



The Book Of Proverbs



“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, judgment, and equity; to give prudence to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion” (Proverbs 1:1-4)

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Introduction To Proverbs

*“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge,
but fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Proverbs 1:7)*

Introduction

- I. “The book of Proverbs is one Old Testament book that has received less than its share of attention at the hands of Christians. The reason for this is to be found in the fact that most want to relegate it to an abrogated law. This is a mistake. For there is very little peculiar to the Mosaic economy that characterizes the wisdom of Solomon... he did not write for the Jew alone. This is a tragic mistake, because his practical knowledge is one of the greatest needs of our hour... His concern is the everyday need of an applied religion. He helps us deal with today’s task, today’s trial, today’s dilemma, and today’s opportunity” (Maurice A. Meredith, *Studies in Proverbs*, pg. 4).
- II. Authors of the book: Solomon (see 1:1; 10:1; 25:1); The wise men (22:17–24:34); Agur (chapter 30); Lemuel (chapter 31).
- III. Background of Solomon.
 - A. His acquisition of wisdom (1 Kings 3:5–15).
 - B. His fame for wisdom (1 Kings 3:16–28; 4:29–34; 10:1–10, 24–25).
 - C. His downfall (1 Kings 11:1–13).
 1. Can a man have wisdom and not use it?
 2. Does that detract any strength from his words of wisdom?
- IV. The book of Proverbs
 - A. What is a Proverb?
 1. “The word ‘proverb’ (*mischele*) means ‘to be like, a comparison; noting likeness in things unlike.’”
 2. What would you say it is?
 3. Name a modern-day proverb to illustrate your definition.
 - B. Characteristics: brief, concrete, general truth, diverse applications.
 - C. Can you name any other characteristics?
 - D. What is the main theme of Proverbs (cf. 4:7)?
 - E. What is the purpose of the Proverbs (cf. 1:1–6)?
 - F. Proverbs are intensely practical.
 - G. What does this book emphasize in our lives?

Discussion Questions

- I. How did Solomon obtain his wisdom? How do we obtain it (cf. Jas. 1:5–8; 3:13–18)?
- II. Is the book of Proverbs an accumulation of many intelligent observations on life, an inspired book of instructions important to man’s education, or both?
- III. Why are proverbs beneficial tools for teaching and learning?

- IV. Are proverbs statements of unchangeable truths or concrete promises of God?
- V. What areas of life do the Proverbs deal with? Which ages, groups, and social classes are instructed?
- VI. How are the Proverbs able to span years, locations, and cultures, and still be relevant to all people?
- VII. Why should we study the book of Proverbs? What are we supposed to learn from all these little bits and pieces of wisdom in this book (1:1–6)?
- VIII. Is a smart person necessarily a wise person? Explain.
- IX. “Indeed a greater than Solomon is here” (Luke 11:31; Matt. 12:42). What does that statement imply about Jesus’ relationship to the wisdom of the O.T.?
- X. Give a brief, general outline of the book of Proverbs (scan the sections listed for you for a hint to their groupings).
- A. Proverbs 1—9 _____
- B. Proverbs 10:1—22:16 _____
- C. Proverbs 22:17—24:22 _____
- D. Proverbs 25—29 _____
- E. Proverbs 30 _____
- F. Proverbs 31 _____
- XI. Think of a time when you used some wisdom in your life. It doesn’t have to be some fabulous display of profundity. Try to think of some simple event where God’s wisdom helped you.

Wisdom

“Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom.” (Proverbs 4:7)

Introduction

- I. “In the Bible, wisdom is always God-oriented and practical. It is not entirely coextensive with knowledge, for a knowledgeable person may be very deficient in wisdom. Wisdom is the right use of one’s knowledge, insight and skill to the glory of God. It originates in the fear of the Lord (Prov. 1:7; 9:10; cf. Job 28:28; Psa. 111:10). Thus the Bible defines wisdom in terms of one’s relationship with God rather than formal education or attainments before men (cf. James 3:13-18). Worldly wisdom is knowledge apart from divine revelation and is often God opposing in nature. True wisdom is the ordering of one’s life by God given counsel” (Rubel Shelly, *A Book By Book Study of the Old Testament*, p.81).
- II. Definition: “Wisdom... enables one to turn every good thing in life to its rightful purpose. It is something more than wit, shrewd common-sense, or even worldly prudence. It is something more than intellectual excellence, in that it implies a spiritual and moral quality of heart, will and life; and is the practical application of knowledge to its best ends.” (Maurice A. Meredith, *Studies in Proverbs*, p.9).
- III. Wisdom is not something to do, rather it is a way of doing things.
- IV. Wisdom is finding, in your own circumstances, any opportunity to concretize a proverb, and then follow through in your actions with a general principle.
- V. Discourse on wisdom (Proverbs 1—9).
 - A. The call of wisdom (1:20–33; 8:1–11; cf. 15:24).
 1. What is the price of rejection?
 2. What is the price of acceptance?
 - B. The value of wisdom (2:1–9; 3:13–18; 8:10–11; 16:16; 24:13–14).
 1. What is more precious for daily living?
 - C. The security of wisdom (2:10–22; 3:21–26; 4:1–9).
 1. How does wisdom keep one secure and protected?
 - D. Rewards of wisdom (3:13–18; 8:32–36).
 - E. Way of wisdom -vs- way of folly (9:1–18; 19:8).
 1. Who do wisdom and folly both call out to?
 2. What do each have to offer us?
 - F. God’s relation to wisdom (3:19–20; 8:22–31).
 1. What does that tell us about our acquisition of such wisdom?

Discussion Questions:

- I. What is wisdom (in your own words)?
- II. Where does wisdom originate (2:6)? How is wisdom acquired—what is necessary on our part (1:7; 9:10)? Explain.

- III. Does *having* wisdom guarantee that we will *live by* wisdom? What else does wisdom need besides knowledge?
- IV. Someone has suggested seven pillars which uphold wisdom (9:1; 1:2-6). Explain what each of these is and what each contributes to wisdom.
- A. Understanding—
 - B. Knowledge—
 - C. Prudence—
 - D. Shrewdness—
 - E. Instruction—
 - F. Discretion—
 - G. Perception—
- V. Who can benefit most from the wisdom contained in this book—the simple and inexperienced or the mature (cf. 1:4-5)?
- VI. List some of the rewards of wisdom (3:13-18; 8:32-36).
- VII. Is the wise man the man who knows it all, or the man who knows he does not know it all (3:5-7; 13:1; 26:12)?
- VIII. The wise man knows how to acquire wisdom in anything. Along with God's help, where else does he turn (13:20; 10:8)?
- IX. Explain the importance of the Divine wisdom in our lives which is related in the book of Proverbs. Compare any New Testament references to wisdom you can find.

The Folly Of Fools

*“Like the legs of the lame that hang limp
is a proverb in the mouth of fools” (Proverbs 26:7)*

Introduction

- I. The tendency in Proverbs is to overemphasize the simplicity in the character of human nature by generalizing the categories and summarizing the wide variety of men as either wise or fools.
 - A. There is no flattering category in between—only the “simple.”
 - B. These are depicted as those standing at the crossroads and having to choose a path of wisdom or folly.
 - C. Each person will possess varying degrees of wisdom or folly, but the book of Proverbs classifies all men in one of these three categories (cf. Pro. 9).
 - D. The most important question for each to consider is, “Where am I?”
- II. What is a fool?
 - A. “The word is used in Scripture with respect to moral more than to intellectual deficiencies. The ‘fool’ is not so much one lacking in mental powers, as one who misuses them... In Scripture the ‘fool’... is the person who casts off the fear of God, and thinks and acts as if he could safely disregard the eternal principles of God’s righteousness (Psa. 14:1; 92:5–6; Prov. 14:9)” (*Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, pg. 375).
 - B. “One ‘who acts without counsel, and whose will is too hard for his understanding; he hath no reason for what he doth, but because he hath a mind to do it’” (Quoted in *Wilson’s Old Testament Word Studies*, pg. 172).
- III. Characteristics of a fool:
 - A. He will trust in himself (12:15; 28:26).
 1. Why is this the mark of a fool?
 2. In whom should we trust (3:5–6)?
 - B. He is deaf to instruction (1:7; 15:5; 23:9; 24:7).
 1. Not only deaf, but he despises the instruction anyone tries to give him.
 2. He cannot stand to have anyone “preach to him”—but that is his downfall (10:21). Why?
 3. He is a know-it-all (18:13).
 4. He is opinionated (18:2; 14:33).
 5. Even though his opinions may be obviously foolish (12:23; 13:16).
 6. He is a talker rather than a listener (10:8; 15:7).
 - C. He can not be disciplined (12:1; 16:22).
 1. He is not moved by the consequences of his folly.
 2. Rods of instruction do not phase him (17:10; 19:29; 26:3).
 - D. He is impulsive (14:29; 17:24).
 1. He does not act on principle, but on impulse.
 2. Therefore, he is uncontrollable (29:11).
 - E. He commits evil (10:23–25; 13:19; 14:9).
 - F. He is virtually unchangeable (27:22; 26:11).

Discussion Questions:

- I. What are the three categories of human nature as depicted in the book of Proverbs?
- II. What things does a fool lack?
- III. Though both the simple (*naive*) and foolish may share many similar characteristics, why is there hope for the simple and none for the fool?
- IV. Combine the characteristics of a fool, then describe this kind of person so we will know what to look for (in ourselves and others).
- V. Why doesn't a fool learn? Is it possible for the fool to recognize his folly?
- VI. Who does a fool blame for his condition (19:3)?
- VII. What are your chances of convincing a fool of his condition?
- VIII. Is a man's foolishness usually a well-kept secret (12:23; 13:16)?
- IX. How morally dangerous are fools (17:12)?
- X. Can you ever win an argument with a fool (29:9)? Why?
- XI. How should we respond to fools (26:4-5; 29:9)?

