

A Month of
PROVERBS
in June

A DEVOTIONAL



JOYCE CORDER

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A Devotional

Joyce Corder

The Church of God, God's Acres
2021

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I do not mean to imply that a quick nibble can satisfy or feed a hungry soul. But one Scripture that you understand, that touches your heart, stays with you all day, and changes your life is better than hours of study without understanding. And a quick nibble is definitely better than nothing at all! That is my proverb! It is my desire to provide a place to begin, to stir up your appetite for more.

The Book of Proverbs gives instruction for our daily living. It makes many contrasts, such as: wisdom versus folly, right versus wrong, righteousness versus unrighteousness. Also, three words are repeated numerous times: wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. Knowledge is to be taught something. Understanding is to be able to take that knowledge (what you have been taught) and figure out how it works. Wisdom is to be able to take your understanding and apply it at the right time and in the right way, to use what you have learned and affect your world. Since this Book of Proverbs does not flow like a story, we can take one verse and dwell on how to make it work in our life.

For a more in-depth study, do a search for topics such as "wisdom," "trust," or "false witness" and find all the places in Proverbs that it is mentioned.

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DAY 1

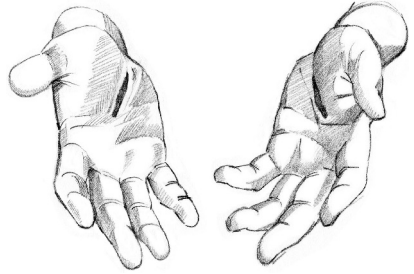
I Called and You Refused

Proverbs 1:24 Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded;

25 But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof:

26 I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh;

33 But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.



In today's verses, we see a loving God, calling, stretching out His hand, giving counsel and reproof in an effort to divert people from making wrong choices. We do not have to look far in our world today to see many refusing God's call, disregarding Him completely, making fun of Godly counsel and completely ignoring His correction. Verse 26 tells the consequence for such action.

The words used in verses 24-25, showing what God will do, are all positive words, such as: "called," "stretched out my hand," and offered "counsel." God offers us everything we need to succeed in our Christian walk. He calls us to walk with Him, He stretches out His hand to help and guide us, and He will give us wonderful counsel that will show the right way to go. But what we do with His provision is up to us. The people in our Scripture refused God's call. They said in their heart: "We do not want to serve, worship, or live for the Almighty God. We want nothing to do with Him." God, through Jesus Christ, has stretched out His hand of mercy and help to the lost world, but they just walk on past Him, disregarding the nail prints in His hands and the mercy in His eyes.

God gives us good counsel. Revelation 3:18 says, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see." God tells us to seek after righteousness and holiness, but people today say: "You do not have to live that good. Holiness is just an old-fashioned term that no one can attain to. Do not worry about it; just do your own thing." John 16:8 says, "And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." The world wants nothing to do with God. The only time many will acknowledge God is when they are in trouble that they cannot find any way out of. They do not want

any of God's reproof for their sinful lifestyles.

There will come a time when God's mercy runs out. If we shun Him and denounce His ways as useless and unnecessary, He will leave us to our own thinking. But be assured that our ways will lead us into calamity and fear. That is when God has every right to laugh. The word "mock" in *Strong's Concordance* means "to speak unintelligibly, stammering, or to have in derision." God speaks His commandments very clearly. He gives us plain instructions on what is good and what is not. When we cannot understand what God is telling us, we cannot figure out how we can ever get out of the circumstances we got ourselves into, God is laughing at us! How terrible to need God's help and not be able to find it, to be afraid and have no place to go for consolation.

If we will not listen to God when He lovingly tries to help us, we will have to feel His wrath. He is a God of love, but He is also a God of judgment. We know that for every deed, there is a consequence—whether good or bad. The same is true spiritually. If you ignore God, He will ignore you. But I am glad I can direct you to verse 33. If you will hearken or listen to God's direction and guidance, you will find safety and a quiet place from fear of evil. That is not saying you will never be afraid of anything or anyone, but it is saying you can run to God for His protection and He will not let you down. I would much rather have God's favor than His wrath. Do not ignore God; He is trying to help you.

DAY 2

Trust in the Lord With All Your Heart

Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

7 Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.

8 It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones.

9 Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase:

10 So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.



I would like for you to notice all of the words that require a response in these verses. Words like "trust," "lean not," "acknowledge," "fear," "depart," and "honour." There is a lot for us to do as Christians. First of all, we must trust in the Lord with all of our heart. Some of the words that *Strong's Concordance* uses to describe the word "trust" are "refuge, secure, sure, and hope." When we put our trust in the Lord, we do not have to have any reservations or fears that He will let us down. He is a refuge, a safe place to hide. He is Someone we can put our hope in because He will not fail. We can trust all of our heart to Him. He is a faithful, never-changing, Almighty God.

When it comes to leaning on our own understanding, that is a hard one! As humans we feel we need to be in control, but sometimes, lots of times, we do not see the path very clearly, and we make mistakes in judgment. Our understanding is human. God's understanding is as high above ours as the heavens are above the earth (Isaiah 55:9). When we learn to trust, we will know that God will never lead us wrong; so, we can lean on His understanding and not our own.

Acknowledge God. Consider how God will feel about every decision you make. Respect God's laws concerning each situation in life. If you acknowledge someone in a conversation, you invite their input or opinion on the subject you are discussing. Do not wait for what we call "big decisions" to ask for God's help; the many small daily decisions form and change our lives as much as big ones. Acknowledging God on a daily basis allows Him to direct our lives. God can see the end from the beginning, so He does not make the mistakes we do.

Verse 7 says, "Be not wise in thine own eyes" Romans 12:3 says not to think more highly of yourself than you ought to think. Revelation 3:17-18 says: "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see." When we do not feel we have a need, we will not trust God as we should. When we realize our dependence on God, it will leave us with a reverential fear of being without His guidance and favor. The fear of the Lord will cause us to depart from evil.

Following God's laws are good for us spiritually and physically. Keeping God first in your life will be health to your navel—the central part of your body, expressing general well-being—and marrow to your bones. When the marrow in our bones is not being produced, the whole body suffers and becomes weak and sick. God takes care of the whole person

The last thing our Scripture today says is, "Honour the LORD with thy substance" Show God and anyone looking on that you believe He is worthy of all you can give Him. He has given so much to us, should we not at least try to repay Him? The firstfruits have always belonged to God. But you cannot outgive God. You give Him your substance and firstfruits, and He fills your barns and overflows your winepresses!

DAY 3

Despise Not the Chastening of the Lord

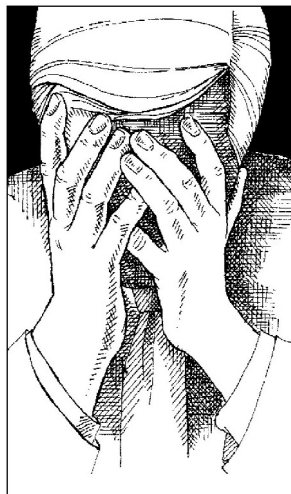
*Proverbs 3:11 My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction:
12 For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.*

Nobody likes to be corrected! But our Scripture today says to "despise not" God's chastening. Some of the words used by *Strong's Concordance* to define the word "despise" are: "to spurn; abhor, cast away, loathe, refuse, reject." So, we see it is not just disliking correction but actually ignoring it.

"Chastening" can mean verbal or physical correction, but it also can mean a warning or restraint, a check and instruction. Hebrews 12:11-13 says: "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed." A parent corrects and warns a child not to make the child feel bad but to guide that child into a good way that will help him in the end. God is the same. He is our heavenly Father who cares about His children and wants them to grow to be strong, respectable Christians, saints of God.

Sometimes it seems God's chastening will never end, but if we will continue listening to His correction and amending our ways, thoughts, attitudes, and whatever is offensive to God, we will profit by it. When I was young, I often marveled when I saw a child who had gotten a spanking climb up in the lap of the very person who had spanked them, put their arms around their neck, and cry on their shoulder! That is what God wants to see out of us, a sorrowful, penitent heart. An attitude of humility that will run to Him and ask forgiveness, telling Him, "I will never do that again!" God is looking for someone who will take reproof and use it to make themselves a better person.

It is good to know God loves us. Today's verses make mention of a father and son relationship. A father does not want to destroy the son that he loves, but he wants to nurture and guide him into a good life, into wise decisions. Our Scrip-



ture says, ". . . the son in whom he delighteth." The Lord delights in us. We are the apple of God's eye. He wants to give us every good gift and watch us excel in His love. Some think of God as a big ogre with a club just waiting for us to make a mistake so He can beat us down. This is just the opposite of His true nature. His love and compassion far exceed that of a natural parent.

Hebrews 12:5-10 says: "And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness."

This passage in Hebrews refers back to Proverbs. Chastening and scourging here refer to correction (not trials from other sources) but the correcting of our own faults. If a child goes uncorrected, he will not be a good citizen and will struggle with the Christian life. I have never met a child who did not need some chastisement! I have never met a Christian who could not get closer to God and be more like Him by God's application of His Word to the heart. The key verse here is verse 7, which says, "*IF* ye endure chastening . . ." If we will measure to God's Word, we will be the sons of God, joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

DAY 4

Keep Thy Heart With All Diligence

Proverbs 4:20 My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings.

21 Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart.

22 For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh.

23 Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.

24 Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee.

25 Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee.

26 Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established.

27 Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil.



Solomon considered this very important instruction. He was saying to listen carefully, prick up your ears, and take heed to what I am going to tell you. Sometimes we fail to give proper attention to what we are told and it affects our outcome. If we are told the bridge is out on a certain route so we should take an alternate way, and we only hear part of the information, we will have to retrace our route and try to recall what we were told. When the Word of God is being preached, we need to pay close attention because it will truly affect our outcome! These instructions are life and health. Our Scripture says to "keep them in the midst of thine heart." Do not just know in your head about God's Word, but know in your heart that it is true.

