

PROVERBS

God's Instruction To His Children

*“To Give Prudence To The Naïve, To The Youth
Knowledge And Discretion”*

– Proverbs 1:4

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Note to the Students

As we study through this twelve week course I would encourage each student to keep up-to-date on the current week's lesson. Each week there will be assigned scripture readings and home work that must be read and completed by the appropriate class time. Some students may have a hard time keeping up with their bible lessons because of public school classes and this is understandable. However, as we will note in the scriptures, the spiritual is more important than the physical (1 Cor. 15:49-54; 1 Tim. 4:7, 8). Therefore the purpose of the homework and assigned reading is to help the students to build a habit of devoting time and effort into studying the scriptures. We must all remember that growing in the knowledge of Jesus Christ is not an option, but a command (2 Pet. 3:18).

Along with being a command from our Lord it is also beneficial to our life. All Christians must look at studying the scriptures as more than simply fulfilling another one of God's commands; faithful Christians take joy in reading and meditating on God's word, for His word is truth and in it is revealed the gospel of our salvation. Consider the attitude that David had toward reading and studying God's word.

Ps 33:6: *By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.*

Ps 56:4: *In God (I will praise His word), in God I have put my trust; I will not fear. What can flesh do to me?*

Ps 119:9-16: *How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. With my whole heart I have sought You; oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You. Blessed are You, O LORD! Teach me Your statutes. With my lips I have declared all the judgments of Your mouth. I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches. I will meditate on Your precepts, and contemplate Your ways. I will delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word.*

As David shows us the joy, pleasure, comfort and great delight that a man after God's own heart has in His word, Solomon exhorts us as children of God to have this same attitude in ourselves.

Prov 8:32-36: *Now therefore, listen to me, my children, for blessed are those who keep my ways. Hear instruction and be wise, and do not disdain it. Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoever finds me finds life, and obtains favor from the LORD; but he who sins against me wrongs his own soul; all those who hate me love death."*

Therefore study to show yourself approved unto God (2 Tim. 2:15).

Lesson One

Good Friends

The qualities which this book urges when it comes to friendship add up to nothing less than “love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt. 22:29), and in treating others the way in which you would like to be treated (Matt. 7:12). This book does speak of the good neighbor or the good friend.

Faithfulness

In contrast to the many “fair-weather” friends (14:20; 19:4, 6, 7) that exist in this world, “*there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother*” (18:24). It is better to have one good faithful friend, than to have many reliable professed friends. Unfortunately, some of us feel bad because we only have a couple of real good friends. For a friend that stuck closer than a brother, consider the example of Jonathan (1 Sam. 18:1-4; 19:1-7; 20:17-24; 23:15-18). There is also a warning here about having too many indiscriminate friendships. Remember, the friend who sticks closer than a brother includes Jesus (John 13:34-35).

17:17 “A friend loves at all times”: The true friend is constant, and will tell you the truth, even when it hurts you or them. True friends are faithful even in times of adversity. The verse might also infer that the price of friendship or being truly part of any family is going through times of adversity with others. Are we willing to be a friend to someone who is unpopular at school? “In case the reader should think only of the friendship he hopes to receive, he is urged to give this kind of loyalty, especially to the old friend of the family who may easily be dropped in the search for new company, but whose staunchness would stand any test” (Kidner p. 45). One of the great things about true friendships is that you do not have to pretend to be perfect or someone “cool” in the presence of real friends. True friends will love you, in spite of your mistakes and imperfections.

27:10 “Do not forsake your own friend or your father’s friend”: The verse advises: Recognize and keep family friends, for they may become your best advisors. Every generation of young people is tempted to downplay the wisdom and importance of those who assisted their parents. We naively think that our best friends will be those who are our own age. “One should seek solid, meaningful relationships among one’s neighbors and family, but not focus on people who are fun but lack substance” (Garrett p. 218). We do live in a disposable world, and our children will be tempted to dump friends when those friends seem to become a liability, especially if our friends or the friend of the family is viewed as unpopular by influential voices. But true friendship means appreciating people, not for their appearance, neat toys, or what they can do for our image, but because of who they are.

Honesty

27:6 “Faithful are the wounds of a friend”: There are times when maybe we don’t realize who is the true friend or the true foe. We readily accept the kisses and hugs but reject the wounds despite their source. “We are so afraid of pain!” (Alden p. 190). Judas is the classic example of kisses from the enemy (Mark 14:43-45). The verse infers that there are a good number of phony friends in our world. Instead of wanting to have friends that only say good

things about us, we really need friends who will be honest with us and tell us when we need to correct something about ourselves. 29:5 “A man who flatters his neighbor is spreading a net for his steps”: One’s self-esteem can be ruinously inflated by flattery, “Which entangles its victim, by the craving it induces and by the ill judged actions it invites” (Kinder p. 46). Note, that the person who is being flattered is apparently the one in this verse who is harmed. One of the “traps” in life to avoid is flattery. In our time when so much of an emphasis is place don self-esteem, or a false sense of self-esteem, this verse needs to be taken seriously. We are not doing people any favors by saying positive and uplifting things to them, if what we say is not true. So let us be careful that we do not become so “positive” that we end up creating people who are arrogant and overconfident. 28:23 “He who rebukes a man will afterward find more favor”: That is, if you correct someone, you might have a wait for a thank you years later. Any thanks that a friend gets for this service are likely to be delayed; he must be prepared to wait till “afterwards.”

Counsel

Being a friend means giving true and godly advice (27:9). 27:17 “Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another”: “The image here is striking; as knives are sharpened by other tools of steel, so scholars, artists or athletes can “sharpen” each other by competition, the exchange of ideas, and constructive criticism” (Alden p. 192). “People must not shy away from interaction with their peers since it is an education in itself” (Garrett p. 220). No man is an island, and we do need good friends, the kind who will challenge us to do better, and motivate us towards good and noble qualities and goals. There are friends which sharpen our character, morals, and thinking and then there are people who we seem to dull us into inaction, apathy or skepticism. Which friend are we? When we interact with people, do we muddy the water, or do we offer clarity? Do we bring our wake moral confusion, or a definite direction and a moral compass? Our children might be tempted to shy away from friends that seek to bring out the best in them, such friendships need to be embraced and appreciated. Select the friends that will make you into a better person! And do not resent a healthy clash of personalities!

Tact

Is respecting the feelings of others. Being honest does not means that we have to be mean or cruel. If you need to correct someone then word such correction in a way that you would appreciate if someone were trying to help you. We also need to avoid becoming a pest, such as overstaying our welcome (25:17); trying to cheer someone up at the wrong time (25:20), and not knowing when a joke or kidding has gone too far. (26:18-19).

Remember, all friendships will be tested and the devil will try to divide friends. At this point, we might have the kids make a list of the qualities that make a good friend and they need to ask themselves, have they been acting like a good friend?

Questions for Lesson One

Assigned Reading: Proverbs 17:17; 27:6, 9, 10, 17; 25:17, 20; 26:18-19. Why is it so important that we understand and apply these scriptures?

1. What is a “fair-weathered friend?” What do the scriptures have to say about this type of friend?
2. List some characteristics of a true friend.
3. What makes the “wounds” of a faithful friend so good?
4. List some things in light of this lesson that you need to work on to be a better friend.

Making the application (These questions are for you to ponder over to help make the lessons learn in the scriptures more personal, they will not be discussed in class)

5. How good of a friend do you think you are?
6. What would you do differently?
7. Do you spend more time trying to be a popular or (cool) person when around your friends or trying to be a wise and godly friend?
8. Think of the friends that you have. Does the level of respect that you have for other people go up or down when you are around your friends. Do you try to have a good affect on them (do you try to be a faithful friend)?

Lesson Two

Bad Friends

Even adults can be naïve about how people can influence them in harmful ways (*1 Cor. 15:33*). Our children need to gain the wisdom to detect individuals who could be a dangerous influence, because the book of Proverbs simply assumes that our children are going to encounter the wrong crowd at some time in life (*1:10-19*). Especially notice this last section, for sinners can be very persuasive in their advertising and presentation, and the common pitch is that this is going to be really fun, no one will catch us, you will find more love and acceptance among us than among your own family (*1:14*), and we will get rich in the process.

Angry people

22:24-25 “Do not associate with a man given to anger; or go with a hot-tempered man, or you will learn his ways and find a snare for yourself”: Even friendship must be governed by wisdom. “For all this, his kindness must not overbalance into sentimentality: he must be able to keep his distance from some” (*Kidner p. 44*). Like it or not, it is easy to become like the people with whom you associate. Evil tends to rub off on us much quicker than righteousness. Such an association is particularly dangerous, when we start admiring such an angry man, because it appears that his anger enables him to get his way! This verse and others gives every parent the right to be concerned and vocal about the type of companions that are chosen by their children. Our kids need to learn to be discerning (*Heb. 5:14; 1 Thess. 5:21-22*). It is sad that in modern professional sports, so much anger is tolerated.