Related Passages: Proverbs 3:35; 10:13-14; 13:20; 14:1, 3, 7-8, 15-18, 24; 15:14, 20-21; 17:16, 25; 18:6-7; 19:13; 26:1-12.

Human Emotions: Pride

“Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall” (Proverbs 16:18)

Introduction

- I. “There is one vice of which no man in the world is free; which everyone in the world loathes when he sees it in someone else; and of which hardly any people, except Christians, ever imagine that they are guilty themselves. I have heard people admit that they are bad-tempered, or that they cannot keep their head about girls or drink, or even that they are cowards. I do not think I have ever heard anyone who was not a Christian accuse himself of this vice. And at the same time I have very seldom met anyone, who was not a Christian, who showed the slightest mercy to it in others. There is no fault which makes a man more unpopular, and no fault which we are more unconscious of in ourselves. And the more we have it in ourselves, the more we dislike it in others. The vice I am talking about is Pride or Self-Conceit; and the virtue opposite to it, in Christian morals, is called Humility... it was through Pride that the devil became the devil: Pride leads to every other vice: it is the complete anti-God state of mind.” (C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, pg. 109).
- II. Companions of Pride:
 - A. Haughtiness (18:12; 21:4; 16:18). Haughtiness is being disdainfully or contemptuously proud. Why does pride show such contempt for others?
 - B. Scoffing (21:24). Why does he scoff? It is his way of letting you know his superiority and your inferiority.
 - C. Boasting (27:2; 20:6; 17:19). Pride’s greatest fear is that someone else will not notice the greatness it sees in itself, therefore it boasts (cf. 25:14).
- III. Pride -vs- God:
 - A. Pride is the ultimate sin against God (3:5–7). It is the assumption that man is self-sufficient and important enough to compete with God’s greatness, magnitude and wisdom.
 - B. Pride opposes the first principle of wisdom—the fear of the Lord (8:13; 15:33; 22:4).
 - C. Pride is an abomination to God (16:5; 6:16–19). It claims honor, but God gives honor only in response to man’s humility (29:23; 15:33).
- IV. Consequences of Pride:
 - A. Shame (11:2; 25:27). It’s ironic that pride seeks glory for but receives shame.
 - B. Contention (13:10; 28:25). What relationships have experienced conflict, strife, and contention because of pride?
 - C. Destruction (15:25; 16:18–19; 18:12). God brings to ruin the man who challenges Him.

Discussion Questions:

- I. Why is it so difficult to see pride in ourselves but easy to see it in others?
- II. Why do God and pride not mix? What is it that causes the enmity between God and Satan (1 Timothy 3:6)?
- III. What is the beginning of wisdom (9:10)? What does the proud man lack (8:13; 22:4)? Therefore what is he?
- IV. Why can't a proud person admit he is wrong?
- V. In what way is pride competitive?
- VI. Does pride receive more pleasure from having what it wants or having more than the next man?
- VII. What one thing does pride receive more enjoyment from than anything else?
- VIII. Why can two proud people never resolve differences or work together?
- IX. Why does the proud man "scoff" at others (21:24)?
- X. Many vices will sometimes bring people together—you may find companionship, laughter and friendliness among drunkards or ungodly people. Does pride ever bring people together?
- XI. Is there any positive kind of pride we should have?
- XII. Someone has said "Humility is an elusive quality, because once you think you finally got it, you just lost it." Why is that true?

Related Passages: Proverbs 12:9; 14:3; 25:6–7; 26:12.

Human Nature: Anger

“He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city” (Proverbs 16:32)

Introduction

- I. “The tragedy of the modern world is that man is the master of so many things, yet has not learned to master himself. In the broadest sense, self-control describes the mastery of appetites... Guided by godly wisdom and knowledge, the wise man disciplines his appetites and makes them his servant rather than his master” (Thomas L. Seals, *Proverbs—Wisdom For All Ages*, pg. 108–109).
- II. “The fact is that there are no damaging or destructive emotions *per se*. Our emotional makeup is totally from God. All emotions of which He has made us capable are constructive when used properly... All emotions however, can *become* destructive when we fail to express them in harmony with Biblical limitations and structures.” (Jay Adams, *Christian Counselor’s Manual*, pg. 349).
- III. Anger.
 - A. Anger is not always bad.
 1. Like other emotions, God built anger into man to move him to action.
 2. Feeling anger is not wrong—responding to anger is not wrong—responding to anger improperly is wrong (14:29; 16:32; 19:11; 29:11).
 3. The one slow to anger (not one lacking anger) is praised in contrast with the quick-tempered who improperly express their anger (cf. Mark 3:1–6; Matt. 21:12–13; Eph. 4:26–27).
 - B. Reactions to anger—these refer more to one’s control or lack of control rather than inborn passion or passiveness.
 1. Quick-tempered—has no control over his spirit (25:28).
 - a) Ventilates his anger {“*blowing up*”} (29:11; 12:16; 14:17).
 - (1) Speaks foolish words (29:20).
 - (2) Stirs up strife (30:33; 15:18; 29:22).
 - (3) Is not seeking a solution to the problem—just a sounding board to voice his dissatisfaction.
 - b) Internalizes his anger {“*clamm*ing up”} (Eph. 4:26–27; Eccl. 7:9).
 - (1) Hurts himself by making himself sick, tense, miserable, and self-pitying (18:14; 27:3).
 - (2) Hurts others by turning bitter, resentful and unforgiving—the very things he must put off (Eph. 4:26–27, 31–32).
 2. Slow to wrath—has his hottest passions under control (16:32).
 - a) Controls his anger. How does he do it?
 - (1) Understanding (14:29). What does he understand?
 - (2) Discretion (19:11).
- IV. Handling anger properly.
 - A. Anger in ourselves.
 1. Break underlying patterns—otherwise you will have same problem over and over (19:19).
 2. Guard our mouth (17:27–28; 21:23).
 3. Overlook transgressions (19:11; cf. Eccl. 7:20–22; Eph. 4:31–32).
 4. Get rid of anger (Eph. 4:26–27, 31–32).

5. Don't allow it to fester and build grudges.
 6. Redirect our anger to the problem—not the people (Eph. 4:29).
- B. Anger in others (29:8).
1. Respond gently, not in kind (15:1, 18, 28; 25:15)
 2. Bring a peace offering (21:14; cf. Matt. 5:23–24).
 3. Don't learn his ways (22:24–25)

Discussion Questions

- I. Is anger ever a commanded response?
- II. Should a man's emotions be his master or his servant? How can he allow them to be his master? How can he make them his servant?
- III. Does the solution to the sinful abuse of anger lie in attempting to turn off the emotion? Must it be turned off or controlled?
- IV. How can anger be constructive? How can it be destructive? Does the answer lie in where anger is directed?
- V. When one "blows up" where is his anger directed? When one "clams up" where is his anger directed? Are either of these people very good company?
- VI. Where should anger be directed?
- VII. What does vented anger produce? What does internalized anger produce?
- VIII. Is anything constructive ever said when people are angry (14:17; 15:18; 29:20)?
- IX. Can anger ever be appeased by going head to head against someone else's anger (15:18)?
- X. Why can the disciplined man be trusted to rule others (16:32)?

Related Passages: Proverbs 16:14; 21:19; 22:8, 24–25

Human Emotions: A Broken Spirit

*“A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance,
but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken” (Proverbs 15:13)*

Introduction

- I. Most people are motivated more from emotion than intellect.
 - A. Not because emotion is stronger than intellect, but because such motivation is easier than the latter.
 - B. Emotional motivation is not necessarily a good thing (cf. 28:26).
 - C. The complexities of life are so great and the problems so heavy that the more we face them, the more ‘mixed-up’ we become.
 - D. Therefore, it is imperative to keep our hearts and emotions under control rather than being ruled by them (4:23).
- II. A Broken Spirit.
 - A. We can become exasperated and give up (15:13; 17:22; cf. Col. 3:21; Eph. 6:4) —our heart can be overly sorrowful and our spirit broken.
 - B. If a person’s spirit (*will, desire*) is broken, what positive things can he do?
 1. He cannot help himself (18:14).
 2. Others cannot help him (18:14).
 3. Difficult to share in (14:10, 13).
 4. Difficult to cheer up (25:20).
- III. What Can Break One’s Spirit?
 - A. Fear (29:25; 28:1).
 1. Fear cripples our confidence, enthusiasm, and optimism.
 2. Our own phobias (fear of failure, fear of rejection, etc.) become stronger than our fear of God (cf. 3:21–26).
 3. A guilty conscience sometimes causes fear (28:1).
 4. Fear can result in great emotional distress, paranoia, and one’s own fantasy world.
 - B. Anxiety (12:25).
 1. Constant fretfulness produces a depressing anxiety which eats away at the spirit and consumes it (cf. Psalm 37:1–11).
 2. Worries weigh us down until they break us (cf. Matt. 6:25–34; 1 Pet. 5:7).
 - C. Depression (12:25; 15:15).
 1. Depression is almost always self-inflicted, then infected by neglecting responsibilities, resentment, self-pity, etc.
 2. It is a downward spiral which ultimately causes a person to break his own spirit (15:13).
- IV. Putting The Pieces Back Together.
 - A. Trust in God (16:3; 29:25; 23:26; 28:26).
 - B. Wisdom (3:21–26).
 - C. Hope, faith, and love (13:12, 19; cf. Matt. 8:26; 1 John 4:17–18).
 - D. A good outlook on life (14:30; 15:15, 30; 17:22).
 - E. Talk and listen to friends (27:9).

