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul.” One of the things we are told about a fool is that he desires to do all the talking. He would much rather talk than listen. He’s always arguing and disputing; his mouth is what brings about his destruction. That’s one of the things there. He has no delight in understanding but in expressing his own heart.

Ever notice that you tend to learn more when you listen than when you talk? That’s an amazing thing, but I guess if we think about it, we will realize it may be one of the reasons God gave us two ears and one mouth. He didn’t give us two mouths and one ear. Maybe we should do more listening than talking. But a fool has no delight in understanding. He’s not interested in learning something new. He only wants to just “blat” out whatever he’s thinking, expressing his own heart. That’s an important key.

Verse 13, “He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him.” Boy, you have an opinion and haven’t even heard all of the facts.

Verse 17, “The first one to plead his cause seems right, until his neighbor comes and examines him.” We shouldn’t jump to conclusions. We need to hear both sides of something before we arrive at a conclusion. Have you ever noticed how someone comes and tells you his side of the story and you think, ‘How in the world could somebody have so mistreated him? Boy, that’s terrible!’ Then, somehow, when you hear the other person’s story you realize, maybe it wasn’t quite as one-sided as it sounded.

Kids are great at that. One of them comes running into the house and, oh, he’s mad and upset at what his brother did. He tells you his

side of the story and it sounds terrible. But when you hear the other side of the story, you realize that there was more to it. The first one didn’t tell you everything. He told you the part that made him look good. That’s human nature. It’s not just three and four-year-old kids who do that; 30, 40, 50 and 60-year-old adults do it, too. We tend to emphasize the facts that favor us and de-emphasize the facts that don’t.

It reminds me of this comedy routine I heard a number of years ago. These two men had a dispute between them and had gone to an arbitrator. One had cut a deal with the arbitrator. He came in there and told his side of the story; the arbitrator (a lawyer) was sitting there listening to it. The first fellow came and told his story. When he had finished, the arbitrator started to hammer down the gavel and give the verdict. The second one said, ‘Wait a minute, you haven’t heard my side yet.’ The arbitrator said, ‘No, look, I have been an arbitrator for a long time, and one thing I have learned is it’s too confusing if you hear both sides of the story. I never have trouble making up my mind if I just hear one side, but I always find it’s confusing to hear both sides of the story. It’s a lot easier to make the decision when you just hear one side.’

That sort of exaggerates a point, but it’s a point we can all find ourselves in sometimes—siding on something when we don’t know all the facts. We don’t have to have an opinion on everything. A lot of times you hear about something and you think, ‘Why in the world would they do that?’ Did you ever hear decisions, perhaps some administrative decision that was done at headquarters—they did this or that. You think, ‘Why in the world would they have done a thing like that?’ It’s possible, and I understand it is remote, that they have known something that you and I didn’t know. It’s possible they might have had a little more information that we didn’t have. What we have to realize is that we don’t have to have an opinion on every single thing because we don’t have all the facts. It’s just an important concept.

Over and over, the importance of the tongue is emphasized.

Verse 21, we are told, “Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits.” The tongue is a matter of vast importance.

Proverbs 19:17, “He who has pity on the poor lends to the Lord, and He will pay back what he has given.” If you have an attitude of mercy and

compassion and you are willing to help people, God takes note of that and blesses you for that.

The book of Proverbs contains warnings on both sides. It warns us not to be foolish. It talks about the foolishness of co-signing a note with someone or doing things like that. It warns us not to be foolish with our resources and obligate ourselves for something that can really impair our ability to provide and function. But on the other hand, it warns us not to go to the other extreme and have this attitude of selfishness. We need to have an attitude of kindness and willingness to share.

But when it comes to loaning something, if you can't afford to make a gift of it, you had better not make a loan of it. In my experience, it has been that an awful lot of the time. I made it a loan and wound up having to make it a gift because they never paid it back. That's an important principle to understand. If you can afford to write it off, then go ahead and loan it. But if you can't afford to lose it, you'd better not loan it because the odds are, more times than not, you are not going to get it back. So if you can afford to write it off, if you are in a position to do that, well, great. Then if you get it back, it's sort of lagniappe. But you are not crippled if you don't.