The Gossip

11:13 “He who goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets”: The trustworthy person is willing to keep a secret. If the secret involves sin, then the trustworthy person is willing to approach their neighbor privately (*Matt. 18:15*). “Some find the temptation to tell others irresistible and offer juicy tidbits to one person at a time. Others give broad hints or innuendoes which give away secrets to those keen enough to put clues together...only a wise man can be trusted to keep his mouth shut (*Alden p. 94*). Wisdom dictates that some things should not be told. Far from being simply indiscreet, the talebearer/gossip is an informer, out to hurt people. He or she will deliberately betray you (*Lev. 19:16; 1 Tim. 5:14*). Even adults have a difficult time resisting the urge to listen to juicy bits of gossip; we also seem to thrive on such, probably because for the moment it makes us feel superior about ourselves. Hopefully we can plant a seed here to discourage our children from walking down this path. Remember, if someone is talking about someone in your presence, then they are probably also talking about you when you are not around. God also reminds us that gossip only circulates when there are people willing to spread it (*26:20*), which also includes people who are willing to listen as well. Our children need to learn to recognize when gossip is happening and when to either walk away from the conversation or put an end to it and admonishing the speaker to quit.

Fair Weather Friends

14:20 “The poor is hated even by his neighbor, but those who love the rich are many”: “Expresses the unfortunate truth that greed is a more compelling trait than generosity; people

are more eager to have rich friends than poor ones...Do we avoid poor neighbors? Do we covet attention from the rich? Do people want our attention because we have money? Have we bought our friendship?" (Alden p. 114). This truth is clearly seen in the number of "fan-clubs" that exist, and the number of people who are eager to meet some famous person. Compare with James 2:1ff. This desire to have all the "right" friends can start yearly in life, and is nothing more than seeking to manipulate people for our own personal advantage. Our kids need to remember that what is popular in the world is often despised by God.

19:4 "Wealth adds many friends": Compare with 18:23-24 and 19:6, 7. Nothing is new, people have always run after the wealthy and coveted their favor. "People will run after the rich, hoping to gain something; but they will avoid the poor, fearing that the poor might be trying to gain something from them" (Gaebelein p. 1031). The verse should really make us reexamine our own circle of friends. Are we ashamed of those who are less fortunate? Do we have any poor friends? Our society often talks about discrimination based on race (and rightly so,) but there is also a tremendous amount of discrimination based on greed. Compare with what Jesus said in Luke 14:12-14. Instead of entirely basing friendships on what others can do for us, we should base friendships on what we can do for others. In our friendships let us try to become servants, rather than those who are being served. The verse also reminds us that people can come out of the world wood work when we start to prosper in life, there are many fair-weather friends who will flock to us when times are good and will immediately abandon us when we are no longer well off. Our children need to discern when people are simply trying to use them, or when people only like them for their toys, or other possessions. Compare with 19:6-7.

Too many friends?

18:24 "*A man of too many friends comes to ruin*": Yes, one can actually have too many friends, that is, one can be careless in their selection of friends, or one might be trying to impress the wrong people. Jesus said, "*Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for their fathers used to treat the false prophets in the same way*" (Luke 6:26). Our children need to learn that serving God will create enemies (John 15:18 "*If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you*"). Instead of trying to be popular, our children need to try to be good, in so doing they will attract good friends and equally turn off the wrong kinds of friends. This is especially true when dating. The Christian young person who is upfront and honest about their convictions will naturally attract someone who is truly interested in them for the right reasons and will also naturally discourage the curiosity seekers and those who impure motives.

Remember, the most important friend to have is God! (James 4:4; 2:23). Make sure that you are God's friend and you will always have the right kind of human friends. Human friends will come and go, people will move in and move away, and some of your friends will change over the years, but God will be your constant friend if you are true to Him.

Questions for Lesson Two

Assigned Reading: Prov.; 11:13; Matt. 18:15; Proverbs 14:20; 18:24; 19:4; 22:24, 25

1. On a scale of 1-10 (10 being very important) how important would you say choosing the right friends would be? Explain your answer using scripture.
2. Why does the Bible say being an angry person is so bad? How can this be harmful to a friendship?
3. When a friend needs your help or seeks your advice and you are not sure what to tell them or do for them, what are some ways that you can help your friend and still avoid gossip? (i.e. without telling your friend's problem to another person to see what they would say)
4. Explain why having too many friends can be a bad thing? Use scripture to support your answer.
5. According to Psalm 119:63, what are the most important criteria for choosing companions or friends? Why? (Hint, consider James 4:4)

Making the application (Questions for you to ponder over to help make the lessons learned from the scriptures more personal. This will not be discussed in class)

6. List some things that "fair weather friends" tend to be attracted to. According to your list, have you been or are you guilty of being a fair weather Friend? If so, what are some changes you can make in order to be a true friend? It may be wise to also consider how many of your friends are "fair weather friends" and see if you can help them to learn to be true friends.

Lesson Three

The Wise Man, Loving Wisdom

“The Book of Proverbs opens by breaking up the plain daylight of wisdom into its rainbow of constituent colors” (Kidner p. 36). James talks about praying for wisdom (James 1:5), yet this does not mean that wisdom simply falls from the sky or naturally comes with age.

The Starting Point

1:7 “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.”

This thought is also found in many other passages (Prov. 9:10; Psalm 111:10; Job 28:28). While the world may contain many “clever and crafty” people, there is a big difference between true knowledge or wisdom and human cleverness. The initial step or starting point of real knowledge is a heart that holds God and His Word in the highest esteem and respect. “Knowledge, then, in its fullest sense, is a relationship dependent upon revelation and inseparable from character...When we fence off (as we must) limited fields of knowledge for special study, the missing context must be remembered, or our knowing is precocious and distorted, as at the fall, and we end up knowing less (3:7; Rom. 1:21, 22), not more” (Kidner p. 59). Not that Solomon did not leave God in the Temple, nor was God relegated to one day of the week or certain time of the day. “The Bible’s assessment of a smart person without God is ‘fool’ (1 Corinthians 1:20), and the humblest, least literate, untutored, but pious person is, in God’s eyes, truly wise. How reversed we usually have it!” (Alden p. 22). What this passage says is so true! The foundation for learning, not only the Bible, but virtually every subject is humility towards self and reverence towards God. So many fields of knowledge can become instruments of evil, when this basic principle is discarded (like evolution in a biology class). When medical technology will be often used for evil purposes such as suicide, abortion, eliminating the physical consequences of fornication, sex changes and the attempt to create a master race.

This means, that one can never be truly wise who does not recognize their own limitations and submit to God. Holding God in awe is the first and most important step towards a happy life. Are our students humble? Are they impressed with God, or are they most impressed with others or themselves? A child “wise in his own eyes” is headed towards trouble (Prov. 3:7). Real wisdom means that a person had learned that the answers to life are not to be found in one’s own heart (14:12; 3:5), but rather in God’s understanding.

Wisdom is Hard Won

While wisdom is for anyone who wants it (87:1-2) and even fools and the naïve are invited (8:5; 9:4-6), it is as costly as character. Our pursuit of wisdom cannot be half-hearted, we must love it (8:17), and diligence is required (8:17). One must be hungry and eager (2:1-5), and an eager learner, waiting every day for another lesson (8:34). In truth, wisdom is for serious disciples only. Let us remind our students that the meaningful things in life require effort and hard word. Do our children really want to be wise? What will they fall in love with, the cheap, temporary and easy to obtain, or God’s wisdom?

Always Learning

9:9 *“Give instruction to a wise man and he will be still wiser, teach a righteous man and he will increase his learning”*

Note that the wise man is not the man who knows everything (the scoffer thinks he knows everything) and neither is the wise man a perfect man, for the wise man might need to be corrected now and then. What makes him wise and what will increase his wisdom is his attitude towards his faults and correction. He or she has the courage to honestly look at themselves, and the courage to seriously listen to constructive criticism. The wise man never resents the truth! This also means that it is very hard to offend a wise man, he or she is teachable to the end. The priority in their life is not comfort or some false view of themselves, rather it is conformity to what is right. The wise meekly receive the Word (James 1:21). They have a love for the truth (2 Thess. 2:10-12). To them the important thing is that God is always found to be right (Romans 3:4). The wise person – teachable, every learning right up to the end of their lives. Always progressing, always improving.

What is the attitude among our students concerning learning? Do they resent it? Do they have a hard time listening to advice? Are they appreciative when their parents or others try to correct them, or, are they like the scoffer and the fool who does not want to listen? Wise men love someone who is trying to help them (9:8).

Devotion

Wisdom is not for the person who thinks they have arrived (has all the answers, does not need any help). “He thinks he has arrived and indeed he has, for he will never get a step further” (Kidner p. 38). Wisdom means truly wanting to be a better person. Notice that in 9:9 the wise man and the “righteous man” are the same person. One cannot gain true wisdom if one does not develop a love for goodness. Do our children “love” goodness? (Matt. 5:6). This includes being open to God’s commandments (10:8), accepting God’s discipline when it comes and not resenting it (3:11ff), listening to advice, because such a person values goodness and the truth enough to pay the price for having it (23:23).

Are the students in the class moving each day closer to wisdom or closer to folly for those are they only real choices.

Questions for Lesson Three

Assigned Reading: Prov. 14:12; 3:5; 9:9-12; 2:1-5; Prov. 10:8; 15:5; 17:10.

As a test for this lesson circle the answer which best describes how you respond in each situation. This test is for your own reference; your answers will not be discussed in class. But, the questions themselves will be discussed so it would be a good idea to have thought about them before class.