Discussion Questions

- I. What do we mean when talking about a “broken spirit”?
- II. What kind of things can break one’s spirit?
- III. What things will help cast out fear (1 John 4:17–18; Matt. 8:26)?
- IV. “The fear of God is the one fear that removes all others.” True or false? Why?
- V. In what ways are love and fear mutually opposed (cf. 1 John 4:17–18)?
- VI. How can anxiety wear us down?
- VII. How does Cain effectively illustrate the downward spiral of depression (Genesis 4:1–15)? Show how his actions degenerated from first to last.
- VIII. Do the sorrows of the mind contribute to sickness of the body (17:22)?
- IX. Does this kind of person have very many ‘good days’ (15:15)?
- X. Why don’t others always fully understand our problems (14:10)? Are they therefore incapable of helping us (27:9)?
- XI. How difficult is the bruised spirit to heal (18:14; 25:20)?
- XII. Who can heal your crushed spirit (cf. Matt. 12:18–21)?

Related Passages: Matt. 5:3; Luke 18:10–14; Micah 6:8; Psa. 34:18

Human Emotions: Hate

“Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all sins” (Proverbs 10:12)

Introduction

- I. Good people hate the evil and their evil deeds.
 - A. That seems like a natural enough human response (14:17; 24:24–25).
 - B. But there is a dark, ugly side to this emotion—a side directly related to Satan (1 John 3:10–15).
 - C. Hatred first reared its ugly head in Cain’s heart and gave him the notorious distinction as the first murderer (Genesis 4:1–15).
 1. Murder is a heinous crime, rarely found among God’s people, but hatred is commonplace.
 2. Yet, the man who hates and the man who kills are guilty of the same crime, for the sin lies in the inward disposition, of which the act is only the outward expression (1 John 3:15).
- II. The Dark Side Of Hatred.
 - A. Evil men hate good men (29:10; 21:10).
 1. Understandably the good hate the evil and their deeds.
 2. Why would the evil hate the good (cf. 9:8; John 3:19–21)?
 - B. Hatred disguises itself (26:24–26; 10:18).
 1. Hides behind flattery, lies, and kind speech.
 2. Hatred will make one a hypocrite—blessing with his mouth and cursing with his heart.
 - C. Hatred stirs up strife (10:12; 26:20–21).
 1. Without fuel the fire goes out.
 2. Hatred fuels strife, contention, and dissension.
 - D. Hatred comes back on you (26:27). Note context of Proverbs 26:24–28.
 1. It is merciless to others, it will be merciless to you.
- III. Manifestations Of Hatred.
 - A. Note other New Testament passages where these are grouped together: Gal. 5:19–21, 26; Titus 3:3; Jam. 3:10–18; 1 Pet. 2:1; 1 Cor. 13:4–7.
 - B. Envy and jealousy (14:30; 6:34–35).
 1. Envy wants what another has, and it hates him for having it.
 - C. Lying (26:28; 10:18).
 1. Hatred spreads gossip, rumors, slander, innuendoes, and lies which destroy the one it hates.
 2. It can smite its enemy secretly when his defenses are down.
 - D. Retaliation (20:22; 24:29).
 1. Displeasing to God (17:5; 24:17). Why would such be wrong?
 2. A losing response (26:27).
 3. The proper response (25:21–22). How would we do this?

Discussion Questions

- I. What are some of hatred's attendant evils? Why are they mentioned together so often (cf. Gal. 5:19–21; Titus 3:3; etc.)?
- II. Why is hatred equivalent to murder (1 John 3:10–15)?
- III. Why is hatred sure to come back on you (26:27)?
- IV. How does hatred disguise itself (26:24–28)?
- V. Did envy or jealousy ever produce any positive results between Cain and Abel, Sarah and Hagar, Rachel and Leah, Joseph and his brothers?
- VI. Does love ever cause envy (1 Cor. 13:4)? In what way does hatred cause envy?
- VII. Why is it wrong to rejoice at the calamity of others (17:5; 24:17)?
- VIII. Can money, possessions, pleasures, or anything compensate for having to live with hatred (15:17)?
- IX. Why is the poor man hated (14:20; 19:6–7)? Would you say hatred is a selfish emotion?
- X. What is the solution to hatred?

How To Be A Slave

“The moment you start hating a man, you have become his slave. He controls your thoughts, invades your dreams, absorbs your creativity, and determines your appetite—he affects your digestion, robs you of your peace of mind and good will, and takes away the pleasure of your work. He ruins your religion, nullifies your prayers, and you can't enjoy a vacation anymore. He destroys your privacy when you eat. He is close beside you while you drive your car, affects your attitude on the job, and distracts your mind, your tone of voice when you speak to your boss, your wife or your child. Do you want to be a slave and hate him?” (*copied*)

Human Emotions: Self-Control

“Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life” (Proverbs 4:23)

Introduction

- I. The emphasis on the inward man is the key point which separates Christianity from all other religions.
 - A. The control of the inner man is the secret to a righteous life. Free-spirited, spontaneous living is irresponsible and destructive. The book of Proverbs encourages us to exercise self-control, because disciplined living refines and strengthens character.
 - B. Proper living is developed and controlled at the source of one’s actions—the impulses of his heart (4:23; 23:7). This may be man’s most difficult challenge, but it will be his greatest victory!
- II. Necessity Of Self-Control.
 - A. Because the heart controls the man (4:23; 23:7; 27:19).
 1. Actually the heart is the man—it is his control center. “The soul of man is the fountainhead of life, and when it is contaminated, so is life. For when the heart is corrupted, the streams of life are polluted, since all of life stems from this one spring.” (Maurice Meredith, *Studies In Proverbs*, p. 39).
 2. Cf. Matthew 12:33–37 Mark 7:14–23.
 - B. Because of man’s inadequacy.
 1. Man cannot deliver himself. The only standard he knows is his own judgment (12:15; 14:12, 14; 16:2; 21:2). His greatest traitor can be his own heart if it is ignorant of God’s will (28:26).
 2. Standards of right and wrong must be somewhere outside our hearts—we must gain control of ourselves, then subject our will to God’s.
 3. Man must give his heart to God (23:26; 3:5–8; 19:21).
- III. Achieving Self-Control.
 - A. Through discipline and instruction (10:8; 15:5, 31–32; 23:12). The wise man profits by advice and discipline he receives:
 1. From God (3:11–12; 10:17; 16:9; 17:3; 19:3).
 2. From parents (1:8–9; 6:20–22; 7:1–3; 13:1). Once we become adults, we are not given liberty to scorn and refuse our parents’ discipline and instruction but are required to wisely apply it.
 3. From others (12:1; cf. 9:7–9; 15:10, 32; 29:1). Man’s ability to improve depends on his willingness to heed advice and reproof—the wise man humbly accepts advice, not viewing it as unkind or an attempt to undermine him (27:5–6).
 - B. Through self-restraint (16:32; 25:28).
 1. Resist and flee temptation (4:14–27; 23:1–7; 24:1).
 2. Responsible behavior (20:5; 23:19). He thinks before acting or reacting, then guides his heart in right way.
 3. He does not engage his mouth before his mind is in gear (13:3; 15:28; 16:23; 21:23).

Discussion Questions

- I. Why does the Bible emphasize the heart of the inner man so much?
- II. With so many passionate and conflicting emotions prompting men to action, what is our responsibility to those actions?
- III. Does the man under control *think* or *act* first (20:5; 23:19)?
- IV. Is a disciplined life really as boring as the “free-spirits” make it out to be?
- V. What is the greatest human display of strength (16:32; 25:28)?
- VI. Is the wise man one who never makes mistakes or one who profits from his mistakes?
- VII. What quality does the wise man possess which enables him to listen and profit from advice and reproof (15:31–33)?
- VIII. Do those who **give** the most advice generally **heed** the advice of others? Are **you** an advice-giver or advice-receiver?
- IX. How can man achieve self-control?

Moral Issues: Adultery

“Can a man take fire to his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?” (Proverbs 6:27)

Introduction

- I. Many Proverbs are devoted to warnings against sexual sins.
 - A. Verse for verse, more consideration is given to this subject than in any other book of the Bible.
 - B. Obviously Solomon perceived in the seductress the greatest hazard to young, unsuspecting male victims.
- II. Wisdom calls the simple to the way of life (9:1–12), whereas the foolish woman calls the simple to the way of death (9:13–18).
 - A. Understanding the adulteress’s evil ways will help safeguard young men from destruction (2:10–22; esp. 16–19).
 - B. Adultery is a self-inflicted, fatal wound (6:32).
- III. The Deception Of Adultery (5:1–6).
 - A. It is full of empty promises—it promises pleasure, love, and fulfillment but in the end gives pain, suffering, and destruction.
 - B. Art of seduction: flattering words (5:3; 6:24; 7:14–21) and sex appeal (6:25).
 - C. What she delivers: bitterness (5:4), destruction (5:5), and instability (5:6).
- IV. The Price Of Adultery (5:7–14).
 - A. Adulterous love appears to be free, but it has its price (cf. Gal. 6:7–8).
 - B. The loss of one’s honor and dignity (5:9).
 - C. It sacrifices all the years of one’s labor (5:10; 29:3).
 - D. Body consumed with disease (5:11).
 - E. Filled with remorse after it is too late (5:12–13).
 - F. Total ruin, disgrace, humiliation and even death (5:14).
- V. The Deterrent To Adultery (5:15–23).
 - A. A happy and honorable marriage (cf. Heb. 13:4)—the adulteress has no charm when a man is spell-bound with his wife’s love.
 - B. Look for love at home (5:15). Adultery and sensual passions are counterfeits (5:16–18).
 - C. Fall in love again with your spouse (5:19–20; cf. Song of Sol. 4:9–16; 7:1–13).
- VI. The Price Of Adultery (6:20–35).
 - A. The “no-strings-attached” love he was offered proves to have “great chains” with heavy burdens.
 - B. Reduced to poverty and emptiness (6:26).
 - C. He is burned (6:27–29). A burn brings injury, leaves permanent scars and continual pain—so does adultery!
 - D. Irremovable reproach (6:33). Stigma of “wife-stealer” cannot be erased.
 - E. The fury of a jealous husband (6:30–35).
- VII. The Enticements Of The Adulteress (7:4–23).
 - A. She is crafty and manipulative—beware of her temptations.
 - B. She appeals to men with her attire (7:10), she is restless looking for excitement (7:11), she is forward (7:12–13), she flatters him because she came looking for him (7:14–15), she has set the mood for their love feast (7:16–18), her husband is gone (7:19–20), and she enticed him through flattery (7:21–23).