First of all, we must keep our heart with all diligence. When you own something of great value, you protect it the best way you know how. Our heart (or the center of our affection) is of great importance. If our heart, or affection, becomes corrupted, our whole life will be corrupt, "for out of it are the issues of life." If our heart desires worldly, lustful things, that is the way our life will go. But if our heart desires God and to be more like Christ, our life will be full of the things it takes to be holy and Christ-like.

Put away a froward mouth and perverse lips. To be froward and perverse is like being a rebel, to say or do wrong just because it can be done; to intentionally

do the opposite of what you know you should do. Knowing you should not slander your neighbor yet not being able to keep your mouth shut about his shortcomings would be perverse. This is certainly not Christ-like.

Let your eyes look right on. Do not allow your eyes to wander to evil and thus be ensnared by it. Typically, we walk where we look. If we get to looking back to sin, we will eventually be turned to it. If we keep our eye on the goal, we will make progress toward attaining it.

Ponder the path of thy feet. Consider your actions; weigh them against the Word of God. Consider how you will affect your fellow man and fellow Christians by what you are planning. How will it change the way people think of you? Will it make a difference in how you think of yourself? Before you make a move, stop and think about how it will change your life, other people's lives, and how people perceive the church, or Christ. Do not just go ahead and do questionable things and hope everything comes out all right. First Corinthians 13:11 says, "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things." Note that a child will speak, then understand, then think. As adults, we should think a problem through, understand how it will affect others as well as ourselves, and only speak when we know what we are talking about. We must ponder our actions before we hurt someone. We must allow God to establish us instead of continually apologizing for what we have done wrong.

Remove thy foot from evil. Stay as far away from evil as possible. Just as you would walk around something you considered disgusting, avoid evil people and evil doings. Sin is disgusting, and we do not want any part of it. These are important sayings; they will keep you saved. Consider them well.

DAY 5

Go to the Ant

Proverbs 6:6 Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise:

7 Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler,

8 Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.

9 How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?

10 Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep:

11 So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.



Consider the ant. It is a small insect yet carries burdens many times its own weight. Its brain can only be tiny; yet, it can travel seven hundred feet from the nest and find its way back by the shortest route. *Wikipedia* says ants work together and solve complex problems, and they find and store food for the whole colony. Each ant works within its designated area of labor, and the whole colony thrives. Proverbs 30:24-25 says: "There be four things which are little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise: The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer." The habits of the ant are very interesting, but this was addressed to the sluggard.

A sluggard is a sloppy, lazy person. Christians should not be lazy or slothful in business (Romans 12:11). The Proverb writer did not think much of lazy people! Proverbs 15:19 says, "The way of the slothful man is as an hedge of thorns: but the way of the righteous is made plain." He was saying that the slothful way is difficult, but God will bless the righteous. Proverbs 12:24 says, "The hand of the diligent shall bear rule: but the slothful shall be under tribute." Do not expect to prosper or excel in the natural or the spiritual life if you will not put any effort into what you are doing.

Reaching spiritual maturity takes pressing toward the mark (Philippians 3:14). It takes being diligent (2 Peter 1:5). It requires being steadfast and unmovable to attain spiritual ground. You cannot just quickly read a Scripture and repeat a prayer and expect to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). You have to apply yourself to study. The devil knows the Word

of God is the Christian's defense; so he will do everything he can to keep you from it.

Verse 10 says, "... a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep." This lets us know it does not take a full rebellion against reading the Word, just let down a little. That is the devil's favorite phrase: "Just a little." He knows if he can get you to let down just a little bit, he can eventually get you to quit altogether! Sleep refers to being fully unconscious. Slumber is just being drowsy, folding of the hand to sleep, settling yourself comfortably with no more thought of work. We can find ourselves in any of these states of leisure spiritually. When God arouses us, we must immediately take action, or we will go right back to sleep! Make a plan, such as, "I will not go to bed unless I have read my Bible." Do not procrastinate, begin today.

When you are asleep, you are not getting any work done, you are not making any progress, and everything stops. Spiritually, you must stay alert to make spiritual progress. You do not want to find yourself in spiritual poverty, without the basic essentials of life, spiritually bankrupt! The traveler and armed man here refer to the marauders who terrorized the highways in those days. Anyone traveling alone was a sure target to be robbed and possibly killed. A robber never has enough. Even if he robs a bank, he is thinking about how he can pull off the next job. That is what our Scripture is saying. Laziness never has enough rest; it is always seeking for more leisure. So, we must not give into it at all because it cannot be satisfied.

The ant has no guide, overseer, or ruler and yet gets much accomplished. We must not wait for someone to tell us what to do and how to do it. We know by the Word of God that we must "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). Stop waiting for a good time and do it!

DAY 6

Seven Things the Lord Hates

Proverbs 6:16 These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him:

17 A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,

18 An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief,

19 A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.



God hates all sin. Here we have seven sins that God considers very disgusting, abominable. Let us avoid all sin, but be especially cautious of these sins. "A proud look" is first. Pride not only thinks too highly of self, but thinks less of others. God loves every one of us alike. Pride makes us a respecter of persons. Pride is the cause of many other sins. People reject Christ because pride makes them think they are too good to need a Savior. Ones thinking they deserve better than what they have is at the bottom of covetousness. First John 2:16 says, "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." Self-confidence to the point of feeling we can handle things without God's help is disgusting to God. He already knows we cannot guide our own steps. We will make a terrible mess of things, but many go right on disregarding Him. That "proud look" has deep roots.

"A lying tongue" stirs up great trouble. James 3:5-6 says: "Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell." Verse 8 continues, "But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." God loves truth and hates every false way. Even the so-called "little white lie" is abominable to God.

"Hands that shed innocent blood." The Bible says, "Thou shalt not kill" (Exodus 20:13), but there are other ways to kill than with a knife or gun. You can kill someone's influence or their confidence. The key word here may be "innocent." Not guilty, but in your mind they need to suffer for whatever reason. We are not the judge. God and His word will have the say in every situation. It angers God when we offend one of His "lambs." Romans 12:19-21 says: "Dearly be-

loved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

"An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations," a desire to contrive and carry out, to mastermind evil plans. Thinking on how to "get even" with someone who has done you wrong. What is in the mind comes out of the heart; they are closely related and become actions!

"Feet that be swift in running to mischief." Enthusiasm for mischief! Quick to jump into the ring when there is a fight or misunderstanding, ready to take sides. Always ready to stir up trouble so they can be in the middle of the excitement. God's children should be anxious to avoid trouble and stay away from troublemakers.

"A false witness that speaketh lies" is another sin with the tongue and another mention of lying as a hated thing! Oh, the hurt that is done by bearing false witness and confusing matters even more.

"He that soweth discord among brethren." Here again our tongue displeases God. To disrupt the fellowship God has set in order for His people is an abominable thing and will only cause the sower of discord a harvest of hardship.

Hands, feet, heart, mind and mouth. Sin works through our mortal bodies to defile the soul.

These are sins against our fellow man, and God wants us to get along with each other and not hurt and offend one another. You cannot change others, but you, by God's help, can change yourself.

DAY 7

Those That Seek Me Early Shall Find Me

Proverbs 8:17 I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me.



The "I" in this verse refers back to wisdom. Wisdom has become a person, and that person is Christ. The first sixteen verses tell us his lips speak right things, this mouth speaks truth. His words are righteousness that are plain and right. Verse 14 says, "Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom: I am understanding; I have strength." Verses 15 and 16 talk about His power.

We can look at this Scripture as wisdom loves those who love wisdom or Christ loves those who love Him. Either way, whatever you love, you will find it responds to you. If you love the world, it will show you the best it has to offer. Unfortunately, the world will grow cold and hard and leave you with just a pretense of love, not the real thing. Christ's love, on the other hand, will grow warmer and richer as in a true relationship. When two people share real love, it will increase with time. When only one of the two has true love, it will diminish and die. Christ loves you, but if you spurn His love, a relationship will never develop.

When you find Christ as your personal Savior, you will love Him for who He is, not just for what He does. He is the Savior of the world, the Creator of all things, the Bright and Morning Star, the Alpha and Omega (meaning the beginning and the ending of all things). He is the Healer of body, soul, mind, and spirit, the Comforter and Counselor, Almighty God, the Savior and Redeemer of mankind, and so much more.

In a human relationship, you must see the person for who they are, not what they look like. Looks change, but the real character of a person remains the same. Hebrews 13:8 says, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." You can depend on Christ's love. Can He depend on your love?

The rest of the Scripture says, ". . . those that seek me early shall find me." It is best to seek the Lord in your youth, before the devil has a chance to entangle you in his chains of habit and vice, before you have the scars of sin and regret. This does not mean that you cannot get saved at an advanced age or if the devil has bound you. It just means it is wise to avoid the devil's devices and be saved

while you are young. Ecclesiastes 12:1 says, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." If we look at the Scripture as saying those who seek wisdom early shall find wisdom, we can also find it. "Listen to those that are older and wiser." Take heed to good advice and the counsel of spiritual people and leaders. This verse says to "seek early." As soon as you realize you need wisdom, begin seeking for it.

The word "seek" makes us think it will not just drop in our lap, but we will have to put forth effort to find it. It may be hiding; it may not be where you think it is. Anyone who is treasure hunting will not give up easily but will earnestly search everywhere for it because it is worthwhile to them. Finding Christ and His wisdom will take some thought and diligence to find, but do not give up. The verse says you will find it, and it is worth all your effort!

DAY 8

Durable Riches

Proverbs 8:18 Riches and honour are with me; yea, durable riches and righteousness.

19 My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold; and my revenue than choice silver.

20 I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment:

21 That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures.



Things that are durable are things that will last. They do not break the first time you use them! Thus, we put greater value on an item that will last twenty years versus one that will only last five years. Christ offers us durable riches that the world cannot match.