1. When someone seeks to give you advice concerning something that you are doing do you:
a. Appreciate the advice, b. Resent their advice?
2. When someone challenges you to correct your actions or even your knowledge of the scriptures are you: a. Willing to be corrected, b. Offended by the challenge?
3. When you are faced with decisions in life do you: a. love goodness (do only what you know is absolutely right), b. Walk the line of sin (do things that you need to stretch to justify such as watching bad movies or doing things that might be wrong but aren't specifically stated as being wrong)?
4. When working with people on a project or on a job of some sort do you act: a. Humble (by taking time to consider other people's ideas and suggestions, or being quick to hear and slow to speak), b. as if you know it all (by spending more time trying to prove that you know what you are doing rather than allowing others to use their knowledge and experience)?
5. When in a group of people do you act more like you: a. want to be a good person, b. want to be popular? (Hint, if you spend a lot of time trying to get people to laugh at you or getting their attention, you're probably not trying to be a good person)
6. When doing things for people to do you do them: a. to please God, b. to please people?
7. When faced with a dilemma do you make your decisions base on: a. fearing the Lord, b. fearing what other people might think?
8. How would you best describe yourself: a. Teachable, loves to learn, b. Hates to read, hates to learn?

Lesson Four

The Fool

Certainly no one wants to be considered a “fool,” yet that feeling alone does not keep one from becoming one. Children are born with foolishness in their hearts (22:15) and unless godly learning takes place the only predictable outcome is a full grown fool. The Hebrew word rendered “fool” occurs nearly 50 times in this book and seems to mean one who is dull and obstinate; “but it must always be remembered that the book has in mind man’s chosen outlook, rather than his mental equipment” (*Kidner p. 40*). That is, God is not talking about someone with a low IQ or a slow learner, but rather someone who refuses to listen to God. Often the person who is a “fool” is the person who thinks that they are smarter than everyone else. Let’s see some specific traits or attitudes that God links with foolishness to make sure that we are not headed in that direction and that our children are not headed there either.

1:7 “Fools despise wisdom and instruction:

They do not like to learn (1:22), they are offended when people try to give them advice (9:7), they are lazy when it comes to making the effort to learn and as a result they become gullible (14:15 “*The naïve believes everything*”), that is, everything else besides the truth. There are different ways of becoming a fool. One is to naively believe everything you hear. We need to examine carefully that we hear and compare it to the teaching found in Scripture (1 *Thess. 5:21-22; Matt. 10:16*). “Faith is wonderful, but faith in the wrong think or person can be eternally disastrous” (*Alden p. 112*). God isn’t glorified when we are gullible, and neither are believers to be mind-numbed robots. A wise person weighs the evidence carefully and really thinks about what he or she is going to commit themselves to. Remember, if we do not fall for the truth, we will fall for everything else. Please note that the empty-headed person will end up wrong headed! (14:18).

14:16 “The fool is arrogant and careless”:

Being cautious is a good thing, but how often does the world glorify the person who is reckless, self-assured, overconfident and boastful? A wise man deliberately shuns evil (3:7; 8:13; 16:5). This proverb is like the statement, “Fools rush in where angels fear to tread.” “Courage and an adventuresome spirit may be admirable at times, but only a thin line separates them from recklessness and unnecessary risk-taking” (*Alden p. 113*). One of the marks of folly is overconfidence in one’s own ability or wisdom.

15:21 “Folly is joy to him who lacks sense”:

“This saying brings out the element of choice in the career of the fool” (*Kidner p. 116*). But how many people argue, “This can’t be wrong, because I am enjoying it so much!” “The fool follows any whim of fancy” (*Gaebelein p. 998*). God says that people enjoy sin because they lack sense, i.e. only an ignorant and narrow-minded (a mind preoccupied only with their own immediate pleasure) person could enjoy what is evil. Sin starts to lose its attractiveness when we understand reality. A wise man does not see the pleasure in evil that others see, because he understands the cost to himself, others and God. He walks straight, not because he does not

want to have any fun, but rather, because he “understands.” Thus, fools enjoy doing evil and being naughty. Do our students think that it is cool or neat to do something that is forbidden?

1:32 “And the complacency of fools will destroy them”:

Like the person who is “content” to remain a non-Christian or remain in sin even though it is costing them so much. There is a false security and careless ease that is found in life apart from God (*Luke 12:21*).

26:11 “Like a dog that returns to its vomit is a fool who repeats his folly”:

Do we have to be punished over and over before we learn the lesson, or do we simply keep on going back and making the same mistakes? “2 Peter 2:22 quotes this to show that by this action such a person gives himself away. Not his sampling of better things, but his reversion to the lower, is the test of him --- just as the tastes that a dog does not share with man stamp him as unmistakably a dog” (*Kidner p. 163*). In light of *2 Peter 2:20-22*, we are being told that the biggest fool of all is the unfaithful Christian. Sin, any sin, is about as attractive as dog vomit! Kidner’s comment needs to be grasped. Changing your life for a good attitude...is not proof that one has really learned. Even the most hardened sinners can “appear” to have reformed themselves for a time. The real test is time! Did you learn from the past, or have you returned to your former sinful habits? The context of 2 Peter, especially verses 19-20 make it clear that former fools can return to that foolish state if they so choose.

12:11 “He who pursues worthless things lacks sense”:

What are our kids chasing? What do they spend their time upon? Are they chasing after worthless things or do they recognize the things that are eternal and lasting?

17:24 “But thy eyes of a fool are on the ends of the earth”:

The wise man sees wisdom right where he is. The foolish man’s sight is directionless. “The phrase might also mean the fool dreams a lot instead of making realistic plans. He might also make plans which are too idealistic or impractical, but in any case it takes a disciplined mind to make plans that work...The discerning man operates within boundaries while the fool does not” (*Alden p. 137*). “The fool misses the opportunities at hand and is always supposing that somewhere else, something else, is really better” (*Hunt p. 225*). One of the qualities of a fool is the inability to concentrate or fix your attention. Learning, tackling difficult subjects, thinking through a problem – is boring to the fool. Are we like the fool? Do we think that happiness and contentment are always found in another place? Do we spend too much time daydreaming? Are we turned off by subjects and questions that we do need to study and resolve? Various modern expressions are like this proverb, such as “The grass is always greener on the other side.” The fool is the person who refuses to make the necessary commitment to learn.

17:10 “A rebuke goes deeper into one who has understanding than a hundred blows into a fool”:

A man of understanding is a man with a sensitive heart, someone who is very receptive to instruction and realizes their own shortcomings. “Those who are wise will be humbled by a rebuke and learn from it; but not even a hundred lashes will make such an impression on the fool” (*Gaebelein p. 1016*). “The wise are sensitive and learn readily, but a thickheaded fool is unresponsive even after extreme measures of correction” (*Bible Knowledge Com. P. 942*).

Remember, according to the law one could only be beaten with 40 lashes (*Deut. 25:2-3*). There are some people who can't even learn the hard way.

14:9 "Fools mock at sin":

To some people sin is a joke, an out-dated idea, and not for their generation. "When a fool sins, he makes fun of the idea of making amends for it" (*Bible Knowledge Comm. P. 935*). Fools give cute names to moral evil ("gay," "Alternative lifestyle," "Living together," "Significant other," "Compulsive behavior," and so on. They also encourage others to join them (*Romans 1:32*). In addition, fools also mock at the idea of judgment and hell. They also might make fun of what the Bible says or the person who is teaching the truth.

20:3 "Any fool will quarrel":

While there are battles and arguments that we need to fight (*Ephesians 5:11*), the wise man picks those which are essential and which godly man must not avoid. One cannot avoid strife entirely but should avoid every unnecessary confrontation. The wise man tries to have peace with all men (*Heb. 12:14; Romans 12:18*), and seeks to convert the enemy with persuasive and winsome arguments (*2 Timothy 2:24*), "Almost anyone can start an argument, but it takes a truly wise man to resolve issues, avoid strife, and make friends out of enemies" (*Alden p. 148*).

17:12 "Let a man meet a bear robbed of her cubs, rather than a fool in his folly":

In a word, the fool is a menace, "at best, he wastes your time (*14:7*); and he may be a more serious nuisance. If he has an idea in his head, nothing will stop him... Give him a wide berth, for 'the companion of fools shall smart for it' (*13:20*)" (*Kidner p. 40*). Not all fools are equally dangerous, but, "Consider meeting a fool with a knife, or gun, or even behind the wheel of a car; a mother bear could be less dangerous" (*Alden p. 134*). It is easy to become stubborn with some silly idea we have. Are we committed to God and His truth or what we want to do? The fool does not think things through; he gets an idea in his head and refuses to allow anyone to stop him. He is reckless and irresponsible, and does not think about how this is going to affect him or others.

Questions for Lesson Four

Assigned Reading: Prov. 22:15; 1:7, 22; 9:7; 14:16; 15:21; 1:32; 26:11; 12:11; 14:9; 20:3

1. What would you consider as being “worthless things” as described in Prov. 12:11?
2. Why is it so important that parents put a lot of care and consideration into raising their children?
3. What does God think about children who act like they know more about life than their parents?
4. Why is foolish to despise correction? Use scripture.
5. List a few activities that can be considered as folly, but that people still take joy in.
6. What is complacency? How does this destroy a person?
7. What does God mean by “the eyes of a fool are on the ends of the earth?”
8. What does it mean to mock at sin? Give some examples (from scripture or from life experiences) where men have mocked at sin.
9. Why is quarrelling so foolish? Is disputing and reasoning the scriptures the same as quarrelling? What is the difference?