- VIII. The Warning (7:24–27).
A. As beautiful and appealing as she may be, her house is a battlefield, strewn with the corpses of many strong men and her door is the gate to hell!
B. “Her house is the way to hell, descending to the chambers of death.”

Discussion Questions

- I. What are some factors which contribute to this great temptation?
- II. What are some of the consequences of sexual immorality?
- III. Why is adultery like “playing with fire” (6:27–28)?
- IV. Many strong men have been slain by the adulteress (7:27)—give a few Bible examples of men who met their downfall due to adultery.
- V. What are the two great safeguards against adultery (5:8; 6:20–24)?
- VI. How can we overcome the temptation of adultery?
A. Proverbs 5:1–2 —
B. Proverbs 5:8 —
C. Proverbs 5:15–20 —
D. Proverbs 5:21–22 —
E. Proverbs 6:20–21 —
F. Proverbs 4:23 —
- VII. Can the guilt of adultery ever be hidden from God (5:21–23)?
- VIII. Adultery is a cruel sin whose pain and destruction are twofold. When will its consequences be experienced (5:7–14; 6:23–35; 7:24–27; Gal. 5:19–21)?

Moral Issues: Drinking

*“Wine is a mocker, intoxicating drink arouses brawling,
and whoever is led astray by it is not wise” (Proverbs 20:1)*

Introduction

- I. The problem of drinking and drunkenness today is “staggering.”
 - A. Wine has a hypnotizing quality—it is delectable, sparkling and smooth and seduces the unwary man, much like the seductress (23:31; 6:24–25).
 - B. Both fascinate and offer the same promise of pleasure and enjoyment, but both have the same fatal sting “in the end” (23:32; 5:4). We must beware!
- II. Reasons For Drinking.
 - A. Momentary pleasure (23:31; Eccl. 10:19).
 - B. To escape problems and forget (31:7).
 - C. Bitterness (31:6). Releases anxieties and burdens.
 - D. Friends (23:20–21). Social drinking is the manner in which most begin.
- III. Effects Of Wine (23:32).
 - A. Produces woe and sorrow (23:29)—for the one who drinks and his family.
 - B. Produces contention (23:29; 20:1). Wine releases one’s inhibitions.
 - C. Physical problems (23:29).
 - D. Hallucinations (23:33).
 - E. Dulls the senses (23:34–35). He is anesthetized beyond feeling.
 - F. Addicting (23:35)—the greatest sting is wine’s addictive power.
 - G. Breeds irresponsibility (31:4–5). Distorts thinking and perverts justice.
 - H. Brings one to poverty (23:20–21; 21:17)—wine is a *taker* not a *giver*.
 - I. Leads one down the wrong path (23:19–21).
 1. The “way” referred to is the way of wisdom which calls for a clear head and steady walk (23:19).
 2. The implied contrast is with the staggering way of the drunk (23:20–21).
- IV. Drinking.
 - A. Drunkenness is a sin (Gal. 5:19–21; 1 Cor. 5:11–13; Rom. 13:11–14). It is always condemned as excessive, indulgent, uncontrolled and sensual!
 - B. Social drinking is a sin (1 Pet. 4:3–4; Rom. 12:1–2).
 - C. Does the Bible condemn taking a drink?
 1. Wine is one of the good things God gave to cheer the heart (Judg. 9:13; Ps. 104:14–15).
 2. When they drank in that day, they were rejoicing in the fruits of their God-given harvest—what little alcohol there was in it was incidental.
 3. When man drinks alcoholic beverages today, the emphasis is on the alcohol content and the effects it will have on him.
 4. Does man have a license to drink whenever or whatever he wants (Rom. 14:15–21)?
 - D. With so many negatives associated with wine, is it any wonder Paul had to convince Timothy to take just a little? Timothy refused to drink any until then (1 Tim. 5:23; Titus 1:15).

Discussion Questions

- I. How are men deceived by the influence of strong drink (20:1)?
- II. How does wine “sting like a viper” (23:32)?
- III. Why are just a few drinks deceptive?
- IV. How can alcohol bring one to poverty?
- V. What positive benefits does drinking have? Negative?
- VI. Am I ever the only person affected by my drinking?
- VII. Why are leaders not to be “given to wine” (31:4-5; 1 Tim. 3:3)?
- VIII. Does the Bible ever say it is wrong to take a drink? If so, give the passage.
- IX. Explain how wine can be one of the good things God has given us, yet we are condemned for drunkenness or social drinking.
- X. Should one indulge himself in an occasional beer or glass of wine? What would be the advantages? The disadvantages? Which outweighs the other?
- XI. What do you believe about social drinking in light of what the Bible says?
- XII. What should a Christian do when he finds himself in a situation where he is offered and encouraged to drink socially?

My advice to drinkers: since you can't stop drinking, why not start a saloon of your own in your own home? You're the only customer and you won't have to buy a license. Give your wife \$125 (depending on the brand) to buy a case of whiskey... there are 240 drinks in a case. At \$4 a drink that would be \$960 in 12 days. When the case is gone your wife can buy another case for \$125 and put \$835 in the bank. If you live 10 years and continue to buy your drinks from your wife, you can die with your boots on and your wife will have over \$250,000 in the bank on deposit. That is enough for her to pay off the mortgage, bring up your children, marry a decent man and forget she ever knew a drunk like you. *(copied)*

Moral Issues: Our Language

*“Death and life are in the power of the tongue,
and those who love it will eat its fruit” (Proverbs 18:21)*

Introduction

- I. Our words can be a fire, a world of iniquity, an unruly evil, full of deadly poison and set on fire by hell.
 - A. The power of our words is awesome (11:11; cf. James 3:1–12).
 - B. It is one of the most volatile things in existence and generally untamed, but when controlled can be of great benefit (15:4).
- II. The Power Of Our Words.
 - A. Destructive—both to itself and others (10:19; 11:9; 18:6–7; 12:13).
 1. Lying is an abomination to God (12:22; 6:17–19; 19:5, 9).
 - a) Fostered by hatred for another (10:18; 26:24–28).
 - b) It is short-lived (12:19; 21:6; 20:17).
 - c) Lying may appear to be beneficial for present circumstances, in the end it is still very destructive.
 2. Flattery (26:28; 29:5; 28:23).
 - a) Not the kind of flattery which compliments, but which deceitfully wins another’s favor and manipulates others.
 - b) It is used effectively by the adulteress (6:24; 7:21).
 3. Tale-bearer (the gossip, slanderer, whisperer).
 - a) Betrays and destroys friendships (16:28; 17:9; cf. 11:13).
 - b) Creates strife (16:27–30; 26:20–22).
 - c) Destroys character and integrity (11:9; 25:9–10).
 - d) Whether the tales are true or not is incidental.
 - e) The spreading of such: being “truthful” or “blunt” is not always in another person’s best interest.
 4. Cursing is self-destructive (20:20; 30:10–11).
 - B. Constructive—our words have power for good (15:4).
 1. Good words are pleasing to those who hear (10:11, 20–21; 16:24; 25:11).
 - a) Such words are precious because they are refreshing, life-giving, encouraging, and edifying.
 - b) Timely words (15:23; 12:25; cf. 15:28)—sometimes *when* you say something is as important as *what* you say.
 2. Control.
 - a) Benefit to guarding our words (13:2–3; 21:23; cf. 16:23; 17:27–28).
 - b) Where there is no wood the fire burns out (26:20–28).
- III. The Power Of The Ear.
 - A. People are hungry for gossip (18:8; 26:22).
 - B. Such is a sad commentary on humanity—men like to hear and are always ready to believe the worst.
 - C. The listener and tale-bearer alike are corrupt (17:4; cf. 20:19)—he may never spread the story, but his attitude toward person forever changed.

Discussion Questions

- I. Why is our language emphasized so much in the book of Proverbs?
- II. How powerful are our words? Are they inherently evil?
- III. Why do people sometimes lie about others (10:18; 26:24–28)?
- IV. What is the difference between honest praise and the kind of flattery emphasized in Proverbs?
- V. How can one do as much damage with the truth as he can with a lie?
- VI. If gossip is not necessarily lying, what makes it so bad?
- VII. Why should we refuse to listen to gossip, rumors, and innuendoes?
- VIII. Why is it as wrong to listen to the whisperer as it is to be one?
- IX. Why is it such a sad commentary on human nature that we love to hear gossip (18:8)?
- X. What are some other sins in regard to our language?
- XI. How can our words be used for good?