God wants you to be kind. He wants you to be merciful and generous, but He wants you to use wisdom with it and not impair the ability to provide for yourself or your family. So there's a balance.

Verse 18, "Chasten your son while there is hope, and do not set your heart on his destruction [KJV, "let not your soul spare for his crying"]." The point he is making, in terms of childrearing, is that the chastisement needs to start early. "Chasten you son while there is hope...." You don't wait until the child is almost grown before you begin to tighten down. The earlier you start, the better it is. You start chastening them while there's hope. "...let not your soul spare for his crying." It's not talking about doing some sort of long-term damage to somebody.

I have seen people who thought they were spanking their kids. They would just sort of touch them and the kid would start screaming and crying—so you'd better not touch him again. You haven't done anything with that except make a bad situation worse. All you did was make him mad. That's not effective childrearing. There are many principles here.

Proverbs 20:1, "Wine is a mocker, intoxicating drink arouses brawling and whoever is led astray by it is not wise." It tells us not to allow

ourselves to be deceived about the misuse of alcohol because it will make a fool out of us if we do. Other scriptures certainly show that there is a right use of alcohol.

Alcohol can be used in a variety of ways. It can be used and misused. The Scriptures show several uses of alcohol. It shows it is used in a religious sense. It is used in the context of the offerings in ancient Israel and in the context of the Passover in the New Testament time. It is used in a religious sense and for medical purposes.

Paul told Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach's sake (I Timothy 5:23). It is used internally for medical purposes to aid digestion; it is used externally as an antiseptic. It's what the Good Samaritan poured on the wounds (Luke 10:34). It is an extremely effective disinfectant of external wounds. Frankly, there is probably nothing any better. The natural wine has just about the right amount of alcohol content in it to disinfect the germs and won't prickle the skin. And it won't leave a scar either. So it has uses that way. It's used as a food or as a beverage in the context of a meal, particularly at a banquet or something of that sort. It aids in the digestion of rich food. It can contribute to a festive atmosphere and it is used in the context of an occasion like that.

But when it is misused as a mind-altering chemical, when somebody is just going off, pouring down the booze and tarrying long at it, they are not simply using it as it's appropriate. They are misusing it. They are using it to try to change the way they feel—to alter their consciousness. It will make a fool out of you. If they are deceived by what it can and will do to them, they are going to have trouble.

Verse 3, "It is honorable for a man to stop striving, since any fool can start a quarrel [KJV, "but every fool will be meddling"]." It's an honor to cease from strife and try to settle something peacefully. But every fool will be meddling. That's one thing you can count on from a fool. He is going to meddle in all kinds of things and sure enough he is going to have trouble.

Verse 4, "The sluggard will not plow because of winter; therefore he will beg during the harvest and have nothing." It's talking about getting the field ready for planting in the early spring. He will say it's too cold! The weather is bad and he doesn't want to get out into it. He doesn't get his field prepared and doesn't get his crop planted early enough. Come harvest, his crop didn't make, and then he is hard up and begging. He

doesn't have anything. A characteristic of a lazy person is that he looks for excuses not to do what he should do. Sometimes you have to get out and plow when it's cold. You have to do what you have to do, and sometimes it's not pleasant. That, again, is an important concept.

Verse 5, "Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out." In counsel, real intentions are like deep water. The analogy is like an old well. When you talk about deep water, we sort of miss the analogy today. I think a lot of us remember the kind of wells where you unwind the pulley and the rope goes down deep into the well. Then you have to pull it up. It takes some effort and patience to draw water out of a deep well. That's what it says here.

In counsel, the real intentions and what a person is really thinking—the deep and real thoughts and the real intents in the heart—is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out. It's going to take time and patience. If you really want to know what a person is thinking, you have to spend some time with them. It takes patience and effort to draw out what's really deep down inside, rather than just superficially.

Verse 11, "Even a child is known by his deeds, by whether what he does is pure and right."

Verse 18, "Every purpose is established by counsel; by wise counsel wage war." (KJV, "...with good advice make war.") In other words, if you are going to go out for a project, you better get some good advice and good opinions. There are people who have expertise in a variety of areas. Desire that input.

Proverbs 21:2, "Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the hearts." People go charging off and their ways are right in their own eyes, but God looks down deep inside.