Lesson Five

The Scoffer

The scoffer or scorner makes about 17 appearances in this book. He is often linked with the fool, but also seems to have his own category. “The mischief he does is not the random mischief of the ordinary fool, but the deeper damage of the ‘debunker’ and deliberate trouble-maker” (*Kidner p. 42*).

9:7 “He who corrects a scoffer gets dishonor to himself...Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you”

Note, one is not born a scoffer or predestined to play this role. The fool does not have to become such a person, for the fool can change (9:4, 6). But the scoffer is the person who hears the invitation offered by wisdom (possibly many times) and yet rejects it. This is the person who has determined to remain a fool. “When someone corrects him he responds in an attitude of hatred by lashing out with insulting verbal abuses” (*Bible Knowledge Comm. P. 924*). “He is the person who will not live by wise and moral teachings and is not content to let others do so without his cynical mocking...Strive, insult and abuse are second nature to this cynical heckler” (*Gaebelein p. 949*). “The further one goes with folly or wisdom, the less or the more one will put up with the criticism which is wisdom’s teaching-method” (*Kidner p. 83*). Scoffing can start early in life, one can be tempted very early to tune out the wise advice of parents and teachers. The attitude that hears advice and says, “Yea, yea, yea I know that” is moving towards the spirit of the scoffer. Hopefully we are not becoming so quick to blame others, argue or dispute that we are not even hearing the advice we need. The scoffer attacks those who try to help him, and will not even listen (13:1). Notice in this last verse, that a “son” can be guilty of being a scoffer just as well as full grown adult.

15:12 “A scoffer does not love one who reproves him, he will not go to the wise”:

The scoffer is not as fearless as he pretends! The unbeliever who claims that they are not afraid of the truth, who claims to have an open mind, is actually refusing to learn. “How much do we resent the slightest attempt of other to give us advice? How often do we rationalize it away by thinking, “He doesn’t know what he’s talking about,” or ‘If she’s so smart why isn’t she doing any better?’” (*Alden p. 119*). Compare with *Amos 5:20; John 3:19-20*. Those who claim that they are not afraid of anything are typically people who are very afraid of the truth. Character is demonstrated by continuing to appreciate and love those who give you constructive criticism. As a result of having this attitude the scoffer will never find wisdom (14:6).

21:24 “Proud, Haughty, Scoffer, are his names, who acts with insolent pride”:

“What a picture to describe the man who sets himself up as his own authority against God!” (*Alden p. 158*). Are we too proud to ask for help? Are we embarrassed at not knowing something or do we humbly ask for someone to teach us?

22:10 “Drive out the scoffer, and contention will go out”:

“Disagreement and bad blood sometimes arise not from the facts of situation but from a person with a wrong attitude...That is to say, what an institution sometimes needs is not reforms, but the expulsion of a member” (*Kidner p. 148*). Sadly, our society tends to tolerate and glorify the heckler instead of removing him. “Verse 10 lists three results of getting rid of a mocker: you spare yourself arguments, quarreling, and insults. An old rabbinic proverb says something like this: ‘When a fool leaves the room it seems as though a wise man entered’” (*Alden p. 161*). Are we the type of people who cause problems and create strife, or are we peacemakers and problem solvers? Do we deliberately try to get things in an uproar? Compare with 29:8.

24:9 “The devising of folly is sin, and the scoffer is an abomination to men”:

The schemer in this verse is pictured as a cold, calculating and very active person concerning evil. “The fool is capable of intense mental activity but it adds up to sin’ (*Gaebelein p. 1074*). The verse infers that the fool may be extremely bright, but he or she simply is using all their mental resources of evil. This is the type of person who wants to challenge every moral code. The good news is that sooner or later the public gets tired of such a person. We should not get discouraged when we see dishonest people being able to out-argue honest people in a debate or in a court of law. Often, the schemer is able to defeat His opponents or make them look silly in such a discussion. The reason for this is what such a person is not governed by any set of rules, hence do not play fair.

19:29 “Judgments are prepared for scoffers, and blows for the back of fools”:

The scoffer will be confronted with the God who he or she had mocked all these years. The verse seems to suggest that it is very hard to break from a mocking mode once you have given into such a temptation. There is nothing glamorous or intellectual about being skeptic of God’s truth.

Applications

What sort of personality am I developing: Here are danger signs that I am moving in the wrong direction:

Cynical

Skeptical

Suspicious

Critical

Pessimistic

Complaining

Murmuring

Making fun of holy things

Making fun of sin

Unbelieving

Jaded

Questions for Lesson Five

Assigned Reading: Prov. 9:7; 15:12; 19:29; 21:10, 24; 24:9.

1. Using either a Greek or an English dictionary define what it means to be a scoffer.
2. Why is it impossible for a scoffer to become wise?
3. Using the assigned reading as a help, list a few characteristics that make up the character of a scoffer.
4. How does a scoffer affect a group of people such as the church? What is the best way to fix the damage that a scoffer can do? List some New Testament passages that teach this same principle.
5. What has God prepared for the scoffer?
6. Define five of the danger signs listed in the Applications section of lesson 5.

Personal Application

Of all the danger signs of a scoffer as listed in the Applications section of the lesson, consider which ones may apply to do. When finished write out some solutions or changes that you can make to help you overcome these weaknesses.

Lesson Six

Hard Work and Industry

When I was a child one could go out and pick berries and thus learn how to work, but it seems that many modern children are growing up without any sort of work ethic. The theme for your classroom on this lesson could be “Learn from the ants.” Primarily we are going to look at one set of passages in this section, but they are stuffed with great thoughts, convincing statements, and warnings.

Proverbs 6:6-11

Like getting into ill-advised business dealings and contracts (6:1-5), laziness will ruin our lives as well. “In case of suretyship such an issue is uncertain; there is the possibility of escape, the surety may prevail upon his friend to release him from his obligation, and so he may escape ruin; but with sloth no such contingency is possible, its invariable end is disaster” (P.P. Comm. P. 125). That is, the consequences for laziness are always the same.

The term “sluggard” means, “the lazy one,” in fact, it is a word that even sounds like someone who is slow, hard to move, unmotivated, like an Oregon slug.

6:7-8 “the ants are models of diligence in that they work tirelessly in spite of having no taskmaster to goad them on, and they prepare for winter in spite of having no administration to lay out economic plans” (Garrett p. 96). The ant shames the lazy person. First, they do not need a supervisor, whereas the sluggard won’t work unless he or she is prodded, threatened or constantly watched. The ant “knows the time,” whereas, to the lazy person all time is alike. Lest we are quick to think that we don’t fit into this category, ask yourself this questions, “Do you work as hard as an ant?” Do we have to be prodded to get certain things done? Do we tend to relax or goof off when the boss or mom and dad are not looking?

In addition, our children need to learn not only to work, but to work in such a way that they are proud to put their name on what they have done. Do they clean up their room, or do various chores in a thorough manner or are they trying as fast as they can to check something off a list. They need to realize that people will attach their name and reputation to things that they have done. Not only do they need to take personal pride in what they do, but they need to learn to work in such a way that would please God and not merely men (Ephesians 6:5-6; Colossians 3:22-23).

6:9 The sluggard wastes time and opportunities.

6:10 “A little sleep”: Kidner notes, “He does not commit himself to a refusal, but deceives himself by the smallness of his surrenders. So, by inches and minutes, his opportunity slips away” (p. 42). That is, “I will clean my room after I take a nap, after I play this game, and so on.” Opportunities and time is precious, once the hour passes it can never be regained (Ephesians 5:16).

6:11 “This lesson comes too late. He will suddenly wake to find that poverty has arrived...and there is no arguing with it” (Kidner p. 43).

There does come a time in life when you cannot recover from wasted opportunities, like not working hard in school, getting good grades, saving your money, spending it wisely. There will come a time when you cannot work as long or hard as you used to. There will come a time when your age or lack of experience will prevent you from making a wage that you can live on. “Poverty and indebtedness cling to the slothful like incorrigible beggars who always linger about the house and always want more. Laziness will siphon off resources until the indolent have nothing left” (Garrett p. 97).

Proverbs 12:24

“To put it bluntly, the diligent rise to the top and the lazy sink to the bottom. At the bottom they may be forced to work as if they owed it (or, as if they owned the company)” (Gaebelein p. 973). “Given enough time the lazy man will become the slave to the diligent one. Hard work means being a self-starter (not a clock watcher), a shrewd investor of time and strength, a hearer and responder when opportunity knocks, and a stick-to-it kind of person” (Alden p. 103).

Proverbs 12:27

“A slothful man does not roast his prey”: The lazy man never brings any project to completion. “In each case, whether as non-finisher or non-starter, the indolent man throws away his chances” (Kidner p. 99). To the diligent, everything that they acquire is treated as precious (1 Timothy 4:4). “Some people will never get ahead because of not taking care of what they have” (Hunt p. 149).