Poverty And Wealth

*“The rich and the poor have this in common,
the Lord is the maker of them all” (Proverbs 22:2)*

Introduction

- I. In the world there are rich and poor people—some can afford all of life’s luxuries, most have to struggle to make ends meet, others are destitute.
 - A. That is a fact of life not likely to change (22:2; 29:13; cf. Matt. 26:11).
 - B. Unlike men, God is impartial—neither man is better than the other.
 - C. Wealth is not an end in itself, but an aid to achieving a prosperous life—righteousness, not wealth, delivers us from death (10:2; 11:4, 28).
- II. Advantages Of Wealth And Disadvantages Of Poverty.
 - A. Wealth gives a man security (10:15; 18:11). An example is found in 13:8.
 - B. Wealth brings a man “friends” (14:20; 19:4, 6–7).
 1. Friendships with the poor are too “demanding.”
 2. People have enough troubles without taking on a poor man’s troubles.
 - C. Wealth brings a man power (22:7).
 - D. Wealth lets a man say what he wants (18:23).
- III. Why Poverty Comes.
 - A. Some Are Victims Of Poverty.
 1. Greed of others is the source of their distress (14:23; 22:16; 30:14; 28:3).
 2. God takes this as a personal insult (14:31; 17:5; cf. Matt. 25:41–46).
 3. God will settle the account (15:25; 22:22–23).
 - B. Some have only themselves to blame.
 1. Idleness (10:4; 14:23; 20:13; cf. 6:6–11; 24:30–34).
 2. Sensuous self-indulgences (21:17; 23:21).
 3. Use no wisdom (13:18; 21:20).
 4. Waste time and energy on frivolous things (12:11; 28:19).
- IV. Wise Acquisition And Use Of Wealth.
 - A. Most enduring wealth is that which is gradually acquired (13:11; 10:4).
 1. Like the shepherd, his prosperity is self-perpetuating (27:23–27).
 2. Wealth gained in a short time is often lost quickly (20:21; 28:20).
 - B. Wealth acquired unscrupulously is temporary and bitter (20:17; 21:5–6; 28:8; 15:27; 10:2)—God will take it away from him (13:22).
 - C. Our own priorities in acquiring wealth (11:28; 28:11; 23:4–5).
 - D. While wealth is a good thing to have, and even comes as a blessing from God (10:22), there are still things which are better to have in life:
 1. Wisdom and knowledge (8:10–11, 18–19; 16:16; 20:15; 24:4).
 2. Fear of the lord (15:16).
 3. A good name (22:1).
 4. Integrity (28:6; 19:1).
 5. Honesty (19:22).
 6. Righteousness (16:8, 19).
 - E. We must be sure that wealth does not blind us to the things which far excel it—what is important is not whether we are rich or poor, but whether we stand upright before God (30:7–9).

- F. Caring for the poor (11:24–26; 13:7).
1. The great benefit of riches is not having them but using them.
 2. The reason the giver is requited for his gifts and generosity is because he is lending to the Lord (19:17; 22:9; 28:27).
 3. We cannot help the poor too much—God sees to that—He listens to the cries of those who listen to the cries of others (21:13).

Discussion Questions:

- I. Why did the Solomon not suggest programs for bringing financial equality to all men and women?
- II. Does wealth have its advantages? Is “money the root of all evil” (1 Tim. 6:10)?
- III. Why do the some rich people oppress the poor? Why do the poor sometimes oppress the poor (28:3)?
- IV. How do some people bring poverty upon themselves? Is poverty always the fault of the poor?
- V. What things are “better” than money? Should we completely withdraw from the pursuit of wealth?
- VI. How may one make himself rich through greed, vanity and selfishness yet have nothing worthwhile (13:7, 11)?
- VII. What are the dangers of worldly prosperity (30:7–9)? Of poverty? Is it better to be rich, poor, or merely content (Phil. 4:11–12)?
- VIII. Why may one make himself poor through generous and liberal giving and yet enjoy great riches (11:25; 13:7)?
- IX. In what sense am I “lending to the Lord” (19:17) when I help the poor?
- X. What is usury (28:8)? Why is such evil?

Industry And Laziness

“Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise” (Proverbs 6:6)

Introduction

- I. Nothing worthwhile was ever accomplished without hard work.
 - A. Laziness will hinder and impoverish a man (10:4–5, 16; 13:11; 18:9).
 - B. The most ridiculous person described in the Bible is the sluggard.
 - C. “Clearly the sages enjoyed poking fun and pouring ridicule on this lazy fellow. They have saved some of their best humor and liveliest imagery for him. As we read their proverbs we are meant to smile. We are also meant to recall when we got out of our beds this morning and how we spent our time today.” (Aitken, *Proverbs—Daily Study Bible Series*, p. 118).
- II. Marks Of A Sluggard.
 - A. Love of sleep (26:14).
 1. Hinged to his bed, tossing back and forth, he sleepily thinks “just a few more minutes” (6:9–11; 24:32–34).
 2. He cherishes sleep as an escape from responsibility.
 3. Rest benefits the worker, but it hinders the sluggard (20:13; 19:15).
 - B. Inability to start (10:4; 21:25–26; 6:9–10; 24:33). “Later” and “tomorrow” are the sluggards favorite times for accomplishing his tasks.
 - C. Inability to stick with task to its conclusion (19:24; 26:15).
 - D. He makes a promising start but doesn’t have the endurance and energy necessary for completion (cf. 12:27). He works hard to achieve something then lets it go to waste.
 - E. Excuses—he will find 101 reasons not to do something—it is either too cold (20:4), too dangerous (22:13; 26:13), or too something (cf. Eccl. 11:4)!
 - F. Talks about and desires success (13:4; 14:23; 21:25–26).
 1. He is as ambitious as anyone, but that appetite which drives the worker to action drives the sluggard to frustration (13:4; 16:26).
 2. He does not have because he lacks diligence.
 - G. Full of advice (26:16). He thinks his days of observing other people work has made him wise and insightful.
- III. Consequences Of Laziness.
 - A. Self-evident ruin (24:30–34). Cannot be hidden.
 - B. Suffers poverty and want (12:11; 19:15; 20:4; 24:34; 28:19; cf 6:11).
 - C. He obtains nothing for himself, God refuses to give him anything and forbids others from providing for him (2 Thes. 3:10–15).
 - D. Loses independence (12:24).
 - E. Perpetual frustration of getting nowhere (15:19; 13:4; 14:23; 21:25–26).
 - F. He is trapped in his own self-perpetuated cage.
 - G. Irritant to employer (10:26; cf. 25:13). If you want a task performed quickly, don’t select a person with a lot of leisure time—always pick a busy person.
- IV. The Industrious, Hard Worker.
 - A. Self-motivated and disciplined (6:6–8; cf. Romans 12:11).
 - B. Knows necessity of doing timely work (10:4–5; 20:4; 28:19).
 - C. Recognition (22:29).
 - D. Rewarded for his industry (10:4; 13:4).

Discussion Questions

- I. Is the sluggard one lacking in ability or zeal?
- II. How are the sluggard and the destroyer related (18:9)?
- III. What is necessary before any person should be able to rest?
- IV. Why is a sluggard unable to accomplish much?
- V. Though they seem legitimate, why does the sluggard *really* make excuses?
- VI. May a lion sometimes be real and the excuse valid (26:13)? What should be done in such a case?
- VII. What is the only work a sluggard does on any project (26:16)?
- VIII. Why does the slothful man lose his independence (12:24)?
- IX. Why does he never get anywhere?
- X. How do you feel about a lazy employee (10:26)?
- XI. Why do busy people complete tasks better than people with more spare time?
- XII. What lesson is implied in the ant having no chief or overseer (6:6–8)?
- XIII. Why does no one ever praise the sluggard (22:29)?

Business

“A false balance is an abomination to the Lord, but a just weight is His delight” (Pro. 11:1)

- I. According to an old saying “Honesty in little things is not a little thing.”
 - A. Another saying states that “Honesty is exact to the penny.”
 - B. It is the “little things” and the “pennies” which we easily overlook that God looks over (cf. Luke 16:10).
 - C. Honesty is the same in principle no matter the size of the transaction!
 - D. Some say you cannot exist in the “dog-eat-dog” business world without pulling some shady deals—if that is true, it is better not to succeed (16:8).
- II. Honesty In Business.
 - A. Where dishonesty gets you (11:3)
 1. Temporary gains (28:8; 21:6).
 2. Bitter gains (20:17).
 3. Bad reputation (10:9).
 4. Troubles own house (15:27).
 - B. Honesty on both sides of the counter.
 1. Seller (16:11; 11:1; 20:10, 23).
 - a) Just scales and measurements have been assigned by God.
 - b) God expects merchants to be fair, not like the dishonest ones with one set of measures falling below the standard for selling, and the other in excess of the standard for buying.
 - c) He also condemns holding back goods to push up the price (11:26).
 2. Buyer (20:14). Likewise the buyer is not to use his own fraudulent schemes for an advantage.
- III. Gifts And Bribes.
 - A. Bribery condemned (15:27; 17:23).
 1. Bribes given or received by one who is out to take advantage of another and make a profit at the cost of justice and fairness (cf. 29:4).
 - B. Gifts can be advantageous (17:8).
 1. Solomon does not make a blanket statement condemning the buying of favor with gifts.
 2. Likely it is the motive and either the openness or secrecy about the gift which determines which side of the line it is on.
 - a) Win friends and influence people (19:6).
 - b) Paves way to social advancement (18:16).
 - c) Helps get a man out of a jam (21:14).
- IV. Moving Up.
 - A. Gifts (18:16; 17:8; cf. 19:6).
 - B. Integrity (10:9; cf. 11:3; 12:22). It may be a slower way to the top, but is far more secure. Honest men are always recognized.
 - C. Competency (22:29). The quality of your work and efforts goes before you.

Discussion Questions:

- I. Why is the principle of honesty not changed whether dealing with small or large amounts?
- II. Can one exist in the business world if he stands for principles of right?
- III. Dishonesty nets a profit, but what else does it bring (28:8; 20:17; 10:9; 15:27)?
- IV. Does God expect more honesty from the seller than He does from the buyer?
- V. Is it wrong to make a sizable profit in your work?
- VI. Explain Solomon's position concerning gifts and bribes.
- VII. What will help you move up in the business world?
- VIII. What good things will man be recognized for in his business?
- IX. What partner do we all need in business?