The price of gold and silver goes up and down. The stock market goes high then falls. But Christ offers substance that is lasting. Righteousness will hold its value for your whole life and beyond. Fine gold is twenty-four karat; it has little or no filler in it. It is of great earthly value because of its scarcity and beauty. But it will melt away and be worthless when the earth is destroyed. Choice silver is refined to 99.9 percent purity. Yet, Christ offers durable wealth of more value than either of these.

His judgment and laws lead to peace, which is without price, and contentment that no amount of silver and gold can buy. What about the durable wealth of a good name? Many a rich person has forfeited that! Then, there is the freedom from the habits of life and freedom from the diseases that come with those habits. What about the communion with Christ, Someone to take your problems to who can actually do something about them? Not to mention Heaven in the end.

Matthew 6:19-21 says: "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." Lay up your treasures in Heaven, treasures like: a soul won to Christ by your testimony or example, a Christian you encouraged who was ready to give up, good deeds that remind sinners God is alive and watching all that we do, or Christian service, such as visiting the sick, cleaning

the church restroom, working in the congregation or singing in the choir. These are all durable riches, treasures in your Heavenly storehouse.

Matthew says to lay not up treasures on earth. That does not mean you cannot save your money for cars and houses and vacations and things you want. But it does mean you should not set your heart on them because your car will get old or wrecked or stop running. A house constantly needs repaired. Vacations come and go, and all you have left are pictures and good memories. These are not durable riches. They can steal your time and tie you down so you cannot work for God because of all of your earthly responsibilities.

Verse 21 says, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Be sure your affections are set on God and His ways, and all these other things will be added to you in due time. Colossians 3:1-2 says: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." Matthew 6:33-34 reads: "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." Make sure the things you desire most are durable enough to get you to Heaven!

DAY 9

The Fear of the Lord Is the Beginning of Wisdom

Proverbs 9:9 Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just man, and he will increase in learning.

10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.

11 For by me thy days shall be multiplied, and the years of thy life shall be increased.



There are five words used in these verses that are found many times in the Book of Proverbs. The first is "instruction." When you instruct someone, you give them directions; you tell them how to accomplish a task. Next is "teach"; you make sure your instructions are comprehended. You guide in studies and show examples. Third is "knowledge." When we are told something and we comprehend it, we have knowledge. Next is "understanding." After you know about a subject, you have to understand for yourself how it works. Last, in my mind, comes "wisdom." You know about the subject, you understand how it works, then you have to apply it to your situation at the right time and in the right way. That is wisdom—to be able to use what you know and understand to affect your world in a positive way.

We all want to be wise. So, the wise man, Solomon, instructed us on how to be wise. The very beginning of wisdom is to fear the Lord. When Solomon first became king of Israel, he was humble and relied on God for direction. In 1 Kings, Chapter 3, God came to Solomon in a dream and asked what he desired of the Lord. Starting in verse 7, Solomon answered God, "And now, O LORD my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in." Verses 9-12 continue: "Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people? And the speech pleased the LORD, that Solomon had asked this thing. And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment; Behold, I have done

according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee." Asking God for wisdom pleases Him. James 1:5 says, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." True wisdom comes from God.

To fear the Lord is not to be afraid of Him but to hold Him in high reverence, knowing He has the keys to life and death. He is the Giver and Sustainer of life and is the Creator of all things. He gives wisdom and understanding. We should be aware that He puts men up and sets them down and can create as well as calm the storm. Understanding the greatness of God will bring a reverential fear. Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 says: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

The first part of our Scripture says, "Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser . . ." By applying yourself to Bible study and listening to a God-called pastor, you can gain instruction and God will give the wisdom you will need to win other souls. Proverbs 11:30 says, "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise." Having God's wisdom will help you turn many souls to righteousness (or right living), which pleases God and encourages us.

DAY 10

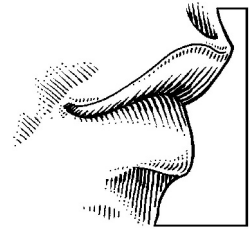
Words, Words, and More Words

Proverbs 10:19 In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise.

20 The tongue of the just is as choice silver: the heart of the wicked is little worth.

21 The lips of the righteous feed many: but fools die for want of wisdom.

*" Let every man
be . . . slow
to speak. "*



This chapter is full of references to the words of our mouth. Our words can bring life, wisdom, understanding, and comfort, or they can incite violence, wounds, death, trouble, and, as it says in today's Scripture, "sin." They can turn away wrath or cut deep. When we just talk without purpose or thought, we will, no doubt, say something dumb, wrong, or hurtful. Those who chatter endlessly, run out of good things to say and turn to gossip or running down someone's character. Verse 18 talks about "lying lips." The old-fashioned meaning is "prating," which is vain and unnecessary words. James says it best in James 3:5-8: "Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison."

Refraining your lips is not an easy task! Our flesh, or our own human thinking, says to give that person a piece of your mind, tell them off, or get even. Proverbs 12:18 says, "There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is health." Our lips can form words that are sharp and cutting, words that will hurt or even destroy another person's self esteem or reputation. But to keep your mouth shut takes the grace of God, and our Scripture says it is the wise thing to do. Doing the right thing is not always the easy way. First Corinthians 13:11 says, "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things." In this Scripture, notice the progression: a child will speak, then understand, and then think. As we grow we need to learn to think first, to understand the situation because things are not always as they seem; then, and only then, should we speak.

It is wise to hold your opinion until God gives you the right words to say.

Your tongue can be like "choice silver." Choice silver is the good stuff, pure silver that is greatly sought after. People can tell when you are genuine and will come to you for advice and prayer. God will give you opportunities to pass on the wisdom that He gives you. Proverbs 25:11 says, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver." Compassion given at the right moment, reproof gently and wisely applied, and encouragement to a discouraged heart are of great value and beautiful to behold. Words fitly spoken will give wisdom to those who receive them. James 1:19 reads like this, "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath."

"The lips of the righteous feed many." Proverbs 10:11 says, "The mouth of a righteous man is a well of life: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked." Knowing the Word of God and spreading it with your lips feeds many hungry souls. The Word of God is also called "the bread of life, sustaining the life of the soul." We should use every opportunity to insert the Word of God into our conversations. It truly has the power to change lives, encourage hearts, save sinners, and fill the longing soul with gladness. Our lips should be full of righteous words that will help our friends and neighbors.

Integrity Shall Guide Us

Proverbs 11:3 The integrity of the upright shall guide them: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them.

4 Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death.

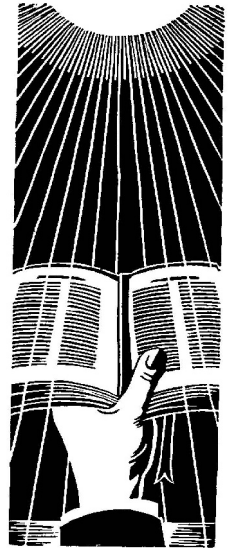
5 The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way: but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness.

6 The righteousness of the upright shall deliver them: but transgressors shall be taken in their own naughtiness.

First of all, let us look at the positive words in these Scriptures. Verse 3 says "integrity . . . shall guide." Verses 4-5 tell us that righteousness delivers from death and righteousness directs the way of the perfect. Verse 6 says that righteousness delivers the upright. These blessings are for the upright and the righteous. "Integrity," according to *Webster's Dictionary*, means "a firm adherence to a code of moral value, undivided, completeness, honesty, unity." *Strong's Bible Dictionary* uses the word "innocence." The way I describe it is doing what you know is right, even when it hurts. Righteousness is just simply doing what is right. So, what verse 3 really means is when you know what is right, you will know what to do. The Bible teaches us how to handle circumstances so if we will just obey what we have learned from the Bible, we will know what to do and God will bless our way. Someone said, "When you do not know what to do, do right."

Verse 4 says, "... righteousness delivereth from death." We know that every human will die; none will be delivered from natural death as long as this world stands. The death that is talked about here is spiritual death. When we have Christ's righteousness, we can be delivered from death, or separation from God. Our own self-righteousness can never deliver us from anything. Isaiah 64:6 says, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." Filthy rags were the strips of cloth that lepers used to wipe their running sores and were very contagious and disgusting.

Now, let us look at the negative words. We know that a transgressor is one who will not follow God's rules. Verse 3 uses the word "perverse," which means



"turned aside or away from right, willfully erring, wicked, perverted, obstinate in wrong doing and stubborn," according to *Webster's Dictionary*. So, what it is saying is, a transgressor will be destroyed because he obstinately holds on to wrong doing and wickedness. Verse 4 goes on to say that wealth will not help you on Judgment Day. You may be able to buy your way out of trouble down here, but you cannot sway God. He is just and cannot be bought off.

Verse 5 says that the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness. If you lie, your own lie will ensnare you. If you cheat, you will be cheated and found out and so on. Wickedness begets more wickedness. Verse 6 says the same thing, ". . . transgressors shall be taken in their own naughtiness." Sin has a way of coming back around to hit you! I heard a preacher say many times, "You cannot do wrong and get by, no matter how hard you may try."

As we compare these two types of living, the righteous way seems so much more agreeable. The righteous are guided and directed and in the end delivered from death. The wicked fall and are taken in naughtiness and in the end destroyed. The devil is a destroyer of all that is good, and we must avoid his way and follow God's Word to stay out of trouble. Work on your integrity, keep a firm hold on what you know is right, and do not divert from it for anyone!

DAY 12

A Fool Is Right in His Own Eyes

Proverbs 12:15 The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise.

Proverbs 14:12 There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

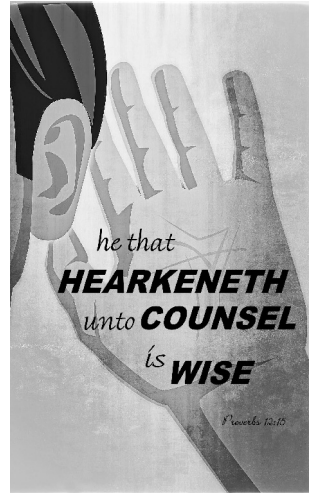
Have you ever felt like you were right and you knew you were right, but everyone around you kept telling you to stop, think, change, do not do it, you are wrong? Frustrating, is it not? What did you do?