Proverbs 22:13

The idea could be that the sluggard comes to believe his own excuses (perhaps there is a lion out there!), and the verse, “Includes such preposterous excuses for the lazy man who doesn’t want to work, that we almost want to laugh. ‘I can’t go to work because there’s a lion outside! ‘Someone might murder me!’” (Alden pp. 161-162). Any excuse, no matter how far-fetched is enough to keep a lazy man from working. And yet, this same lazy person wouldn’t be afraid of the ‘lion outside’ if they wanted to go down to the local tavern. There are a good number of modern day sluggards. Most of us have seen the shows in which some investigative reporter catches the supposed disabled person with a neck brace, who happens to be recreating just find without it. Let us remind ourselves that our excuses for not serving God or sharing Him with others sound just as silly to God.

Proverbs 26:13-16

Be impressed with God’s view of the sluggard. In secular society such a man or woman is at times viewed as misunderstood. They are either too talented and gifted, and that’s why they can’t pay attention in school or a hold an ordinary job. Or they somehow have seen a clear picture of reality, which makes “work” such a useless thing.

26:13 The sluggard doesn’t view himself as being lazy! “Admiration for the wit of this portraiture has to be tempered with disquiet, on reflection that the sluggard will be the last to see his own features here, for he has no idea that he is lazy: he is not a shirker but a ‘realist’ (13); not self-indulgent but ‘below his best in the morning’ (14)” (Kidner p. 163). The verse does remind us that lazy people can come up with outrageous excuses to avoid work. In light of this verse, none of us should be surprised to find that a good number of people are really as “disabled” as they claim. There might not be any lions on the road or in the square in 20th

century America, but there are a host of mysterious aches and pains, and strange diseases that only strike on sunny days, Fridays, and the day before a three-day weekend.

16:14 “The humor in this verse is based on the analogy with a door – it moves but goes nowhere. Likewise the sluggard is hinged to his bed...the turning in his bed is the greatest degree of movement to which he aspires” (Gaebelein p. 1090). “Just as a gate turns upon its hinges, so does the sluggard when aroused turns over (roll over onto his other side) for more sleep” Hunt p. 352). “He looks as if he might be getting up to do something productive, but then he falls back on to the pillows” (Alden p. 188).

26:15 Now, at this point such a man might argue, “I don’t like to be pushed,” “I’m a laid-back type of guy.” If we are tempted to think that this verse might be an exaggeration, “Someone too lazy to eat?” Experience teaches one not to be too surprised at anything!

26:16 The lazy man’s problem isn’t a low IQ, for he considers himself a very smart fellow. “He thinks that he has life all figured out and has chosen the wise course of action” (Gaebelein p. 1091). He thinks that avoiding work is the slightest by their unwillingness to help, lend a hand, assist others, or do something productive. Getting out of working, having somebody else do it – now, that’s being smart! To this person, getting out of work is viewed as outwitting everybody else.

Questions for Lesson Six

Assigned Reading: Prov. 6:6-11; 12:24, 27; 22:13; 26:13-16.

1. What is the definition of a sluggard?
2. The world views a person who is able to gain much with little work as being wise and understanding. Does God agree? Explain your answer.
3. What should be our motivation for not being lazy?
4. What is the best age to learn hard work? Have you reached that age? If so, how do you compare to the bible's example of a hard worker (Prov. 6:6-8)?
5. How does God view those who use the excuse of "being tired" or "not feeling like it" for not getting their work done? Have you ever tried this one?
6. In the gospels how did Jesus say one would be great in the kingdom of heaven? Give a passage. According to Prov. 12:24, what must also go along with being great in the kingdom of heaven? Are you fulfilling both of these?
7. What is Prov. 12:27 talking about?
8. Why is it so hard for one who has succumbed to laziness to learn how to be diligent and hard working?

Lesson Seven

Money and Things

We do live in a very materialistic culture, yet greed and materialism (placing your trust, love and security in money and things) has always been a common temptation (1 Timothy 6:9), even being around in the time of Job (Job 31:24-25). Starting at any yearly age children can start deriving all their happiness and content from toys and things, rather than from God, family, His creation and noble truths.

Prov. 13:11: Such a truth is vividly demonstrated in the lives of people who gamble. Money management is a skill acquired through the “little by little” gathering and wise use of money. So don’t get depressed if you aren’t making money quickly. There is a warning here against wild speculation and the desire to get rich quick or to make a lot of money out of a very small investment. “By fraud” – could also be translated, “in haste,” as in a quick scheme. As they grow up our children will be tempted to want to make a whole lot of money real quick or real soon, or, at any early age or early in their marriage they will be tempted to want to have everything right now. Notice the emphasis upon gathering by “labor.” Christians should not expect to get something for nothing, we should only want to be paid for a task what it is really worth. The person who wants to be paid a whole lot for little effort has a sinful attitude.

Prov. 13:21-22: “Adversity pursues sinners.” Eventually what the sinner sows will catch up to them (Galatians 6:7). The past does catch up, and one cannot outrun the consequences of their evil deeds forever, “and be sure your sin will find you out” (Numbers 32:23). Don’t envy the sinner, because he or she has a lot of spiritual creditors on their tracks. One of the surest ways of generating some “bad luck” in your life is to depart from God. 13:22 Generally, the wealth amassed by good people does make it to succeeding generations. But the wicked, either due to selfishness, internal family squabbling, divorce, or no descendants, end up forfeiting what they have gained. Other passages talk about the wicked leaving their estates to others (Psalm 49:10, 17). Wealth that is unjustly acquired or wickedly used, ultimately finds its way into better hands and better stewards.

Prov. 19:4: Our children need to be prepared to recognize the fact that many people in this world are shallow and superficial. They will run into people who want to be their friends or the friends of someone else simply because of what the other person owns or has. Yes, our boys and girls will be tempted to think that having a nice car will make them popular, but it will only attract the wrong type of friends.

Prov. 11:28: Trusting in wealth to deliver, save, bring fulfillment, happiness, meaning, purpose and so on is a mistake that many people repeat in every generation (1 Tim. 6:9-10; Psalm 62:10; Prov. 23:5; 27:24; James 1:11). In contrast, like a green leaf, the godly man will find fulfillment, refreshment, and true health (Psalm 1:3-4; Jer. 17:7-8). Note, everyone is trusting in something, every man has “faith” in something, and everyone is prescribing to some type of religion. Already, has our culture planted the seed in the minds of our children that “things” will make them happy.

Prov. 22:1: A good name is honorable reputation and is to be valued and appreciated far above having physical wealth. Riches are useless if in gaining them one ruins his or her character. Sadly, many people seem willing to sacrifice their reputation for instant gratification, but how can you be happy if you know that others don't respect you? "Today people who go broke in one city move to another, unmarried mothers leave town to have their babies...everyone is given so much leniency to start over that one wonders how important 'good name' really are" (Alden pp. 159-160). Our own times may will be summed up by the statement found on a popular bumper-sticker, "Does character matter...YET?" "Not the power we wiled, but the love in which we are held, is our proper joy (Kidner p. 146). Envy isn't the same thing as respect!

Prov. 23:4-5: Here is a warning against overwork for the sake of getting rich. "This speaks not against being industrious but against consuming oneself for money" (Bible Knowledge Comm. P. 956). Remember, this was said by a wealthy man! The word "consideration" literally means, "to let one's eye fly toward it." "But the wealth itself can fly like the eagle and thus outstrip all attempts to capture it" (Garrett p. 195). Compare with 1 Timothy 6:7-10, 17. "Wealth Is not less elusive than social prestige" (Kidner p. 151). "Even though a man may become exhausted trying to get rich, what he has amassed could disappear by tomorrow" (Alden p. 168). Unfortunately, in our society many people would argue, "but we have solved the problems of financial instability." Compare with 27:24

Prov. 30:8: The author realizes his own weakness. "Both in his tendency to forget God when life is too easy and to turn in desperation away from God when life is too hard "(Garrett p. 238). "He might have prayed to use poverty or riches rightly, but knows his frailty too well" (Kidner p. 179). The expression, "feed me with the food that is my portion," Sounds a lot like, "give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11). I wonder if we have been too influenced by our culture (Romans 12:1), for how many of us would be content to have simply our daily portion? It seems like we aren't happy unless God gives us a "year's supply." Would we think that God is taking really good care of us if all we had was a daily portion?

Our children, are they "content" or are they learning to be dissatisfied with their blessing? Are they grateful for what they have, or do they seem to be never satisfied?

And do not forget to talk about the really important things in life, such as the value of wisdom (Proverbs 8), or a godly mate (Proverbs 31:10), salvation in Jesus Christ (Colossians 2:3), and a home with God in heaven (Matthew 6:19-21).

Questions for Lesson Seven

Assigned Reading: Prov. 11:28; 13:11, 21-22; 19:4; 22:1; 23:4-5.

1. According to the world “easy money” is one of the best things a person can have (lottery, gambling, etc.). But according to God where does the best money come from? (Prov. 13:11). What makes it so much better?
2. According to God, why should we not envy those who have great wealth? See also Num. 32:23.
3. Many people put all of their faith in their wealth, it is the source of their joy and happiness it is their purpose in life and when their wealth is gone they despair because they have nothing to rely on (1 Tim. 6:9-10; Ps. 62:10; Prov. 23:5; James 1:11). But where does one find true happiness that will never leave them? What if we have nothing, how does that source continue to bring us joy and happiness?
4. What does it mean to have a good name? How is that more valuable than great riches?
5. We discussed the diligence a godly man must have and how hard work is a part of his character, but is it possible for one to over work? What is the difference between the diligence of the godly and the overworking of the fool?
6. How does one become content? This one requires a combination of many answers. Use scripture as much as possible for your answers.
7. Test yourself to see how much emphasis you put on physical things in your life:
 - Do I get upset if I receive a gift that isn't as cool as I would like?
 - Do I resent having to sacrifice something I want so someone else can have something they need?
 - Do I only work hard if I know I'm getting paid a lot?
 - Do I spend more time thinking about what I want (i.e. looking at magazines, catalogues, or window shopping at the mall) than I do thinking about what I can do for other people?
 - Do I get upset when someone else gets something that I want?