A Good Name

*“A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches,
loving favor rather than silver and gold” (Proverbs 22:1)*

- I. After you die, would you rather have someone tell your children that you were a rich man, or that you were a good, honest and noble man (cf. 19:1)?
 - A. Integrity can gain honor, glory, and dignity that money cannot buy (22:1).
 - B. “It is the foundation of society, the basis of justice, and the guarantee of treaties among men and nations” (McNutt, Vol. II, p. 27).
- II. Importance Of A Good Name (12:3).
- III. A Good Name Comes From Others, Not Yourself (27:2, 21).
 - A. A man’s reputation comes from others recognizing his integrity, not from him announcing it!
 - B. The value of gold and silver is tested by refining—the value of a man’s character is tested by his reputation.
- IV. Honor Associated With A Good Name (3:3–4).
 - A. From God (11:20).
 - B. From men (12:8; 10:7; 11:16).
 1. Even people of the world have praise for honorable men.
 2. Dishonorable conduct brings reproach (18:3).
- V. How To Achieve A Good Reputation.
 - A. Integrity (10:9; 11:3; 20:7).
 1. Integrity is “adherence to a code of values”—it is a man’s noblest possession—it is not an action in particular, but a motivation to action.
 2. Integrity speaks of a man’s relationship with himself.
 3. A man who walks in integrity will not stumble, for he has something to guide his steps properly.
 4. The dishonorable man is a blight on his family—they must also live under his bad reputation!
 - B. Honesty (12:20; 13:5; 17:20; 20:17).
 1. Deceit is in the heart of the unrighteous (26:24–26).
 2. Honesty sets a man apart and gives him a good name.
 - C. Diligently seek God (11:27; 21:21). Then when you make a mistake, others will know where your heart is.
 - D. Righteous deeds (20:11). Actions tell people what we are (Matt. 12:33–35).

Discussion Questions

- I. Why is a good name better than riches (22:1)?
- II. As a Christian, why is it important for you to have a good name?
- III. What is integrity? Why is it important?
- IV. How does a just man bestow blessing upon his children (20:7)?
- V. What does honesty tell people about you?
- VI. Does a man with a good reputation ever make mistakes? What do people know about him though?
- VII. Why are our actions a good indication of our integrity or lack of it (cf. Matthew 12:33–35)?
- VIII. What is the final goal of a life of integrity (4:18)?
- IX. Do you have a good reputation?

Friendships

“A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity” (Proverbs 17:17)

- I. “A friend is a gift we give ourselves” (Robert Louis Stevenson).
 - A. Friends are valuable and precious, one of the greatest blessings a man has.
 - B. Blood relationships, if not founded on a deep sharing, cannot have the depth of quality that a real friendship has (18:24; cf. 27:10c).
 - C. Superficial friends are gained and lost, but true friends are for a lifetime—neither time nor miles can separate them (cf. 1 Sam. 18:1–4; 20:41–42).
- II. Real Friendships.
 - A. Not superficial (19:4, 6–7; 14:20).
 - 1. “Fair-weather” friends are only loyal as long as you have that which attracts them (i.e., money, common interests, things they benefit from).
 - 2. True friends are not looking for what they can get out of it.
 - B. Reciprocal—not be one-sided (18:24).
 - C. Proven in adversity (17:17; 18:24).
 - 1. He comes through for you—not because you beg him to but because you need him to (cf. 27:10b).
 - 2. A real friend will come through not because it is demanded of him—but because he loves.
 - D. Refine us (27:17, 5–6).
 - 1. Real friends care enough to correct us and help us grow rather than remain silent about our faults.
 - 2. Don’t respond “I thought you were my friend” when receiving constructive criticism—that is exactly why a friend gives it.
 - 3. We must appreciate it (cf. 28:23).
 - 4. A man’s character does not develop in a cocoon, but through constant interaction with others (27:17).
 - E. Forgive and forget (17:9).
 - F. Are worth keeping no matter what the cost (27:10).
- III. Nurturing Friendships.
 - A. Know when a joke is not a joke (26:18–19).
 - 1. Tackiness and thoughtlessness can be painful to another.
 - 2. “I was only joking” is a lame excuse for such conduct.
 - B. Don’t make a pest of yourself (25:17).
 - C. Don’t be inconsiderate (27:14).
 - D. Don’t tell tales (17:9; 16:28).
 - 1. Friendship thrives on forgiveness and love, bearing no grudges and telling no tales (cf. 1 Cor. 13:4–7).
 - 2. Friends know how to keep quiet.
 - E. Don’t betray confidences (25:8–10).
 - 1. The man who tries to undermine his neighbor’s good name, will himself end up with a reputation of being untrustworthy (cf. 25:19).
- IV. The Power Of A Friend’s Influence.
 - A. Friends influence us more than anyone else (12:26; 13:20).
 - B. For Evil (1:10–19; 22:24–25; 23:20–21; 24:1–2; 28:7; 29:24).
 - C. For Good (27:17).

Discussion Questions

- I. How would you describe a real friend?
- II. How would you describe a “fair-weather” friend?
- III. What is the difference between real friends and fair-weather friends?
- IV. Which is better: having many friends or a few real friends? Why?
- V. Is a person’s best friend necessarily determined by who they spend the most time with?
- VI. Do real friends always agree on everything (cf. 27:17)?
- VII. Why do friends conceal each other’s mistakes (17:9)?
- VIII. Why would you not gossip about a friend and his shortcomings (17:9; 16:28)?
- IX. Why is the influence of evil companions emphasized more than the influence of good ones (12:26)?

Generosity And Greed

*“Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due,
when it is in the power of your hand to do so” (Proverbs 3:27)*

- I. Generosity is not tied to a person’s net worth, nor to the face value of his gift.
 - A. It is not just the rich who can be generous and benevolent.
 - B. The wealthy are not the only ones who may hoard what they have.
 - C. These qualities are not tied to what a person *has* but what he *is* (22:9)!
 - D. “It is not what you would do with a million, if a million should ere be your lot. But what you are doing at present, with the dollar and a quarter you have.”
- II. Greed.
 - A. Character traits of a greedy man.
 1. Insatiable desires (27:20).
 - a) Like Sheol, the monster that can never satisfy its appetite, the ‘eyes of man’ are never satisfied (cf. Eccl. 1:8; 5:10).
 - b) That which he wants but cannot have makes him miserable and he despises it (cf. 21:25–26).
 2. Miserly (23:6–8).
 - a) His generosity is a front (23:7).
 - b) His heart is not in his gift to you, but in the cost to himself.
 - c) If one’s generosity is selfish it is a sham.
 - d) Generosity does not keep records of good done.
 - B. Greed is self-defeating (11:17, 24; 15:27).
 1. In its attempt to fill itself by gaining and retaining things, it empties itself of the inward qualities which truly satisfy (cf. 13:7).
 2. Any evil done to fill oneself with the spoils of others is self-destructive (1:10–19; esp. vs. 19).
- III. Generosity.
 - A. Caring for the needy (14:21, 31; 28:27; 11:24–26).
 1. The benefit of possessions is not in *having* them but in *using* them!
 2. Where we have opportunity, we have responsibility (3:27).
 - B. Don’t put off helping the needy (3:28).
 - C. Honoring the Lord (14:31; cf. 3:9–10).
 1. God is honored by our consideration and generosity for the poor.
 2. God takes it as a personal insult when we do nothing (cf. 22:22–23).
 - D. Blessings of liberality (28:27).
 1. The satisfaction he receives from giving (11:17).
 2. He is the recipient of the generosity of others (11:24–25).
 - E. God’s response to our generosity (22:9).
 1. He becomes indebted to us for being a channel of His blessings (19:17).
 2. He also responds to our lack of generosity by turning the same “deaf ear” to us (21:13).

Discussion Questions

- I. Why isn't generosity based on the amount of the gift? What is it based on?
- II. Why is the greedy man never filled (27:20)?
- III. How will a miser treat you? If he does happen to do anything for you, what is his mind likely on (23:6-8)?
- IV. Even though a paradox, why is it true that one can make himself rich yet have nothing and make himself poor even with great riches (13:7; 11:24)?
- V. What is the extent of our responsibility to help the needy (3:27)?
- VI. Why can't the needy wait until tomorrow for your help (3:28)?
- VII. In what sense do we "honor the Lord" when we show mercy (14:31)?
- VIII. Jesus said "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). What greater blessings does the giver experience than the recipient?
- IX. Why does God indebted Himself to us for helping the poor (19:17)?
- X. To what extent must our generosity and benevolence go (25:21-22)?

Home Life

*“In the house of the righteous there is much treasure,
but in the revenue of the wicked is trouble” (Proverbs 15:6)*

Introduction

- I. God designed the home with our best interests in mind (Gen. 2:18; cf. Proverbs 18:22; 19:14)—it was not designed to be a battleground, but a haven.
 - A. Although Proverbs does not provide pat answers for all the problems the home faces, it does point us in the right direction.
 - B. Its instructions are worthy and valid for having successful families.
 - C. It impresses us with the personal responsibility of every family member for the benefit of the whole (11:29).
- II. Purpose Of A Home.
 - A. Contribute to happiness of each family member (5:18; 10:1; 15:20; 17:6; 23:15–16; 29:3; 31:28).
 1. Families are God’s way of blessing all of us (cf. Psalm 127:3–5; 128:3–4).
 2. The righteous family member brings happiness to all the rest.
 - B. Training ground for children (22:6; 23:14; 1:8–9).
 1. In the home children get the direction and guidance necessary to grow and develop.
 2. They also receive instruction that will prepare them and stick with them into adulthood (4:1–13; 6:20–23).
- III. Complementing One Another.
 - A. A family is comprised of different members with various responsibilities.
 1. Each has his own place and effect on all other members of the home.
 2. Their lives are all interrelated and influence one another.
 - B. Husband and father (20:7; 17:6; cf. 15:27).
 1. His wise and righteous life benefits his family.
 - C. Wife and mother (14:1; 12:4; 31:10–31).
 1. She may have the most pivotal and important position in the home, with the success or failure of that home dependent upon her!
 - D. Children (10:1; 15:20)—they are either a blessing or curse.
 1. Many proverbs are specifically addressed to the children to impress on them that their lives can bring joy or sorrow to their parents.
 2. Good children (23:15–16, 24–25; 29:3, 17).
 - a) They are a delight to their parents—children they can be proud of.
 3. Bad children (17:21, 25; 19:27).
 - a) Even a parent’s love cannot make the pain and shame go away.
 - E. Aged (17:6).
 1. Here we see the harmony of family life spanning three generations.
 2. Instead of “generation gaps,” each generation finds enrichment in and derives honor from the other—grandchildren are the blessing of the aged and fathers are the blessing of children.
 3. The elderly have much to contribute to their family (20:29; 16:31).
- IV. Worth Of A Good Home.
 - A. May be man’s most precious possession (24:3–4; 15:6)
 - B. Unity is the most important thing a family can have (15:17; 17:1).
 - C. It is far more valuable than the greatest wealth and pleasures.