Did you do it your way only to find out it was not such a good idea after all? Did it turn out okay so far? Did you listen and take heed to the advice offered you?

God has given us "counselors" for a reason. People who are older are usually wiser because they have lived long enough to make their own mistakes as well as see the mistakes others have made. A good counselor will warn you of tricks and traps the devil sets for everyone. The key word in Proverbs 12:15 is "hearkeneth." I have known people who would ask for an opinion or guidance, then go out and do exactly the opposite of the counsel that was given. Do not waste your time and your counselor's time if you do not plan on taking heed to what they have said. The word "hearken" means to hear intelligently, to understand and obey. But choose your counselors well; make sure they are wise.

There is a story in 1 Kings, Chapter 12, about Solomon's son, Rehoboam, who heard the counsel of the old men, but chose to hearken to the counsel of the young men he grew up with. Verses 13-14 say: "And the king answered the people roughly, and forsook the old men's counsel that they gave him; And spake to them after the counsel of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke: my father also chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions." Because of bad counsel, Rehoboam forsook the law of the Lord and led Israel astray with him (2 Chronicles 12:1).

A fool is someone who is perverse, silly, and unwise. It is easy to be a fool, to just go your own way and do your own thing and do not pay attention to anyone. Ecclesiastes 10:12-14 says: "The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious; but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself. The beginning of the



words of his mouth is foolishness: and the end of his talk is mischievous madness. A fool also is full of words: a man cannot tell what shall be; and what shall be after him, who can tell him?" Psalm 14:1 reads, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good." Proverbs 12:15 starts out by saying, "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes" Just because a fool says there is no God does not mean God does not exist! I can say the moon is made out of green cheese, that does not make it so. The fool is convinced he is right and everyone else is wrong, but that does not change the facts. The fool has said, "I want no part of God." That is what makes him a fool. Proverbs 14:12 reads, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man" It may seem okay to go after worldly fashion and entertainment, but when the Bible tells us to seek God first and you go dancing to the world's tunes, ignoring Godly counsel, you are very foolish, and you will find the end is "the ways of death." You will not die physically, but you will lose your life in Christ, and separation from God is called spiritual death.

Do not be a fool. Seek out wise counselors with Godly wisdom, and follow their instruction. The words of a wise counselor are gracious and good for the soul.

DAY 13

How to Get Rich!

Proverbs 13:4 The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.

7 There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches.

11 Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour shall increase.



These Scriptures teach us about how to become rich! A Christian should be the best worker in the company. First is honesty. Have you heard of giving an honest day's work for honest wages? If you are getting paid for eight hours of work, do not be late starting, late coming back from lunch and breaks, and leaving early! Our first Scripture says be "diligent." Do not be afraid to work for what you want. This goes materially and spiritually. If you, like the lazy person, just sit around and say, "I wish I were more spiritual," you will never find the joy of being close to God. If you are diligent, you will pray for God's guidance, you will apply yourself to reading and studying God's Word, you will seek for opportunities to witness for God. Then you will find your soul blessed and close with God.

Verse 11 says, "Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished." Commentators speak of this kind of wealth as "ill-gotten" and mention things like gambling, fraud, unlawful employment, and any employment that feeds pride and luxury. Many superstars have ended up bankrupt because they have used up more money than we can imagine on luxury and frivolous things that do not satisfy. Proverbs 23:5 says, "Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven."

The rest of verse 11 says, ". . . he that gathereth by labour shall increase." Work is very satisfying! You have a feeling of accomplishment that will not come with anything but good, old-fashioned hard work. Second Thessalonians 3:10-12 says: "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them

that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread." Idleness leads to many sins, but when you stay busy, you will increase by keeping your body and mind fit as well as earning a living.

Verse 7 is very interesting. It is similar to Proverbs 11:24, which reads, "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty." How can you give things away and make yourself poor, yet increase and have great riches? When you give God ten percent of your gross earnings, God will bless the ninety percent. When you give money, groceries, or time to someone in need, God keeps tally and supplies all your needs according to His riches (Philippians 4:19).

But there are those who desire riches more than anything. Those people are empty of true happiness and joy. Verse 7 says he "maketh himself rich." When your purpose in life is to gather wealth, impress your peers, and live in luxury, you have a very shallow existence. You can work hard and lay up riches, but the "devourer," such as doctor bills, accidents, lost jobs, and expensive habits like smoking, drinking, or drugs, and one hundred other different little things can steal your profits. Malachi 3:11-12 says: "And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts."

But then there is he "that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches." You just cannot outgive God! The more you share of your material goods and your spiritual wealth, the more God adds to you in His wonderful blessings. Try it, it really works!

How to Be Happy

Proverbs 14:21 He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth: but he that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he.

31 He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker: but he that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor.

We know well that we are not supposed to hate anyone if we claim to be a Christian. Sometimes we will make excuses for our actions, saying things like: "I do not hate them. I just do not like them!" Verse 21 says, "He that despiseth his neighbor sinneth" The word "despise" means "to disrespect or contempt, to treat or regard with disdain, scorn, or contempt, as well as despise." We must keep a constant check on our attitudes toward others because God created us all, and in His eyes we are equal. As it says in Proverbs 22:2, "The rich and poor meet together: the LORD is the maker of them all."

The word in verse 31 is "oppress," and it is a little stronger. It means more on the lines of physical pressure, to do violence, defraud, violate, and deceive. While we would not be quick to do physical harm to someone, we might easily talk bad about them or humiliate them in some way. Verse 31 says, "He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker" We know our Maker is God and to reproach God would be to find fault with or criticize Him. We would not openly criticize God, but when we find fault with one He created, we sound like we know more than God Himself!

I would like for us to consider the word "poor" in these verses. There are three different Hebrew words used in these two verses. In verse 21, it refers to one who is depressed or humble, meek or lowly. From these words, do you see a very backward, shy person who gets picked on all the time and never tries to defend themselves? Our Scripture teaches us to have mercy on those who are bullied, not join in with the group. Show them mercy, a kind word, defend them, let them know there is someone on their side, someone who cares about them.

Then, verse 31 says, "He that oppresseth the poor" This word means weak and needy. *Strong's Concordance* uses the word "dangling," which gives a different picture: someone who is just barely hanging on, ready to fall to de-



struction, someone who needs a friend or a helping hand. Turning your back on someone in need reminds me of the story Jesus told in Luke, Chapter 10, starting in verse 30. A man was traveling to Jericho when he was attacked by thieves and beaten half to death. A priest and a Levite refused to lend a helping hand, but the Samaritan stopped what he was doing and took care of him. We do not want to get involved or be bothered with other people's problems; we have enough problems of our own. In Luke 10:36-37 Jesus said: "Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise."

Then, verse 31 goes on to say, ". . . he that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor." This time the word "poor" means "in want or destitute." I believe this Scripture means the person who honors God has mercy on the ones who truly have no earthly goods. Matthew 25:37-40 says: "Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

So, how can we be happy? If we honor God, we will help our fellow man in his difficulties regardless of what the problem may be. God will give us guidance as to the best way to help others. We can pray for them, feed them, clothe them, give them friendship or protection, encourage them, lead them to salvation, or whatever God leads you to do. It will make you and God happy!

DAY 15

Prayer Is God's Delight

Proverbs 15:8 The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is his delight.



To pray or address God is a beautiful privilege. God allows us to bring our cares and burdens to Him and just dump them at his feet. There are lots of different kinds of prayer. The prayer of *intercession* would be asking God to help someone else, maybe a friend or family member. A prayer of *supplication* is to ask humbly or beg for a need to be supplied. There are prayers of *thanksgiving* when we just give God the praise He is due. Other words that define prayer are commune, meditate, muse, or just talk with God. When you commune with someone, it is not just a one-sided conversation; it takes two! Those are sweet and precious moments when we tell our side of the problem, and then God, through His Holy Spirit, tells us the other side of the problem. Prayer is not just talking to God but listening for God's response.

Sometimes it is just the feeling He heard us that gives us comfort. Sometimes it is the impression of the Spirit that shows us what needs to be done or how to correct a problem. Sometimes it is even a rebuke for the way we have handled issues that trouble us. Whatever the response, it is always good to hear from God.

But this Scripture is not talking about how good it makes us feel, but it says it is God's delight to hear from us! It pleases Him when we pray. Whether it is concern for our fellow man or a personal need, God is anxious to hear our petition. Psalm 46:1 lets us know He is very present, or close at hand, saying, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." We live in such a selfish time that all we can think about is how prayer is good for us, but we need to keep in mind that we honor God in prayer. We acknowledge that He is more than able to correct every problem, supply every need. We turn to Him as the Almighty Creator, the King of kings and Lord of lords. When our problems look overwhelming, let us remember Whom we are going to for our help—the giver and sustainer of life.

When we pray, it is always good to start by giving glory, as Jesus taught us in Matthew 6:9, "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in

heaven, Hallowed be thy name." "Our Father" refers to the title of the head of the family. "Which art in heaven" states His position as One exalted above all. "Hallowed be thy name" means holy, to be revered or sacred is Your name.

Next, let us consider that the Scripture says, ". . . the prayer of the upright . . ." Other words for "upright" are "righteous" or "rightness." Before our prayer will please and move God to action, we MUST be upright, clean, pure, and holy in His sight. If there are sins, bad feelings, wrong attitudes, anything God has asked you to do and it remains undone, or ill will toward someone, God will not be delighted with that prayer. The prayer of a sinner asking for forgiveness is a delight to the Lord. However, our Scripture says that even the sacrifice of the wicked is "an abomination." You can spend hours on your knees praying, but if there is sin in your life, your prayer is "an abomination," or despicable to God. You can beg and plead and put on quite a show, but without a holy life, that prayer does not please God.