If you answered yes to all, or even one of these questions chances are you put too much emphasis on money and things in your life. Take serious consideration of question six and see how you can better yourself for Christ. Paul gives us encouragement in Phil. 4:11-13.

Lesson Eight

Things That Harm Our Bodies

Sadly we live in a time when drugs, alcohol and other harmful things are being presented to our children at a very early ages. One writer noted, “I grew up in a time not far removed from Mayberry. I could ride my bike all over Slaton with absolutely no fear of being assaulted, molested, or abducted. I don’t recall any fences around the playgrounds. I never participated in ‘Drug Prevention Week’ in elementary school” (Focus Magazine 7.1, “Still a Threat,” Russ Bowman, p. 56). And yet the writer of Proverbs does warn young men about the wrong type of girls (5:1, 7:1), running with the wrong crowd (1:11ff), and abusing our bodies with the wrong substances. Apparently, “drugs” have always been a temptation 20:1.

Proverbs 20:1

Some argue that they need such beverages to relax or get in the right mood. Often the world argues that one’s personality is improved by a couple of drinks. It helps a person come out of their shell. It gives them confidence and courage. God doesn’t see courage as coming from a bottle, rather He sees sinful aggressiveness, and the attitude and type of language which is found among scoffers. If it gives a man or woman courage, it gives them the courage to mock God and His standards. In the end, “drugs” will end up mocking the person who uses them.

23:29-35 The real picture of the drug addict:

This is God’s viewpoint of such a person and note that there are no excuses for their behavior. This man does not have disease, rather his drinking is a choice (31). Our society tends to glorify drunkenness (as long as we aren’t driving), but here God gives us the whole truth.

23:29 “Who is miserable, and has sorrow, strife, complaints, bruises, and bloodshot eyes?” (Alden p. 171). So much for the expression, “Happy hour!” What an accurate picture! The local tavern is filled with people who have had a host of personal and relational problems. How many fights happen in bars? How many of those sitting on the barstool are continually complaining about how people have treated them and that they can’t get any breaks or that they had bad luck?

23:30 The expression, “Linger long over wine,” “Describes those who derive comfort and security in knowing that a glass of wine is at hand, ready to deaden the senses” (Garrett p. 197). This isn’t necessarily the bum on the street, rather this can also be the person who says, “What a day – give me a double” or, “I need to go get drunk and blow off some steam.” The word “taste” in this verse can mean to “search out.” Here we see the increasing desire for something stronger.

23:31 The verse admits that alcoholic beverages are very appealing to the senses. So much for the argument, “but I like the taste.” Note, the only way to avoid this temptation, “Do not look on” – that is stay away from it completely.

23:32 After the wine goes down smoothly, after the effects wear off – watch out! Everything hurts; bloodshot eyes and ‘needless bruises’ are the results of beating (or self

inflicted wounds cause by falling down, etc..) acquired when the drunkard couldn't feel them...sorrow, strife, and complaints follow" (Alden p. 172).

23:33 Blurred eyesight, and "oh, the foolish, the coarse, the vulgar, the wicked things that men say when drunk" (Hunt p. 312). Here is the real danger of alcoholic beverages, "One's senses and one's judgment can no longer be trusted" (Kidner p. 153).

23:34 "Physically a drunkard is off balance as he walks. In his stupor he may imagine himself moving like a sailor swaying at the top of a ship's rigging" (Bible Knowledge Comm. P. 957).

23:35 Here is real tragedy. In spite of all this suffering, this man still wants another drink. Here is "addiction!" Again, this isn't merely the bum on the street; this can also be the person who maintains a job, has a family, or the person in college who binges on the weekends. "Man, did I get sick after the party last night – where is the party tonight!" Christians at times fail to appreciate the fact that God has released us from the need to find happiness in some artificial stimulant. Christians can actually find happiness in reality!

Let us also remind our children that God created them and that their bodies and minds belong really to God and not to themselves or the world (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). God wants us to use our mind and bodies like tools or weapons for goodness and truth (Romans 6:16).

Instead of letting the world, or even such things as hobbies or games get the best of their time, God needs to get the best of their mind, love, soul, energy, emotions and so on (Matt. 22:37). In addition, for the younger ages you could spend sometime on eating good foods and being a healthy person, for God needs all the energy they can muster.

Proverbs 23:20-21

Remember, it costs money to eat like a glutton and drink like a drunkard. Sin is expensive in more ways than one. Gluttony is pretty much a forgotten sin. Alden admonishes us, "Is eating a necessity or a hobby? Would you rather eat out or give to the poor?" (p. 170). The verse infers that laziness seems to be a progressive state. The glutton and the drunkard (or the person always wanting to have a good time) finds it harder and harder to concentrate on their work. Living for the next party has become a very addictive lifestyle.

Proverbs 21:17

Note the contrast in these verses. The righteous man seeks to do the right thing, and finds joy as he does so (15). The pleasure-lover strikes out towards joy itself, and finds poverty. Happiness is simply a by-product of doing the right thing. Those who want a happiness divorced from righteousness are destined to find frustration. The verse also reminds us that more is at stake than just a state of mind. Poverty and hardship will be the lot of the person bent on pleasing themselves. Today our society is filled with people who are suffering because they want to be happy and feel good all the time. A love of pleasure will cause one to live above one's means.

Proverbs 31:4-5

"A cutting reminder that an administrator has better things to do than anaesthetize himself" (Kidner p. 182). Yet, even today many leaders are addicted to alcohol. How can we expect fair and just legislation from people who refuse to live in reality? Such beverages will only serve to cloud the mind of a ruler – something that he or his people cannot afford. Garrett notes, "The queen mother does not recommend a free beer program for the poor or justify its

use as an opiate for the masses. The comparison to the suffering poor and to their use of alcohol is meant to awaken Lemuel to the duties that go with his class and status that to describe some king of permissible drunkenness” (p. 246). Verse 5 suggests that when rulers are “partying,” the true interests of the nation, especially the afflicted are forgotten. What a contrast these verses are to the views of secular society, which affirms that political power should have its perks and that real men are those who can drink others under the table.

Questions for Lesson Eight

Assigned Reading: Prov. 20:1; 23:20-21, 29-35; 21:17; 31:4-5.

1. Many people in the world take joy in becoming drunk because they say it relaxes them or gets them in the right mood. What does God say is the true nature of strong drink? (Prov. 20:1).
2. Read Prov. 23:29-35 and summarize the true nature of an alcoholic or drug addict.
3. What is one of the greatest tragedies of being a drunkard (Prov. 23:35)?
4. According to Prov. 23:20, what sin do many people fail to see as sinful today. (Hint, its not drunkenness). What do the scriptures say is the reason for its sinfulness?
5. Many people who become addicted to substance continue in it because that becomes their source of joy. Where does the righteous man seek all of his joy? What does the source of our joy have to do with addiction? Why?
6. What was Paul's attitude toward addiction? (1 Cor. 6:12, 13)
7. In Prov. 31:4-5 what is the reason God says strong drink is not for kings? Does this apply to us? How? Use scripture to prove your answer.

Lesson Nine

Good and Bad Words

It is easy to take words for granted or attach very little importance to them. We live in a culture that is saturated by a “so what” sort of attitude. In addition, the peers of our children are being taught that in order to make a point or get someone to listen you need to say a bad word now and then. Children can also become fixated by “forbidden” words to the point that they are almost worshipping, or at least finding glee in saying a bad word or at least hearing one. Children can also learn at an early age to be very unkind and cutting in their speech, hopefully we can reverse any trend in that direction. Added to all this, the choice of words in most modern movies and Television shows and popular music is all the wrong kind.

The Power of Words

Prov. 18:21: We often forget that the tongue is a dangerous tool. Our society tends to feel that saying any thing that you want is a harmless exercise. A popular sacred cow is the attitude, “This is my opinion and nobody can judge me for airing it.” This verse reminds us that people can be destroyed by mere words. Look at the wars that have been started because of mere words. Look at the damage done because many people simply believed the words of a certain ideology. Look at all the lost people in the world, lost because they are listening to the wrong words.

Prov. 12:18: Rash words are those which are spoken without thinking. A wise man or woman will not cause harm by their reckless talk. Words which heal are faithful, true, gentle, kind, uplifting, encouraging and honest. Many people though believe that if they have been wronged, they are justified in striking back. Compare with Ephesians 4:29. The right words, true and kind are so powerful that they can actually change people (15:1; 12:18 “brings healing” 12:25 “a good word makes it glad”). Our children, do they encourage others with their words or are they tending to tear each other down? “Above all beliefs and convictions are formed by words, and these either destroy a man or are the making of him” (11:9; 10:21)” (Kidner p. 46).