Discussion Questions

- I. Did God bless or curse us with the roles and responsibilities of the home?
- II. Can any family member live without having an effect on the others?
- III. Why was the home and family relationship established?
- IV. What do children learn in the formative years (4:1–13; 6:20–23)?
- V. Where does a child learn how to discipline himself and respect authority?
- VI. Should children be *made* to attend worship services and Bible study?
- VII. Why may the wife/mother be the most pivotal person in the family (cf. 14:1)?
- VIII. Why does one's love for his children intensify the pain when that child goes astray?
- IX. What place do the elderly have in the family (cf. 20:29; 16:31)?
- X. How important is a good home?

Husbands And Wives

*“He who finds a wife finds a good thing,
and obtains favor from the Lord” (Proverbs 18:22)*

Introduction

- I. Godly homes don't just happen—they are the fruit of much toil and labor.
 - A. They are built by the strong hands of both men and women who follow after the wisdom of God (24:3–4; cf. Psalm 127:1).
 - B. Such homes are a blessing and reinforced by God.
 - C. The most intimate human relationship is with one's spouse.
 - D. The stability of that relationship is more important than anything they possess (15:17; 17:1).
 - E. It's success is based on the partnership between the two (cf. Luke 11:17).
- II. Husbands.
 - A. Good husbands are rare (20:6).
 1. As many negative things as are said about women in Proverbs, the men may think they are naturally superior as husbands. Fat chance!
 - B. His greatest treasure is his wife (18:22; 19:14).
 1. She is his blessing from a gracious God.
 2. She enhances his position, brings out the best in him, and can bring him honor and dignity (31:10–12, 23).
 - C. Troublesome husbands (11:29; 27:8).
 - D. Faithfulness (5:18).
 1. In the book of Proverbs, the warnings against sexual sins are addressed almost entirely to the men.
 2. Beware of the harlot (5:1–6; 7:24–27).
 - a) Like a leech she will take all his livelihood and vitality from him, leaving him empty (5:9–11).
 - b) Then too, he must face the punishment for his sin (5:14, 21–23).
 3. Share love with your wife (5:15–20).
- III. Wives.
 - A. Power to stabilize or destroy home (14:1).
 1. A wife will manage and establish a home or bring it crumbling down.
 2. The home teeters on her character—she will either balance and support it through her wisdom or bring it crashing down (cf. 1 Tim. 5:14).
 - B. Makes or breaks her husband (12:4).
 1. She will either bring out the best in him and assure him of honor and dignity (31:23) or through her shameful behavior bring disgrace to him.
 2. She can continually gnaw away at and waste him like a consuming bone disease (cf. 11:22).
 - C. Contentious (19:13; 27:15–16).
 1. A wife always at conflict with her husband, nagging and restless, is a torturous irritation—like constantly dripping water.
 2. A man's only real relief from her is separation—whether sleeping on the couch, in another room, or as far away as he can get (21:9, 19; 25:24).
 - D. The Worthy Woman (31:10–31). She is rare and priceless, a blessing to her family and deserving of their praise (31:28–31).

Discussion Questions

- I. Is a successful home a partnership or dictatorship?
- II. What is more valuable than a peaceable home (15:17; 17:1)?
- III. Are good husbands about as rare as good wives (20:6; 31:10)?
- IV. How is a man's wife his greatest treasure?
- V. Why do you suppose the instructions about sexual sins are addressed solely to the men?
- VI. What power does a wife hold in the home (14:1)?
- VII. Why does a wife have such a tremendous effect on her husband?
- VIII. What is the effect of a continual dripping of water (19:13)? What is the similar problem with a continual dripping on a rainy day and a contentious woman (27:15)? Will there be peace in such a home?
- IX. Is the description of the worthy woman (31:10-31) just a man's conception of his dream-girl or a real and obtainable description of a godly woman?

Parents And Children

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

Introduction

- I. Parenting may be the most difficult, yet rewarding job in the world—because being a child is the most important time in anyone’s life.
 - A. The person a child will become is shaped and formed most by the parent’s influence during the adolescent years.
 - B. Parents must provide the necessary instruction, training, guidance and example which are fundamental for the child’s development.
 - C. Children must honor their parents and be willing to receive instruction and correction (1:8–9; 4:1–4).
- II. Parents.
 - A. Task Of Child Training (22:6).
 1. Difficult (22:15).
 - a) Children are immature.
 - b) Their silly whims must be removed and replaced as they grow, making them *thinking* people rather than just *responding* people.
 2. Important (19:18).
 - a) If not trained and directed properly in the formative years, it may be too late to change them later.
 - b) The folly of youth seems to be not giving a matter *enough* thought; the folly of an adult is in refusing to give a matter *any* thought!
 3. Serious (29:15, 17; 19:18).
 - a) Leaving a child to grow up without guidance, either through neglect or choice, will be destructive for the child and his parents.
 4. Key to the task (3:11–12).
 - a) Discipline is first and foremost a matter of *instruction* for the child and then afterward *punishment* for his wrong doings.
 - b) Rod (29:15; 23:13–14; 13:24). The plain truth is that without the unpleasant discipline parents must administer the child is likely to follow the path of folly to his own destruction (cf. 22:15; 19:18).
 - c) Reproof (29:15; 6:20–23). The wise child is able to accept reproof (a fatherly “sermon”) and such sets him straight (15:5, 32); the foolish needs to have those lessons driven home by the force of the rod.
 - d) Proverbs address the importance of parents disciplining their children and not much on how it should be done—such judgment is left for the wise parent to use with each individual child.
 - B. Effects Of A Parent’s Life On The Child.
 1. The effects last longer than a lifetime!
 2. Faithful parents are a great blessing to children (20:7; 17:6; 31:28).

- III. Children.
- A. Showing Honor To Parents. How can the conduct of wise children honor and delight their parents (20:11; 23:25)? (Points taken from “Proverbs”, by Kenneth Aitken, pp. 149–152):
1. Listen to them (13:1; 15:5; 23:22).
 - a) Some children are fools, refusing to listen to parent’s instruction.
 - b) Others are so brass and cocky that they cannot be taught.
 - c) Some are so contemptuous, the rolled back eyes tell it all (30:17).
 2. Don’t speak ill of them (30:11; 20:20). Picking fault and criticizing them reveals our dishonor and disrespect for them.
 3. Don’t mistreat them (19:26; 28:24). Children who would harm their parents in any way are inexcusable.
 4. Pull your weight (10:5). A lazy child is a curse to his parents.
 - a) Parents are running a home, not a hotel!
 5. Watch the company you keep (29:3; 28:7).
 - a) Their influence on you may bring a father shame.
- B. Effect Of A Child’s Life On Parent (10:1, 5; 15:20; 17:21, 25; 19:13; 23:24).
1. Children can be a man’s greatest source of pride and joy or the most grievous burden he has to bear!

Discussion Questions

- I. Should the spiritual training and guidance of the child be judged less important than his material needs?
- II. What are some things included in the idea of “training” a child?
- III. Why is training a child difficult?
- IV. Why is training a child such a serious matter?
- V. What are two useful tools for training children (29:15)?
- VI. Is the rod of correction likely to warp a child’s personality? What are some useful tools for disciplining children?
- VII. Parental discipline must be meted out as God administers discipline to us. How could a father provoke his child to wrath by his use of discipline (Eph. 6:4)?
- VIII. How long must a child honor and respect his parents?
- IX. Is any child “too big” to listen to his parents?

The Worthy Woman

“Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies” (Proverbs 31:10)

Introduction

- I. The Bible does not suppress women, but rather elevates and honors them.
 - A. When God looked at the man He created, He saw incompleteness, instability, and weakness (Genesis 2:18).
 - B. He saved the best for last and created woman as man’s help—not just to cook, clean and provide sex for him.
 - C. As she demonstrates the special, God-given graces of womanhood, she enhances the family’s life along with the rest of society (11:16; 14:1).
 - D. Proverbs includes an acrostic poem which extols the virtues of the godly woman and emphasizes her value to mankind (31:10–31).
 - E. Lest anyone think this is just some man’s unreasonable expectations of a “perfect woman,” notice that these are the words of a woman (31:1).
- II. Her Value (31:10–12).
 - A. Priceless (31:10). She is his crowning jewel, a treasure by God (12:4; 19:14)
 - B. Reason for her worth (31:11–12). Her husband has confidence, knowing she will always do what is best for him and the family.
- III. Her Life (31:13–24).
 - A. Hard worker (31:13–15). She looks for tasks which need to be done and is willing to do them rather than complain or leave them undone (31:13).
 1. She goes to whatever lengths she must to acquire the things needed for her family (31:14).
 2. Her greatest satisfaction comes from providing for her family all hours of the day or night (31:15).
 - B. Wise and industrious (31:16–19).
 1. A good business manager who can make wise decisions (31:16, 18a).
 2. She also prepares herself for the rigorous work of providing food and clothing for her family (31:17–19).
 - C. Kindness and generosity (31:20). She still has time for others!
 - D. Benefit to family (31:21–24). What would they do without her?
 1. She provides for every need of her family (31:21), is an asset to her husband’s standing in the community (31:23) and even brings in extra income needed for the family (31:24).
 2. Notice that she also does something for “herself” (31:22). She is not a slave—her hard work buys for her the right to some “time to herself.”
- IV. Her Character (31:25–27).
 - A. Strength and honor (31:25). She is adorned with the fine trappings of the inward woman (cf. 1 Pet. 3:3–5; 1 Tim. 2:9–10).
 - B. Wisdom (31:26). She knows when to speak, what to say, and how to say it—she has something to say worth listening to (cf. 18:2, 13; 14:33; 10:8).
 - C. Busy (31:27). She has no time to be idle (cf. 1 Tim. 5:11–15).