One word that is translated as prayer is defined as "a whisper, a private prayer," sometimes just a cry of the heart for guidance or help. A whispered plea coming from a holy life will be heard and answered immediately.

Do not wait until you need God to hear and answer a prayer before you turn to Him in repentance and find a holy, upright life. Psalm 66:18-20 says: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me: But verily God hath heard me; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me."

DAY 16

Mercy, Truth, and the Fear of the Lord

Proverbs 16:6 By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil.



When I was little and a storm would come at night, I prayed my most earnest prayers because I was afraid. Have you ever been so frightened that you made promises to God, such as, "If You will get us home safe on these icy roads, I'll testify," or "If You'll get me out of this situation alive, I'll live for You the rest of my life"? God listens to those promises and expects you to keep them.

The fear of circumstances and the fear of consequence are different from "the fear of the LORD" in our Scripture. We make promises when we are afraid of our surroundings. When we get into trouble, we have worldly sorrow; we are sorry we got caught! But Godly sorrow is knowing we have offended Almighty God, the God Who can strike us dead and cast our soul into hell. Luke 12:4-5 reads like this: "And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him." This is not the fear that I had when the storm was howling. This is a reverential attitude toward One who is much greater than we are. Colossians 1:16-17 says it best: "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist." If you do not have any fear of God, you have never come in contact with Him!

When God meets with you, you will know you are a sinner and headed for hell and need God's forgiveness. The presence of God will make you tremble and cry even if you are the toughest person on the planet. Philippians 2:9-11 says it this way: "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

God's convicting power will put the fear of the Lord on a soul, and they will desire to depart from evil. Then it will take mercy and truth to purge them from

sin or iniquity. John 14:6 says, "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Jesus Christ is the truth. We must come to Jesus to be forgiven for our sins. There is no other name under Heaven whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12). When we read the Bible or hear it preached, we hear truth, we hear the voice of Jesus showing us our sin and how we can be cleansed from it. Jesus is faithful to show us when we have done wrong, but He does not stop there. He will show us the way out, show us what to do to make amends. The devil will accuse us, but he will never show us a way to get right; he will just beat us down. Jesus is not like that. He points the way to salvation and guides us all the way to Heaven. John 8:32 tells us the truth will set us free—free from sin, free from confusion, and free from doubts.

After truth shows you your sinful condition, mercy will show you the loving-kindness and favor of God to forgive your sins and set you on the highway of holiness. Knowing your sins are all taken away and God is pleased with your life is one of the greatest blessings you can enjoy. What peace it brings to our heart and mind. Proverbs 3:3-4 says: "Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart: So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man." After we have tasted mercy and truth for ourselves, we need to show them to others. This pleases God.

Be Careful What You Say!

Proverbs 17:9 He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends.

17 A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.

27 He that hath knowledge spareth his words: and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit.

28 Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding.



This whole chapter has everyday wisdom scattered through it. However, let us think about the things we say and how we say them. Everybody needs friends, but sometimes we do not treat our special people with enough respect. It is true in verse 17 when it says, "A friend loveth at all times," and a true friend will certainly stand the tests of time. But Proverbs 18:24 says, "A man that hath friends must show himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." You cannot treat people just any old way and expect them to take your verbal abuse! That friend who sticks closer than a brother is Jesus, and we cannot ignore Him and be disrespectful to Him and expect Him to just hang around waiting for our acknowledgment. The same is true with earthly friends. It is more important to *BE* a friend than to *HAVE* a friend because if you will *BE* the right kind of friend, you will *HAVE* friends. Think about how you talk *to* your friends and how you talk *about* your friends and see if you are a true friend. Think about how you treat Jesus, and see if you are worthy of such a close friendship.

The first part of verse 9 says, "He that covereth a transgression seeketh love . . ." This does not mean that you are hiding wrong doing, but you are not telling everybody you can get to listen about another person's shortcomings. If it were you who had fallen short of expectations, would you want it told all over the town? The last part of verse 9 explains that "he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends." What about secrets? When someone trusts you with confidential information, can you keep your mouth shut, or do you just have to tell it? Many friendships have been destroyed because something was repeated that should have been hidden.

Verse 27 tells us to spare our words. We do not have to be talking every

waking hour! It is a special person who is a good listener. If we will practice listening to other people, we will be better able to listen to God. Many times people do not want to hear your advice. They just want to know someone heard them and understands how they feel. Be an active listener. When someone is talking to you, look at them and respond to what they are saying with a nod of the head or a short response. The world needs good listeners. Listen for signs of distress, signs of repentance, anything that will give you a hint as to the root of the problem they are discussing. Not very many people can talk and listen at the same time, so listen first and listen carefully. During your listening, pray silently that God will give you the words that are suited for your situation. Psalm 141:3 says, "Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips." No one wants to give wrong or hurtful advice; so always seek God's direction before you open the door of your lips. Another rendering of verse 28 is, "It is better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to open your mouth and remove all doubt!"

The purpose of this lesson is to remind us not to talk too much. I am sure you have listened to someone talk on and on about what they would say or what they would do in a situation, knowing it was all just talk. You considered those words foolish. God does not want us to be foolish, He wants us to wait on Him to fill our mouth with good words and sound wisdom.

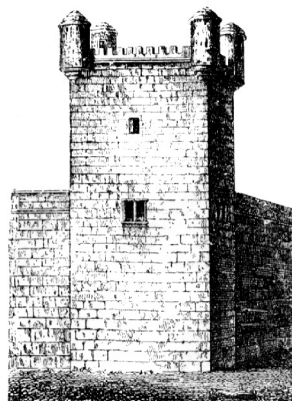
A Strong Tower

Proverbs 18:10 The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.

Your name is the one distinguishing factor by which we can identify you. Not very many people in the world share your first, middle, and last name. I could try to use physical or character traits to describe you, but that can be confusing. There are certain names that bring character values to mind when we hear them, such as Abraham Lincoln—we think of honesty (honest Abe)—or George Washington—the courageous first President of our country. When we talk about the name of the Lord, there are many character traits we could discuss. Revelation talks about "the Lord God almighty." Acts 4:12 tells us there is no other name whereby we must be saved. He is holy, just, true, and righteous. Maybe we can talk about all the names of God in another lesson, but today our Scripture says, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower"

Let us consider the analogy of the Lord as a tower. A tower is taller than its surroundings, thus providing a distant view in all directions. With better visibility, a property owner in ancient times had advanced warning of an approaching enemy or danger, such as fire. A tower provided a height advantage over a fortified army. They provided a means of distance communication by signaling from one tower to the next or sounding an alarm for the close inhabitants. They were also landmarks that travelers could depend on. We still use towers today. We have water towers, light houses/towers, bell towers, clock towers, storage silo/towers, drilling towers, bridge towers, watch towers at correctional institutions or forested areas, and cellphone towers. You may be able to think of even more uses for towers today. So, a tower was a very useful advantage in Bible days when this Scripture was written. People in remote locations could run to the tower when the alarm was sounded and find protection.

Why would the Scripture add the adjective "strong"? The word "strong" used here refers to security, might, and strength. Not every tower is built for strength and durability. As a child you probably played with blocks and stacked them one on top of the other until they fell over. This is how some religions are; they have



no foundation and will fail when the test of eternity comes. Science has taught us to fortify our towers with strong building materials and plan for expansion, contraction, and sway so that we can go to the top floor of very tall buildings with confidence they will not fall down. We can have confidence in the name of the Lord to know He is a strong tower; He will stand the tests of time and eternity.

Now, let us compare all these things to God. "The name of the LORD is a strong tower . . ." The Lord is over all and above all. So He has the vantage point of a good tower. He can see when the enemy is approaching and sound the alarm that should call us to the safety of His care. He knows the end from the beginning so His counsel is the best. If He can "build" a universe, He can certainly build a strong tower that can stand the tests of time. He rides on the storms, so He can withstand any gale that may come our way. As for a landmark, He is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8), so the weary traveler on the road of life can know His location.

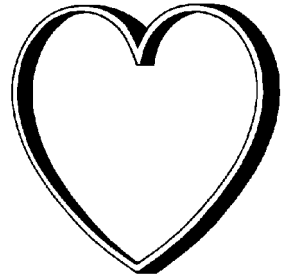
If we stopped the lesson right here, we could be encouraged to know our God is our strong tower, but there is more to this Scripture: ". . . the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." The righteous, or those who are living right according to the Word of God, can run, or another meaning is "to rush," into our strong tower, or our tower of strength, and be safe. In the definition of "safe" that *Strong's Concordance* gives, it says, "Especially inaccessible." The devil says you can never stand, but run to the Lord. He will make you inaccessible to the power of the devil. Read Psalm 18:2.

Generally speaking, we think of lying to others, but we can lie to ourselves also. When we know an action is wrong, but we talk ourselves into doing it anyway by denying the consequences, we are lying to ourselves. An example would be to know smoking is doing damage to our body, which should be God's temple. The cigarette package clearly says it can cause cancer, but you convince yourself that you will not get cancer. Or thinking you can get by with a wrong deed and no one will suspect you. Convincing yourself the holiness standard is not as important as the pastor says. On and on goes the self deception.

Worse than lying to others or ourselves is when we lie to God. When we tell God we will live for Him for the rest of our lives, then allow something to cause us to backslide, we have lied to God. Another way to lie to God is to twist the Word of God to make it say what you want it to say. First Timothy 4:1-2 says: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron." Again, Proverbs 30:5-6 says: "Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar." God does not want anyone tampering with His Word, so be careful to interpret every Scripture in the light of the whole Bible and not just your own understanding. Ephesians 4:25 says, "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another." This is the best way to live because God, your friends, and family can all have confidence in what you tell them.

Who Can Say, "I Made Myself Clean"?

Proverbs 20:9 Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?



Another way to say this Scripture without changing its meaning at all is, "What person can boast in himself, I have made my heart clear, I am innocent of any wrong doing and uncontaminated by my offence and habitual sinfulness."