Prov. 10:19-21: “Many words, transgressions are unavoidable”: Words, use them sparingly! Compare with James 3:2-8 and Matthew 12:36 “every careless word.” “Although the wise person gives sound advice, wisdom is found more in those who are silent than in those who are verbose” (Garrett p. 121). Keep this verse in mind when you hear modern society telling us to “air all our feelings, vent our frustrations and get everything off our chest.” Talking is good but what is our motive for wanting to vent? Being frustrated or upset still does not give us the right to say things that are foolish and sinful. God feels that a sin can be ceased an addiction can be overcome without spending 20 years talking about it (1 Corinthians 6:11). In addition, when people “vent,” often God is wrongfully accused. 10:20 Your words are worth what you are worth! “The good man’s words are like silver; scarce, beautiful and valuable” (Alden p. 88). Too many people think that they have something wise to say – without being wise themselves. You cannot offer what you do not have; you cannot speak words which are nobler than the condition of your heart. Not to mention their words, even the thoughts (heart)

of the wicked are not worth anything. “What the righteous say is infinitely more valuable than what the wicked intend” (Gaebelien p. 956).

10:21 “Feed many”: You will never know how many people that you truly helped. Discouraged preachers, teachers, elders and deacons need to keep this verse in mind! Compare with 1 Timothy 4:16. The word “feed” infers that some people are listening when you do speak! It infers that there will always be people who realize their need for God and sound teaching. (Proverbs 15:7; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:29; Hosea 4:6).

How quickly bad words spread: 16:27 “Worthless”: We can make ourselves worthless to God. “Digs up evil”: Digs for scandal and gossip. Literally, “digs for calamity,” which suggests the effort he puts forth to dig a pit to trap others. For words that “are as a scorching fire,” see James 3:5-6. 16:28 Because of his slander and gossip, he causes close friends to doubt and distrust each other. 16:29 Such a person will also corrupt their own neighbors (Romans 1:32). (“Entices”: Evil is also out trying to convert people. Sin is typically never content to sin all by itself. The sinner will typically try to get others to join them. 16:30 “By winking and pursing his lips an evil person signals to others nonverbal clues (facial gestures) to communicate his intentions” (Bible Knowledge Comm. P. 941). Do our students do this are they learning the winks and gestures of the world? Are they becoming deceitful in the signals they send? The verse reveals the “wealth of meaning, and of mischief, that can be disseminated without a word spoken” (Kidner p. 122). And God doesn’t accept the excuse that is so often offered, “But I didn’t say anything.”

God hates dishonest words and actions: 6:12-19

The weakness of words

- They are no substitute for deeds: 14:23
- They cannot alter the facts: 28:24
- God does not like excuse makers: 24:12
- They cannot move a person to act, the listener still must make their own decision (29:19). “The other side of the matter is that evil words are subject to the same handicap. The most spicy gossip has power over the listener only in so far as he is himself ‘an evildoer’ and a walking ‘falsehood’ (17:4)” (Kidner p. 47).

The Marks of good words

- Honesty: 27:5-6; 28:23
- Few: 17:28; 10:19
- Calm: 17:2; 18:13; 15:1; 25:15
- Apt: 15:23

Our children need to learn that speaking is an art, a craft, and they need to become skilled craftsmen picking right words to encourage others, convict them, admonish, teach and bring back the lost.

The making of good words

- Study: 15:2, 28

Do our children ponder before they answer?

- Character: 4:23

The “heart” also includes the mind, the will, the emotions, the whole inner being (3:5). Jesus stated the same truth in Matthew 6:21; 12:34-35 and 15:18-19.

Carefully chose what you will value, because what you prize, value and believe in will naturally control every other aspect of your life. What you treasure or cherish in your heart will set your priorities and will determine what you do with your time, talents and money.

Today we are faced with many people who claim, “My personal beliefs in no way influence any of my decisions,” or my performance of certain business, secular or professional duties. What a foolish statement! It is impossible to keep the convictions of the heart from remaining silent. “Here the word ‘heart’ means more than mental or emotional capacity; it also encompasses one’s values” (Bible Knowledge Comm. P. 914). Before we protect or guard anything else – let us make sure that we have guarded our hearts. “Keep thy heart more than any other keeping” (P.P. Comm. p. 91). Because our habits, lifestyle and eternal destiny will all be determined by what we allow ourselves to believe and value. There are too many people who somehow think that they can live good lives, and yet think evil things. Solomon would agree that Christians need to be reminded that if they are putting garbage into their minds, if they are allowing themselves to watch movies, T.V. shows, etc...which are sending the opposite message than that found in the Scriptures, that they are making a fatal mistake. Someone has noted that when a person says, “You need to be more opened-minded,” in our culture that typically means that someone is wanting to back up a dump truck and use your mind as a mental landfill.

Proverbs 4:24 After thoughts come words: “Yet it is not enough to take care of the first and let the second take care of themselves. Superficial habits of talk react on the mind; so that ...cynical chatter, fashionable grumbles, flippancy, half-truths, barely meant in the first place, harden into well-established habits of thought” (Kidner p. 68). “The only thing worse than evil is evil that tries to look good. Lies, deceit, hypocrisy, and falsehood don’t ever belong in the mouth of a wise man” (Alden p. 48). If we aren’t controlling our tongues, then we aren’t doing a very good job of guarding our hearts. This is one reason why Christians need to be very careful about being sucked into conversations or relationships in which the topic of conversation consists of running down the Church, the elders, the importance of biblical doctrine, and so on. If someone is complaining about the elders, the first question that should cross our mind is, “Why aren’t they talking to the elders about this?” (Matthew 18:15; 1 Tim. 5:19).

Questions for Lesson Nine

Assigned Reading: Prov. 6:12-19; 10:19-21; 12:18; 18:21

1. What kind of power does the tongue have? Why or how?
2. What can we do to teach ourselves to refrain from rash words? Consider the character of the wise man as an example (Ps. 19:4; Prov. 4:4; 22:17-19; Eccl. 5:2).
3. In the world they teach us to “vent our frustrations.” What does God say about venting? What is the godly way of dealing with frustrations?
4. What is the nature of bad words (Prov. 16:27)? According to Matt. 12:36 are these types of words acceptable before God?
5. Words have great power and can do both much good and much harm (Matt. 12:35). But in what sense are our words weak?
6. How can we keep our words from being weak?

Lesson Ten

How We Affect Our Parents

Our Children need to realize how their actions can either bring joy or heartache to their mom and dad. While some children are afraid of upsetting their parents, children really need to be sensitive to breaking the hearts of their parents. That is, “I am not going to do this sin because it is wrong and it would hurt my parents.”

Prov. 10:1: Once again it is asserted that Solomon is indeed the author (1:1). From this verse we learn that parents cannot truly disown their children. Concerning a fool, Kidner notes, “Some people, however, cannot disown him; it is their tragedy. To his father and mother the fool brings sorrow (10:1; 17:21), bitterness (17:25) and calamity (19:13). It is the price of living \him; but it cause him no qualms – he despises them (15:20)” (p. 40-41). Raise your children right, because you cannot emotionally distance yourselves from their choices. Children have the ability to bring us tremendous pride and joy, or deep heartache and sorrow. In addition, let us hear no more the selfish excuse, “I’m only hurting myself.” “A family will thrive if the children are diligent in their work but collapse if they are lazy or resort to crime” (Garrison p. 117). This verse also helps to explain why parents are often willing to spend everything they have in the hopes of saving a child.

Let us remind our children that they have an obligation for keeping peace and building a happy home as well as their parents. Are they causing problems or solving problems?

Prov. 15:20: The verse really captures the callousness and selfishness of the rebellious child. Such a child does not love their parents. “Here rather than stating that folly in a son grieves his mother (as in 10:1) that reaction on her part is implied and the fool’s attitude toward her is stated” (Bible Knowledge Comm. P. 938). But how often does our society make excuses for the rebellious child? How often do relatives and friends say, “But they are a good kid, and I think that they do love their parents?” How can you love your parents and be breaking their hearts at the same time? Just like you cannot love God and be breaking His commandments at the same time either (John 14:15).

Prov. 20:20: The Law of Moses provided the execution of those who curse parents (Exodus 21:17); Lev. 20:9). While such an execution is not administered today, it is clear that God hates the foul mouth and disrespectful child (Romans 1:31). “His lamp will go out in time of darkness”: His lamp will be snuffed out and he will be left in pitch darkness. “That image may be more gentle than the one used in 30:17 (where children who curse parents are eaten by vultures or have their eyes pecked out by ravens), but the point is the same” (Alden p. 151).

Prov. 28:24: “Jesus showed that there are refined ways of incurring this guilt (Mark 7:11)” (Kidner p. 172). Compare with Paul’s strong words in 1 Timothy 5:4, 8. Yet when people are selfish they can rationalize away even the most glaring and obvious sins. The man who is trying to rob his parents in this verse might be the person who is trying to prematurely gain control of the family property through some form of pressure and in the process reduce the parents’ possessions and standing in the community. “He can say, ‘It’s not wrong,’ because he could reason that it would be his some day anyway” (Gaebelein p. 1109). Greed will move us to violate the most basic moral principles and will also more us to place wealth e even before

our parents. Modern application: Do our children secretly go through mom's purse looking for some spending money?