- V. Results Of Such A Life (31:28–29).
 - A. Praise from family (31:28). She does not go unnoticed or unappreciated—her praise comes from the mouths most important to her.
 - B. She excels all others (31:29). She stands head and shoulders above the most noted women of this world—none are even in her league!
- VI. Her Secret (31:30–31).
 - A. We might credit her success to her charm (but that is deceitful), or to her beauty (but that is vain and fleeting)—her secret is her fear of the Lord.
 - B. Does that surprise you? Isn't that where the wise life begins (cf. 1:7; 9:10)?

Discussion Questions

- I. Why do so many people have a negative view of what the Bible says about women?
- II. Does the Bible elevate or denigrate women?
- III. Why do some people argue that such a woman as is depicted in Proverbs 31:10–31 is unrealistic?
- IV. Why is she so valuable? Why is she so rare?
- V. How does she find time for the rigorous activity as a mother, wife and manager of the home?
- VI. Why does she take time to do some things for herself (31:22)?
- VII. Why is her husband known in the gates (31:23)? How can a wife encourage and inspire her husband?
- VIII. How does she approach the work of providing for her family?
- IX. What is the true value of a woman? What is the key to her success?

The Nation

“Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people” (Proverbs 14:34)

Introduction

- I. A nation’s greatness cannot accurately be measured by its wealth, commerce, or size—its strength and might has no lasting value if it is not characterized by righteousness in its leaders and citizens (14:34).
 - A. Governments are assigned to men by God and leaders are raised up by Him to carry out His will among nations (24:21; 21:1; cf. Rom. 13:1–7).
 - B. Dishonor and disobedience rendered to the king is likewise shown to God.
- II. Kings And Rulers.
 - A. Thrones must be established on principles of righteousness (16:12; cf. 29:4).
 1. The only real security for a ruler and his nation is to build and guard it with righteousness, justice and truth—even though the people think he speaks “as God” he is not free to pervert justice (16:10).
 2. Must be just and fair (20:8; 8:12–15)—in order to do that he keeps abreast of what is going on among his people and how faithfully his ministers are fulfilling their duties (25:2).
 - a) Insures punishment of wrong-doers (20:8, 26).
 - b) Protects rights of needy and poor (29:14; 31:8–9; cf. 28:15–16).
 3. Advisors should be men of honor (25:4–5).
 4. Refuse bribes which pervert justice (29:4; 17:23).
 - B. Responsibilities of his position.
 1. Avoid excess and overindulgence (31:2–6)—one distracts his attention and drains his energy while the other confuses his mind and confounds proper judgment.
 2. Compassion for his people (28:16; 31:8–9). A throne built upon the gratitude and loyalty of the people will defy revolutions (29:2, 14).
 3. His influence on his people (29:12; cf. 17:7).
- III. Subjects And Citizens.
 - A. Keep the law (29:18; 14:34)—the attitude that if you do not like a law or think it is unjust, therefore you are justified in breaking it, is nothing less than anarchy and rebellion.
 - B. Fear the king (24:21–22).
 1. Both he and God deserve our respect and honor.
 2. We must avoid association with revolution in religion or politics.
 - C. Support righteous rulers (14:28).
 - D. Gaining the king’s favor (16:15; 14:35; 19:12).
 - E. Provoking the king’s wrath (20:2; 19:12; 14:35).
 1. With the authority a king possesses, provoking his wrath is suicidal.
 2. Wisdom advises that we appease his wrath (16:14).
- IV. The King’s Attendants (14:35).
 - A. Win his favor and avoid arousing his anger (16:15; 19:12).
 - B. Merit the king’s approval to receive promotion and praise (14:35; 22:29).
 - C. Counsel he gives must be tactful—he cannot scold the king (25:15).
 - D. Counsel he gives must be truthful too (16:13; 22:11).
 - E. Know his place (25:6–7).
 - F. Control his passions and appetites (23:1–3).

Discussion Questions

- I. Are these proverbs applicable to all nations or just those ruled as a monarchy?
- II. How is a nation's greatness measured?
- III. Why must a ruler's throne be established on principles of righteousness and justice (cf. Psalm 97:1-2; 89:14)?
- IV. Why must he avoid overindulgence (31:2-6)?
- V. What will compassion on his subjects insure for the king (29:2, 14)?
- VI. Whether or not laws make sense or seem fair to us, why should we obey the laws of the nation?
- VII. Why are we to avoid those who rebel against the authority of our rulers (24:21-22)? Who is really in charge anyway?
- VIII. Is revolt and uprising the solution to getting out from under a bad ruler? What are some possible channels and lawful solutions?
- IX. Why is it important to remain in the king's favor?
- X. List some ways to win the king's favor and offset his anger.

Numerical Riddles

“to understand a proverb and an enigma, the words of the wise and their riddles” (Prov. 1:6)

Introduction

- I. Some of the most puzzling, yet picturesque riddles in proverbs are found in the riddles of Agur (30:11–31).
 - A. Each group of four observations or proverbs have something in common and it is that common thread which is the emphasis of each group.
 - B. These observations from nature and people shed light on human behavior, conveying moral truths which the reader must meditate on and extract after much thought.
 - C. They are brainteasers which do not press their lessons, but after putting forth the effort to understand are deeply etched in a person’s mind.
- II. Four Classes Of Evil Doers (30:11–14).
 - A. Likely every generation which has its share of ingrates, self-righteous sinners, proud and arrogant men and those whose covetousness knows no bounds and shows no mercy (cf. 30:17).
- III. Four Things Never Satisfied (30:15–16).
 - A. The leech (30:15). Its blood-sucking appetite is never satisfied.
 1. If that’s not enough, its offspring has the same insatiable appetite.
 2. Thus, not only is it never satisfied, but desire is intensified!
 - B. Four things never say “It is enough” (30:16).
 1. The grave never fills, the barren womb never stops crying out for children, the dry parched earth drinks in the water and thirsts for more and the fire needs constant fuel to burn.
 2. Even so a man’s lusts and desires are never filled.
 3. Human greed and covetousness can never be filled, it must learn contentment with what it has (cf. 27:20).
- IV. Four Things That Are Incomprehensible (30:18–19).
 - A. How can an eagle hang in midair hundreds of feet above the ground?
 - B. How can a smooth-bellied serpent, without legs, climb to the top of a smooth rock and cling there?
 - C. How can a heavy ship weighted down with cargo float on top of the water when much smaller objects sink?
 - D. What is that mysterious magnetic power which attracts certain men and women to one another instead of someone else?
 - E. These are beyond man’s comprehension.
 - F. Likewise, man does not understand God’s power and will—but he can stand in awe, trust and believe in the ways of God (30:4–6).
- V. Four Things That Are Unbearable (30:21–23).
 - A. People not suited for their promotion in life. These people are nauseating to the world—they have each been raised to a higher position and have “let it go to their head,” becoming arrogant and feeling superior.
 - B. A mistreated servant will be an oppressive ruler.
 - C. Fools who receives an abundance are too self-centered to share and use it.
 - D. The hateful spinster will bring her bitterness and discontentment to the marriage and become doubly odious.
 - E. The maid who becomes the woman of the house will be intolerable.

- VI. Four Small But Wise Things (30:24–28).
- A. We minimize the worth of small things. These small creatures exhibit wisdom effectively, highlighting the fact that wisdom, not strength, is the key to success.
 - B. Ants (30:25). They redeem the time and make provisions for the future without being prodded (cf. 6:6).
 - C. Rock-badgers (30:26). These rodents, about the size of small rabbits, realize their feebleness and frailty; therefore, they do not trust in their strength, but flee to the rocks for safety from danger (cf. Psalm 46:1–11; 61:1–4).
 - D. Locusts (30:27). Though small and insignificant, they show what a life of discipline, direction, order, cooperation, and unity can do (cf. Joel 2:4–9).
 - E. Lizard (30:28). He is adept at “getting places” through his ingenuity, determination and persistence—he can even find his way into the most royal of places.
- VII. Four Stately Things (30:29–31).
- A. Some things are regal and stately and others are not.
 - B. Some interpret these passages as referring to arrogance or domination.
 - C. That may be it, or it may depict certain things as being grand and beautiful (30:29–31) and others which would do better to cease boasting (30:32).

Discussion Questions

- I. Why are these riddles so difficult to understand?
- II. What is the point made with the illustration of the leech’s daughters (30:15)?
- III. How are each of the four things mentioned never satisfied (30:16)?
- IV. What is the point about some things in nature being beyond our understanding (30:18–19)?
- V. Explain how those mentioned in 30:21–23 become unbearable.
- VI. Which is more important—wisdom or strength? How does the wise man emphasize that?
- VII. What is the lesson taught by each of the small animals mentioned?
- VIII. Some things may be grand and beautiful, but should we boast of ourselves as such (30:29–32)?