First of all, we know that all have sinned. As it says in Romans 3:23, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." If you know an action is wrong and you do it willfully, you have sinned against God. There is a voice within us that tells us we are wrong; that is the Spirit of God. Without the power of God to help us, we will sin. We do not have the power within ourselves to keep from sinning.

Next, we need to realize that once we have sinned, there is no way to undo that action. Saying, "I am sorry," does not take away the fact that we have sinned. Justice says your sin requires your death, but thank God, mercy says, "Jesus paid it all." Part of a song says, "I owed a debt I could not pay, He paid a debt He did not owe." We must realize that our situation is hopeless in our own strength. No other human can help us because they, too, have sinned. Second Corinthians 5:21 says, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

We need a mediator, someone who can come before God and plead our case. Jesus Christ is the only way to get to God. First Timothy 2:5 tells us, "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." Being all God, Jesus can come boldly to the Father. Being all man, He can come to mankind and understand his needs and carry that man to the Father in mercy's arms. Hebrews 4:15 says, "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Acts 4:12 reads, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." So the answer to the question, "Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" is no one. I cannot make my heart clean and pure from sin. Only through the blood of Jesus Christ can sin be cleansed.

Can we have a heart clean and pure from sin? We know all have sinned. We

know no human can take sin away once it is committed. Romans 8:1-4 tells us: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

First John 1:7-9 says: ". . . the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Proverbs 28:13 goes on to tell us how we can be cleansed from our sin—confess it and forsake it. Let us not forget what is called the golden Scriptures in John 3:16, which reads, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Even though we cannot say, "I have cleansed myself from all sin," we can say, "God loved me enough to make a way for me to find mercy and forgiveness through His son, Jesus Christ." What a blessing!

DAY 21

Justice and Judgment

Proverbs 21:3 To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.

7 The robbery of the wicked shall destroy them; because they refuse to do judgment.

15 It is joy to the just to do judgment: but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity.



Judgment sounds like such a harsh word, but it is very necessary to keep order. Without judgment we cannot understand what is right and wrong. When a judgment is handed down by a court, it is a formal statement of what the court believes to be right according to the law, compared to an act committed and the punishment for breaking the law. God has a law, and when we break His law, we can expect Him to tell us in very direct language that we have done wrong and what the consequence is for our wrong choice. In this way we know what is right.

Justice, simply put, is getting what you deserve. If you have done well, you should receive a reward. If you have done wrong, you should receive a suitable consequence. Words like "just," "fair," and "righteous" are used in the definition of justice. Justice maintains law and order by holding people accountable to the law. Can you imagine what chaos there would be in this world without law and consequence for breaking the law?

In our first Scripture, verse 3, we need to consider that in the Old Testament, sacrifice was a very important part of worship, and yet this verse says, "To do justice and judgment is more acceptable . . ." Your sacrifice is not good in God's eyes unless you are living a holy life. First Samuel 15:22-23 says it this way: "And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king." God puts great value on obedience to His law because that is the way we show our love to Him. Bringing material gifts to Him means little because He already owns the whole universe; He needs nothing from us. He wants our obedience, love, and devotion.

Verse 15 says, "It is joy to the just to do judgment . . ." It is not a hard thing to obey someone you love. If someone you really admired asked you to run an

errand for them, you would jump at the chance and do your best to please them. How much more should we do our best to please the God who has been so good to us? It is a joy to live for the Lord. It is a joy to serve the Lord. It is a joy to obey the laws of the Lord. The disobedient and rebellious find no joy in obeying God's laws. They find them hard and confining simply because they are lawless and want their own way. God's law keeps order in our lives just as civil law keeps order in our towns.

Last, we will consider verse 7, "The robbery of the wicked shall destroy them; because they refuse to do judgment." Robbery, as well as every evil deed, will destroy the doer simply because they choose to do evil over good. They refuse, they know to do better, and they have the power to do better, but decide in their heart they would rather do evil. As long as a person chooses evil, they are headed for destruction.

According to *Webster's Dictionary*, part of the definition of "judgment" is, "the final judging of mankind by God, a divine sentence or decision, a calamity to be sent by God." This is often referred to as the Final Judgment. If a person holds to evil until death, God has the final decision as to where that soul will spend eternity. Since sin cannot enter Heaven, justice will require that soul to spend eternity in hell. You choose.

DAY 22

Train Up a Child

Proverbs 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

15 Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.

Proverbs 23:13 Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die.

14 Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.



We have probably heard it a hundred times, "Spare the rod, spoil the child" (Proverbs 13:24). Today let us think about why the Bible would say such harsh things. When you are the one receiving the punishment, it seems unjust and hard, but when we see undisciplined adults who cannot control their actions or their tongues, we look at things differently.

Our first Scripture is verse 6, which tells us to "train up a child." A vine that grows quickly and needs a trellis to grow on has to be trained to go up the trellis. That means it needs consistent attention to keep the tendrils from creeping across the ground and going wild instead of groomed and growing neatly up the trellis. Young children, teenagers, and even young Christians need constant attention given to their daily actions and reactions. The next part of that verse says "in the way he should go." God wants us to live by His Word. So it is important to memorize as many Scriptures as possible. Get them into your head as well as in your heart. When temptations come, God can remind us of a Scripture that will help us *IF* we have put them in our head and our heart. You put them in your head by reading and memorizing them. You put them in your heart by believing, obeying, and living them.

Verse 15 tells us a little bit about children. Children are like our vine and have to be trained or taught the right way to act. It is true, children will imitate adults, but they also have a strong will that has to be brought into subjection to rules and right. A child or young person never thinks punishment is right or fair, but God knows it is necessary if they are to be able to follow His laws later in life. Let us think about a mistake in a letter. If someone wrote: "I will arrive on the train at 10:00 p.m. Please have someone pick me up." But they made one little

mistake; they will arrive at 10:00 a.m. It is just one letter different. It is a small thing except when they arrive, no one will be there to meet them, and many plans have to be changed in a hurry because of one very small error. It is the same with a child; small habits that may start out cute can become terrible problems to deal with. Take temper tantrums for instance. A small child falling on the floor and crying loudly can sometimes be funny, but as that child grows and that habit is not corrected, it becomes an ugly, ruinous problem. Have you ever seen an adult throw a tantrum in a store because they could not get what they wanted? It is not a pretty sight!

The Bible does not teach abuse. Verses 13 and 14 let us know that a child will certainly make it sound like you have done great harm by screaming, yelling, and crying loudly, but drama will not correct the error in their way. God gave you a hand and a place to put it that does not break bones, cause burn marks, scars, or any of the other disgraceful tactics abusers use. Correction and discipline are not abuse; it is training a child in the way he should go. Without discipline in our lives, we will accomplish nothing, and we will not be prepared to face life's battles.

The last part of verse 14 says, ". . . shalt deliver his soul from hell." It may be easier to give in to a child's willfulness and easier to avoid the conflict of teenage years, but parents will be responsible at Judgment Day for those little souls God has entrusted to their care. It is the duty of a parent to bend that human will to authority, first to the parents' authority, then civil authority, and most of all, divine authority. If a parent does not correct the child, a civil judge will, and in the end their soul will be doomed for hell. Third John 1:4 says, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." Regardless of your age, take correction and know it is to guide or train you to be more like Christ.

Riches Take Wings and Fly Away

Proverbs 23:4 Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom.

5 Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.



All of us have goals or aspirations, which is not a bad thing. If you fail to plan, you plan to fail! It is a good thing to work or labor. Second Thessalonians 3:10 says, "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat." So, what is our Scripture telling us? It tells us we must keep our priorities straight! Priorities are the mental list of important things starting with the most important.

Be careful of excess. In the preceding Scriptures, Proverbs 23:1-3 talks about when you are invited to a situation of plenty, do not overindulge. We live in an age of an abundance of everything. It is easy for us to get more than we need, even more than we want. In Deuteronomy, Chapter 6, the Lord was warning Israel concerning the blessings He would pour out on them, a time when they would have everything they needed and more. Verses 12-14 say: "Then beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name. Ye shall not go after other gods . . ." Riches, whether they are money or material goods, can become a god to us and draw our heart away from the true God.

We must always remember why we are here—we are to please God and do His bidding. If we are to keep our mind on spiritual things, we cannot be encumbered with worldly material things. "Things" need to be maintained, repaired, and cleaned. The more "things" we acquire, the more time they require. The more money we make, the more money we spend. The flesh is never satisfied. The last part of our Scripture is definitely true. It says, ". . . riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away . . ." Isaiah 55:1-3 says it this way: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is

good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."

It is a fair question to ask, why spend money on things that do not satisfy? Entertainment, monetary riches, popularity, and power will not satisfy. Only Jesus can really satisfy the longing down in the heart of every person. All the things mentioned will make us superficially happy for a space of time, but they wear out, rust out, or get old, and we get tired of them. "Let your soul delight itself in fatness" (Isaiah 55:2); spiritual riches are eternal and will never grow old.

If God blesses us as He did Israel with a land of milk and honey, or as He did with Joseph where every job he had flourished, and we become rich, then God knows we can handle it; but do not make it your priority to become rich. If you become so consumed with getting and keeping riches, you will lose your appetite for the spiritual riches God offers us. In Matthew, Chapter 19, we learn of the rich young ruler who had great possessions, yet he felt a lack in his soul. Jesus said in verses 21-22: ". . . If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions." He no longer had possessions; his possessions had him. Seek or labor for the true riches that come from God; they satisfy.

DAY 24

Do Not Envy Evil Doers

*Proverbs 24:1 Be not thou
envious against evil men, neither
desire to be with them.*

2 For their heart studieth destruction, and their lips talk of mischief.



Sometimes it seems like the bad guys get all the breaks and have all the fun and you are just dull and boring while trying to be a good person. One of the tricks of the devil is to make sin look so good and good look so bad. The psalmist had this problem in Psalm 73:3-9, when he wrote: "For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish. They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth."

Verses 11-14 continue: "And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High? Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning." Verses 17-18 say: "Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction."