Verse 5, "The plans of the diligent lead surely to plenty, but those of everyone who is hasty, surely to poverty." —Being careful, diligent, consistent and persistent leads to plenty. Sometimes somebody gets in a hurry and goes off at half cock. That can create a problem. The principle is that if you don't have time to do it right, how are you going to find time to do it over again?

Verse 17, "He who loves pleasure will be a poor man; he who loves wine and oil will not be rich." If you are out partying and doing all sorts of things like that, spending it all as fast as you get it, you will never get ahead. Some people just waste away everything they make on all sorts of luxuries and pleasures and "poof"—it's gone.

They can't pass by something and not try to buy it. They will never get ahead.

Verse 23, "Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles."

Controlling what we say will keep us out of trouble more than virtually anything else. That's an important thing. Guard your mouth and tongue and you'll keep yourself out of an awful lot of trouble.

Verse 31, "The horse is prepared for the day of battle, but deliverance is of the Lord." That simply means that you can make all the preparations you want, but God's help and God's blessing is what is ultimately necessary to establish it. "The horse is prepared for the day of battle." You can prepare the horse all you want, but real safety is going to come from God. That's something we have to realize. It's not a matter that we shouldn't make preparations, but we need to understand that there are limits to what we can do.

Proverbs 22:1, "A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, loving favor rather than silver and gold." A good name is of value. Our reputation is something that's more precious than anything money can buy. We should give thought and consideration to our reputation—to the way we conduct ourselves.

Verse 6, an important principle of childrearing, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." Early training is a great key to future character.

Verse 7, "The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender." That's a truism. It's what some have sort of used as the term "the golden rule"—he who has the gold makes the rules.

"The borrower is servant to the lender." We are finding that and we are going to find it far more in this nation. Who's been financing our spending spree? Who's been financing our massive debt for the last few years? Primarily, it's been the Japanese. Japanese banks have been buying up American bonds. They have been paying for our spending spree. "The borrower is servant to the lender." We have a major deficit from year to year. We are in a situation where the only way we can keep going is if we're selling bonds. We are going deeper and deeper into debt. We are going to find that, eventually, some of the lenders are going to come in and are going to call the shots because they have control. We haven't begun to really realize some of what's going to happen when the Japanese and the Europeans begin to do some of these things.

Verse 8, “He who sows iniquity will reap sorrow [KJV, “vanity”], and the rod of his anger will fail.” This is a very important principle. We are going to ultimately reap what we sow.

Verse 10, “Cast out the scoffer [KJV, “scorner”], and contention will leave; yes, strife and reproach will cease.” Here’s an important principle of dealing with problems. If you have a troublemaker, he needs to be gotten rid of. Things will settle down when you do.

A lot of times, even in groups, we’ve had situations and circumstances where somebody was a scorner. A scorner is not somebody who makes a mistake. A scorner is somebody who has contempt for the rules and lacks respect for the institution and for what it stands. When you tolerate somebody like that and you let them stay around, it’s just going to be strife and contention. If you have somebody who has that sort of an attitude, the best thing to do is to get rid of him. Isolate him. Get rid of him and then everything settles down. Everybody will make a mistake from time to time, but if you have respect for the institution and respect for the rules, then all it takes is a little bit of correction and it’s all back on track.

Verse 13, “The slothful man says, ‘There is a lion outside! I shall be slain in the streets!’” Boy, you talk about looking for excuses.

Verse 15, “Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction will drive it far from him.” –This sort of immaturity that is there. Foolishness is just bound up, and it takes some discipline and correction because, otherwise, there are just problems.

Verse 16, “He who oppresses the poor to increase his riches, and he who gives to the rich, will surely come to poverty.” God says that if you take advantage of people to get ahead, it’s going to come back to haunt you. God will see to that.

We come to the end of this first body of Proverbs. Proverbs 22:17 begins what is termed “the words of the wise ones.” Proverbs 22:17 down to the end of chapter 24, we have about two and one-half chapters of Proverbs that were collected as “the words of the sopherim.”

We will conclude here this evening. There’s an awful lot packed into the book of Proverbs. We could only hit the high spots this evening. Hopefully, you have gained some insight into some of these things. We have hit a number of proverbs. We will conclude the book of Proverbs next Bible study.