When we look on people who are not serving God and things seem to be really good for them while we are struggling, we can get discouraged and "weary in well doing" (2 Thessalonians 3:13). Many Scriptures say to "not be envious of evil men and women," because what you see is not the end of the story. Our humanity wants to find the easiest way to do everything, and serving God is not always easy! As a young person, I sometimes felt my parents were too strict. I saw the freedoms that others my age had and thought I was being cheated out of good times. Several years later, when I saw those undisciplined youth in troubles of many kinds, I was able to thank my parents for keeping me close to home and under constant watch. In Psalm, Chapter 73, we are told the writer went to church and discovered "their end." What looks like a good time turns into terrible trou-

ble. Verses 9 and 11 talk about their total disregard for God, but verse 18 lets us know they are in slippery places, and God will bring them to destruction for their careless talk.

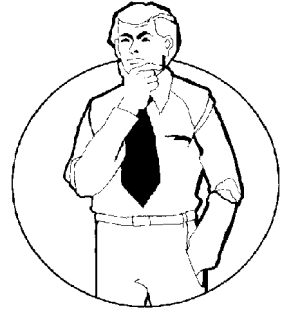
Let us consider how friendships affect us. Everyone needs friends; God made us that way. But we need to choose our friends very cautiously. A friend has an influence on how we talk, where we go, how we treat others, and what choices we make. If our friend disregards God and His Word, we will very likely be led away from what is right and wholesome, or we will have to curtail that friendship. We also have an influence on others. We must stay aware and do our best to lead our friends to a closer walk with God. Going back to Psalm 73:28, which says, "But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all thy works."

When you are tempted to leave the Christian way and go seeking out worldly adventures, remember these verses and be sure there are slippery places that will slide you into trouble. Galatians 6:9 says, "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." There are rewards for staying close to God that you will reap if you will stay faithful. So, do not envy evildoers or choose to be with them, for they will lead you astray.

Heap Coals of Fire

Proverbs 25:21 If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink:

22 For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee.



This topic is repeated in the New Testament in Romans 12:17, which reads, "Recompense to no man evil for evil . . ." Then verses 19-21 say: "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

Turning a bad situation over to God is not usually easy because our humanity wants to have justice poured out immediately. Verse 19 says, ". . . Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the LORD." God knows the motive of an action, the intentions of the heart, and the far-reaching consequences. God does not misjudge, so it is good to leave the vengeance to One who knows just the right punishment for every offense. Our job is not to dole out punishment but to supply a need.

In 2 Kings 6:8-23, we read how Elisha the prophet told the king of Israel every move his enemy, the king of Syria, made. So, the frustrated Syrian king decided to get rid of Elisha. He sent a whole army after one man! Elisha's servant thought they were as good as dead, that there was no way out. But Elisha prayed for God to open the servant's eyes and blind the eyes of the enemy. Thus, he led the enemy right into the city of Samaria to the king of Israel. The king of Israel saw great opportunity to hurt his enemy and asked anxiously if he could smite them. Elisha said: "No, do not hurt them. Fix them a feast and send them home." That is what was done, and there was no more trouble from Syria for a long time.

Proverbs 25:22 talks about coals of fire. Leviticus 16:12 describes how the high priest would "take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the LORD" and take it into the holy of holies and put incense on the coals that the smoke would cover the mercy seat. Our actions rise up before God as a sweet smelling savor. Matthew 5:43-45 shows us the old law versus the new covenant when it says: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy

neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

This topic will be brought up again at the Judgment. Matthew 25:31-37 tells us: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee?" Verses 40-42 continue: "And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink." Verse 46 says, "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."

Where No Wood Is the Fire Goes Out

Proverbs 26:20 Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth.

22 The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.

27 Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein: and he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him.



This is a pretty plain proverb! Let us look at both sides of this problem. Beware of people who are troublemakers, then do not *BE* a troublemaker yourself. Problems will arise in our lives from time to time. We may not agree with everyone all the time. It is how we handle problems that make us better or worse individuals.

Verse 20 says, "Where no wood is, the fire goeth out . . ." This is a logical statement we all understand. Then he pointed out that it is a talebearer who feeds the fire of contention. Some people just have to tell everything they know, right or wrong, good or bad. They delight in being the first to know and tell the latest gossip. As long as you are the one telling the story, it seems quite all right. It is when you are the one being talked about that it hurts and causes problems! When you are tempted to repeat a sensitive situation, think about how it would feel if someone was talking about you. Put yourself in the other person's place. Remember God already knows the whole situation, and you cannot fix it by talking about it.

Verse 22 tells us that a talebearer causes deep wounds and scars that could last a lifetime and could cause spiritual death to one or many souls. It is easy to talk and not mean to hurt anyone, just saying whatever comes to your mind. But the Bible tells us in James 3:6, "And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell." Again, we read in Proverbs 11:13, "A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter." Let us be like the person who takes the wood away so the fire will go out. It is okay to tell someone: "Can we talk about something else. I do not want to hear your gossip!" When a talebearer asked a wise old saint about a

private matter, her response was, "Now, that will not help your spirituality one bit." End of discussion! Wood taken away.

There is something in human nature that wants sympathy. We want others to know how badly we have been wronged. But Christ is our example in all things. First Peter 2:21 says, "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." When He was on His way to the Cross, He could have stood up for Himself, but He did not. Verse 23 states, "Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." We must strive to be like Jesus.

Verse 27 of our Scripture reading is interesting. The old saying is, "What goes around comes around." If you are quick to spread tales, true or false, about others, eventually a tale will be told about you. If you wait until someone is out of the room to start talking about them, you will always wonder what is said about you when you leave.

A pit was used to snare or catch an enemy or an animal. They did not have interstate highways in Bible times; so, they would follow paths. If you could dig a deep hole then cover it with a net and make it look natural like the rest of the path, an unsuspecting traveler could step off into your pit and be caught. Psalm 9:16 says, "The LORD is known by the judgment which he executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands." The story of Haman is a good example of this, starting in Esther, Chapter 3.

Be sure you are not the one feeding the fire of talebearing. God keeps good records. Be careful not to stay in the company of talebearers, because you may end up being wounded by their words.

Be Aware of Your Mortality

Proverbs 27:1 Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.



There is an old saying, "Prepare like you will live forever; live like you will die today." The older you get, the more you realize your mortality, the fact that you were born to die. The soul will live forever, but the body was made to die—some very young, some very old, many middle aged, but all die.

Sometimes we boastfully say, "I will do this tomorrow or I will go there next week." We take for granted that life will continue as it is for as long as we will it to be so. Yet, life and death are not in our hands, but in God's control. On September 11, 2001, no doubt someone said, "Tomorrow I will cut the grass," but life changed forever for many families on that day. An automobile accident takes only seconds, but can change our plans for a long time. James 4:13-15 says it this way: "Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that." It is always good for us to acknowledge God in our plans, to remember He has the final say in our lives. Ecclesiastes 11:5 reminds us, "As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all."

There is one thing we can know: we need to be ready now for Eternity, ready now to meet God in Judgment, regardless of our age. Second Corinthians 6:2 tells us, "(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)" *NOW* is the day of salvation. Do not put off reconciling with God because you do not know what the next minute holds or the next day or year. Take care of your eternal soul now.

One of the devil's best tricks is to tell you to wait a while, that there is plenty of time to get right with God. He says, "Do not do it just yet." The devil knows if he can get you to procrastinate, or put off getting saved, there is a great chance you will die lost. Life is uncertain, it is true, but procrastination claims many souls because we do not realize how fast time is moving or how close to death we

really are. You may have goals, such as, "I will get saved when I am out of high school or after I am married" or hundreds of other excuses, but when you reach a milestone, the devil always has another waiting for you. Before you know it, you have wasted your life, and the devil tells you it is too late, you have gone too far, you cannot get saved and offer God a wasted life. The devil is a liar, but he has many convincing arguments. Because life is uncertain, take care of your eternal soul right away.

Even though life is uncertain and we cannot boast of any control over the circumstances that may come to us, we can know beyond any doubt that God will take care of us. First Peter 5:7 says, "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you." You can depend on the Lord to watch out for you, guide you in difficult times, give you rest when you are weary with the cares of life, and give you encouragement to keep pressing on and stay true to Him. He will help you make difficult decisions. We could go on and on describing God's care for us. Even though we cannot predict the future, we can know who holds the future and rest in the fact He will hold our hand and take us through. We do not have to worry and fret over what may befall us; just trust in our all-knowing God.

It is a good idea to remind ourselves and those around us that we rely on God to take care of our future by adding to the end of our planning, "If the Lord will," as it says in James 4:15. That phrase alone will remind us to be ready, for the Lord may come before you can read tomorrow's devotion!

**Confess and Forsake but
Do Not Try to Cover Sin**

Proverbs 28:13 He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.



How can this be true? Hollywood is full of people who live immoral lives and yet have more money than they know what to do with. There are many wealthy people in the news who get caught doing unlawful and sinful acts. What is this verse saying? A person can try to cover their sin, and may fool neighbors, police, even friends and loved ones, but the Bible says to "be sure your sin will find you out" (Numbers 32:23). You cannot cover sin because God already sees it; you cannot prosper in your venture of hiding sin because God was watching when you committed it.

Mark 4:22 says it this way: "For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad." You may play the part of a Christian and know how to dress and just what to say, but if you have sin hidden in your heart, you are a hypocrite, and God already knows about you. God may let you go on for a while, but eventually He will show everyone the true condition of your heart.

God is an all-knowing and all-seeing God. Psalm 139:9-12 says: "If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee." You cannot cover sin.

A soft conscience or someone who is easily corrected is a wonderful blessing from God. When God speaks to their heart, they are quick to acknowledge God and make wrongs right. God loves them as a dear child. The conscience can be hardened or calloused, just as the skin will form a callous when it is rubbed or wounded time and again. You will make excuse for an action that God is telling you to stop. God, through the Spirit, will prick and prod your conscience with thoughts, Scriptures, and things people say to you. God works in many ways, but if you constantly ignore the warnings, you will begin to feel that everything is fine, that there is nothing wrong with what you are doing; you can explain it

away. You may feel the issue is covered or resolved when in God's book of deeds, it is just as glaring as it ever was. When God speaks to you about a change He needs you to make, listen carefully and obey immediately. That is the way to keep a soft conscience.

The last part of our Scripture says that "whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." Mercy is a wonderful gift. Mercy in this Scripture means love, but we also know it means divine grace, tender mercy, and pity. When you have God showing you divine, unmerited pity, you are blessed.

Confessing your sin is only part of the path to mercy. You must also forsake sin, have it completely forgiven, and never go back to it again. First John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Psalm 51:3 calls it acknowledging transgression. Until you acknowledge that you have sinned, you cannot be saved.

Mark 2:17 says, "When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." When you are really sick of sin and come to God confessing and asking for forgiveness, you will not want to sin anymore. When you just want to escape the consequences, you will return to the very sin you confessed. Our Scripture says to forsake sin, turn from it, be sick of it, and then you will find forgiveness that brings peace and contentment. God's loving kindness, tender mercy, and grace will keep you free from sin. Do not waste your time trying to cover sin, but confess and forsake it.

Without Vision

Proverbs 29:18 Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.



Vision is a wonderful thing, but how cleverly the devil can blind our spiritual eyes to the perfect will of God and have us stumbling along until we fall in the ditch. The Lord knows we are no match for the devil's trickery, so He sent us pastors, Sunday school teachers, youth leaders, and evangelists to keep the Word of God in view. There have been times in history when the Word was not preached openly and there was great spiritual darkness, but we now have light, which is understanding. So, there is no reason we cannot have a fresh vision of God today. Some words that are used to define the word "vision" are revelation, dream, sight, understanding, or oracle. An oracle is a prophet or a reliable source of information. A Godly pastor will constantly refresh our vision of who God is, why we serve Him, and what He requires of a good servant. A faithful pastor will keep the Word of God before our eyes and show us how to keep it in our everyday lives.

The word "perish" in this Scripture has several different meanings, such as "to expose, make naked or uncover, to set at nothing, to loosen, dismiss, absolve, avenge, to go back, or refuse." When the Word is not heard, we have no armor to protect us from the enemy's fiery attacks, and we are exposed to false teachings and wrong ideas. When there is a lack of judgment preaching, people rebel against God, as we are seeing in our world today. They do not understand that a God of love is also a God of justice.

Punishment comes with disobedience. People just ignore God altogether or they go to church and act religious, then the rest of the week they live like any old sinner. They just play church. They "set at nothing" the warnings of God's Word. They "loosen" the restraints God has given us for protection. They cannot seem to find a settled place in the family of God. They wander from church to church always looking for something different, but they do not know what they are really looking for. They have no pastor because they do not trust anyone. These will perish or come to nothing because they do not have the Word of God written in

their hearts and minds. Proverbs 3:3-6 says: "Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart: So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man. Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." We can know the law, we can have the whole Bible memorized, but if we do not obey it, we will perish.

The last part of our Scripture says that "he that keepeth the law, happy is he." When I looked up the Hebrew meaning of the word "keep," it means more than just obeying. Obedience is necessary, of course, but this word also means "to guard, protect, hedge about as with thorns," as well as "to take heed." We must not lose our love of the truth—God's Word. Guard the things we have been taught, and do not allow the fleeting fashions of the day to turn us from the principles of God's Word, which are everlasting. The devil will blind our eyes and have us chasing all the fads of this world, causing us to lose sight of what God wants us to look and act like. The devil will tell us we are just not keeping up with the times, when his underlying goal is to turn us from the law of God. If the devil can steal our joy, he can steal our salvation. The person who obeys the law and loves the law is full of joy and enjoys salvation every day. He loves to go to church to hear more of the Gospel and desires to walk in all that he hears. In short, "happy is he."

A New Name

Proverbs 30:1 The words of Agur the son of Jakeh, even the prophecy: the man spake unto Ithiel, even unto Ithiel and Ucal.



In the beginning of Proverbs, we found the writer to be Solomon, and he expressed his purpose in writing in Proverbs 1:1-4, saying: "The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel; To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity; To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion." Verse 6 continues, "To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings." In Proverbs 30:1, it seems like we are changing authors, but *Strong's Concordance* gives us a different idea. The name "Agur" means "to gather or received among the sages." It is another name for Solomon. This implies that he listened to others and gained their wisdom. We should do the same. Listen to people who have been saved a long time, for they have been through trials and come out victorious, and their wisdom can help us.

The name of "Jakeh" means "obedient" and is also a symbolic name for Solomon. When God gives you wisdom in a situation, be obedient to what He has shown you. So, this chapter is Solomon's prophecy or words of wisdom that he gathered from listening to wise people and observing things around him. Proverbs 31:1 says, "The words of king Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him." Lemuel, meaning "for God," or "consecrated to God," is yet another name for Solomon. In Chapter 31 we will learn the things taught by his mother.

A name change is not unusual. Fanny Crosby was a hymnist in the 1800's. She wrote over eight thousand hymns and used around two hundred names or pseudonyms. A pseudonym is an alias assumed for a particular purpose. Since she wrote so many hymns, those who made the hymnbooks did not want her name on every page; so, she signed her work under different names to make it look like they had many contributing hymnists.

Isaiah 14:4 states, "That thou shalt take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say, How hath the oppressor ceased! the golden city ceased!" The name of the king of Babylon was Nebuchadnezzar. Verse 12 is still talking about the proverb against the king of Babylon, but the name that is used is Lucifer,

which means morning star. "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning . . . !" Same person, different name. If we read carefully, a lot of confusion can be eliminated.

When we are saved, we are given a new name. That name is "redeemed." We are no longer called sinner, backslider, transgressor, or child of the devil, but we are a child of God, joint heir with Jesus Christ. Romans 8:16-17 says: "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ . . ." Isaiah 62:12 says, "And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the LORD: and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken."

So what about Ithiel and Ucal? "Ithiel" means "God with us," or "God has arrived." Starting in Proverbs 30:4, it says, "Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell?" Ephesians 4:8-10 talks about who ascended and descended.

"Ucal" could mean "the mighty one," or "the devoured." Jesus gave His life that we might have a new name. He descended to earth so that He could ascend to the Father and intercede for you and me. A name is important. Make sure your name is redeemed, a child of God.

DAY 31

A Poem to Live By

Proverbs 31:10 Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.

25 Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come.

30 Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.



This is a chapter that should be studied carefully. For women, it is a description of what they should strive to be. For men, it is what they should look for in a companion. It is an acrostic poem that Jewish men sing to their beloved wives, daughters, sisters, mothers, and women of honor, celebrating their daily acts; it is wisdom in action. (An acrostic poem is one that starts each line or phrase with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Psalm, Chapter 119, is another example of an acrostic poem.)

Throughout the Proverbs, there are many references to how a man should act and what a bad woman acts like, but these twenty-two verses are devoted to teaching women what is right. The tone of the question in verse 10, "Who can find a virtuous woman?" leads us to believe that virtuous women are hard to find, and when you find one, she is a rare jewel and should be guarded and cared for as a choice treasure.

She is covered, as with clothing, with honor and strength. A Godly woman has God-like characteristics. She is kind, compassionate, giving, trustworthy, and faithful. She provides for those who depend on her and cares for those who have need. She wears these graces like a beautiful coat that everyone can see; she is beautifully adorned.

Next is verse 30, which states, "Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain . . ." Have you ever known someone who looked so nice, had natural physical beauty, but when you got to know them, their personality was hateful and sneaky? Not all beautiful people have bad personalities, but it does not take long for age, sickness, or accident to drain and deform beauty. It is a fleeting, vain attribute. Be careful about how much time you spend making the outward person beautiful, but spend much more time making sure your spirit and attitude are beautiful. The

inward person can stay beautiful for a lifetime.

We know that proper nutrition is necessary for the physical part to stay healthy and beautiful, but it is also true for the soul. A diet of worldly attractions, fads, and ideas will cause the soul to shrivel up and look pale and deformed. You must feed your soul the Word of God, spiritual songs and hymns, good and clean conversation, earnest prayer, and meditation on righteous things. Philippians 4:8 says, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

Ruth was a virtuous woman. In Ruth 3:10-11 Boaz said: "Blessed be thou of the LORD, my daughter: for thou hast shewed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followedst not young men, whether poor or rich. And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest: for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman." If you read the story of Ruth, you will find she was industrious and courageous, and God blessed her for it. She was the great-grandmother of King David!

The last part of verse 30 says that "a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised." Proverbs 9:10 tells us, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding." A virtuous woman is not afraid of God, but has respect for His will and His way of living. She hates the evil way and follows God's direction. A woman of spiritual strength and courage is worth waiting for, "her price is far above rubies . . . she shall rejoice . . . she shall be praised."

About the Author

Joyce Corder and her husband, Bill, live in Newark, Ohio. They have two children and seven grandchildren. She and her husband currently teach the Senior Young People's Sunday School Class at the Church of God, God's Acres. Joyce and Bill were youth leaders for 25 years and continue to have a burden for young people. Joyce was active in a children's Sunday school bus ministry and in nursing home visitation, taking youth to sing for and visit with older people in the community. The Lord laid a burden on her heart to write devotionals for young Christians who desire to know more about God and the Bible but do not know where to begin. Her intention is to teach daily Christian values and ignite greater interest in a deeper study of the Word of God.

A Month of **PROVERBS** *in June*

One Scripture that you understand, that touches your heart, that stays with you all day, and changes your life is better than hours of study without understanding. And a quick nibble is definitely better than nothing at all! That is my proverb! It is my desire to provide a place to begin studying the Word of God and stir up your appetite for more. The Book of Proverbs gives instruction for our daily living. Since this Book of Proverbs does not flow like a story, we can take one verse and dwell on how to make it work in our life.



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