Prov. 30:17: Severe punishment awaits those who show disrespect for their parents. The inference appears to be that the birds picking out the eyes implies that the corpses lie unburied. Teenage rebellion, or rebellion at any age, isn't something "natural" or cute. The world tempts children to make fun of their parents and to be ashamed of being with their parents. In contrast, God demands respect and honor (Ephesians 6:1-2). In addition, note the word "curse." When parents lay down the law, do our children say things behind mom and dad's back? How do they talk about their parents when they are around their peers?

Prov. 17:21: This verse infers that parental training can only go so far. There are children, despite good training who insist on being foolish. Parental sorrow concerning such a child really never ends. Think of the sorrow that Cain brought to Adam and Eve, Absalom to David, and Hophni and Phinehas to their father Eli. A son or daughter may grow up and be very good at some secular task, but if they have turned their backs on God, such cannot relieve the sorrow experienced by godly parents. Nothing can make up for a lost soul. Let us stress to our children that the most important thing they can do in life is be a faithful Christian, and regardless of what they might accomplish otherwise, no earthly accomplishment can make up for unfaithfulness.

Prov. 27:11: A wise son or disciple will enable a father or teacher to defend himself against his critics. Children sometimes fail to realize that others will or have accused their father and mother of being poor parents. Parents and teacher are usually held responsible for the faults and weaknesses of their children or pupils; but any parent or teacher criticized that way takes pleasure in pointing to godly children or pupils. Such is proof that he or she has not labored in vain! Along this line see 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20 and 3:8. "In other words, his son will either publicly disgrace the father or enable hi to stand proudly before even his enemies" (Garrett p. 219). When we are young we can forget that our behavior and attitude can either discourage our parents and move them to retreat, or give them great incentive to stand up and be counted even during intense criticism.

Do our children realize that the reputation of their parents is wrapped dup in the reputation of their children?

Prov. 23:24-25: The connection from the above verse would be that godly parents value children who buy the truth (23:23). No other parental accomplishment is greater than for one's children to become faithful Christians.

Practical Application

Have the students make list of the things that they can do to bring joy into the lives of their parents. How can they make the lives of their parents a little easier?

Questions for Lesson Ten

Assigned Reading: Prov. 10:1; 15:20; 20:20; 30:17; 17:21; 27:11; 23:24-25.

1. On a separate sheet of paper, make a list of things you can do that will bring joy to your parents. What can you do to make their lives easier?
2. In what way does a wise son make his father glad? How would he differ from a foolish son?
3. We see the way God feels about rebellious children in the way He commanded them to be dealt with under the Old Law (Ex. 21:17). However, in what way is the rebellious child's punishment greater today than under the Law of Moses? Why?
4. What constitutes "robbing" our father and mother? Where the Pharisees guilty of this in Matt. 10:3-7?
5. In light of the last two verses, at what point or age are we no longer bound to respect and honor our father and mother? (Hint, leaving father and mother in Gen. 2:24 does not affect this respect and honor)
6. Many times children will dismiss the instruction of their parents because they believe their parents do not understand what they are going through. Is this an acceptable argument before God?
7. Even when we think our parents are wrong, or do not know as much as we do, how should we treat them? Give scripture for your answers.

Lesson Eleven

How to react to discipline

One of the most important lesson to be learned in life must be learning how to correctly respond to correction

Prov. 3:11-12: Here is a blessing of a different nature, a blessing in disguise – chastening. But it is easy to resent correction, or resent the God who allows it to happen. “The pianist, artist, or athlete who accepts and acts in response to criticism is the one who excels; it is never easy to be corrected, but to be mature enough to take it and do something about it is a mark of wisdom...A child who is being spanked usually doesn’t believe the parents who says he is doing it because he loves him” (Alden p. 39). “To loathe the correction of Jehovah is to allow it to completely estrange us from Him. We faint under it when, by dwelling or brooding over, or bemoaning the trial, the spirit sinks to faintness. To faint at correction ignores the belief in the truth that ‘all things work together for good to them that love God’” (P> P. Comm. P. 58). But how many times do we say in the midst of trial, “God why did you allow this to happen to me?” Trial and testing for the believer, is actually proof that God loves you, and not the opposite! (Hebrews 12:5-11). Correction can take the form of hardships and persecution. Hence it is pure unbelief to argue that if God really loves me He would never allow anything bad to happen to me. God does allow negative things to happen to us in life, for the purpose of making us better and stronger. Read also Hebrews 12:7-11.

Our children will certainly run into peers who are never disciplined, what they need to realize that children who are never spanked are not lucky, rather they need to be pitied. Having parents who correct you is proof that they really love you (Hebrews 12:7-8). That is, mom and dad love me enough that they will correct me when I do wrong.

Prov. 29:15: Note that God believes in both kinds of discipline. Mere verbal correction won’t get the job done, but neither will simply punitive discipline. There must be a good balance between communication, instruction, encouragement, and the last resort. An occasional spanking is a healthy thing in any home, but children who aren’t corrected will end up shaming themselves and their parents. “Those who do not discipline their children suffer grievous embarrassment; those who do will be at ease, able to trust their children and delighted with the children’s growth and accomplishment” (Garrett p. 231)). Note that spanking imparts wisdom! It doesn’t teach children to be violent or hateful, rather, it imparts wisdom. A child who gets his own way or who is left to himself is allowed to do as he pleases and have whatever he wants. Early on in life children must learn that they can’t always do what they want, that the world doesn’t revolve around their needs, and that they can’t always have what they want. The verse infers that children aren’t born with an inherent sense of knowing which is the right way and which is the wrong way. It is naïve to believe that we can just let children raise themselves and they will naturally find the right path in life.

So instead of day-dreaming about being able to skip school, eat candy all the time, and never have a bed time, our children need to learn that such a life would be foolish and unwise. They

would not become happier, rather they would only become selfish and very unhappy and hard to live with.

Prov. 23:14: The death under consideration could be physical as well as spiritual. Compare these verses with popular modern educational theories. It seems that in the mad dash to make learning “Fun,” many have forgotten that learning takes work and effort! In order to learn there does need to be order and a definite element of strictness present. “The child will not only survive it, eh will survive because of it” (Kidner p. 152). “The text does not justify brutalizing children. Parents who find it only too easy to apply the rod, and especially those who lose their tempers when doing so, should consider Ephesians 6:4” (Garrett p. 196). “Wisdom literature is also timeless in the sense that what is recommended here does not change in the New Testament. Children needed spankings then just as much as they need them today” (Alden p. 170). Please note that self-control and maturity don’t just happen with the physical aging process. We cannot depend on the popular idea, “Well, they will eventually grow out of it.” The process to an unselfish life isn’t easy or painless. Many adults would testify that if one does ‘t receive loving and consistent discipline as a child, the only other way to gain mastery over self is typically to learn it the hard way. Either we can correct our children, or “life” will administer discipline that is often very deadly.

Please note that mom and dad exercise discipline when it is necessary. If you got a spanking, it was because you were doing something that will send you to hell if you keep on that path. When you get a spanking, you are acting like the devil. Your mom and dad are trying to do their best to train you right”while there is hope” (19:18).

Prov. 22:15 Knocking out the nonsense: Note, the verse doesn’t say that a child is born depraved (1 Corinthians 14:20), but children are born immature, ignorant and if not educated or disciplined they can easily become fools. In reflecting back all of us can remember the foolish, unwise, careless, and immature things that we either did or thought when we were children. Like climbing up on the dresser, jumping off the roof, etc. The good news is that such foolishness can be removed by godly discipline. Any child can mature, and develop good judgment and self-control. To me this verse offers a good argument against people who try to excuse sinful behavior on the premise that, “they were born this way.” Clearly, Solomon is arguing that sin isn’t genetic. Be impressed that the purpose of such discipline is to remove folly far from the child. It isn’t enough to merely tell a child that something is wrong, we must convince them that they need to abhor such behavior. Contrary to the claims of Calvinism, a miraculous indwelling of the Spirit doesn’t drive folly from the child, rather, godly and diligent parental discipline which is in harmony with the will of God.

“An inevitable struggle between the individual and the several powers that go to make his individuality, begins in every child at his very birth, and continues so long as his life in the flesh continues. On the outcome of this struggle depends the ultimate character of him who struggles. It is, to him, bondage or mastery, defeat or triumph, failure or success, as a result of the battling that cannot be evaded...It is in a child’s earlier struggles with himself that help can easiest be given to him, and that it is of greatest value for his own developing of character...hence it is that it rests with the parent to decide, while the child is still a child, whether the child shall be a slave to himself, or a master of himself...to leave a child to himself in these earliest struggles with himself, it is to put him at a sad disadvantage in all the future combats of his life’s warfare” (Hints on ‘child Training. H. Clay Trumbull pp. 53-55).

Hopefully our children will realize that God is giving them a great blessing and jump on life by being given godly parents. From an early age they are learning about God and His truth and they are being corrected so being godly will be an easier task as adults. Do they thank God for their Christian parents? Do they want to grow up selfish or unselfish?

Our children are like plants or trees, and good cutting back now and then will only make them stronger and healthier. Or, they are like gardens, and when we discipline them, mom and dad are removing the weeds from their hearts (parable of the sower).

From this lesson, we want our children having the seed in their mind, that parents who discipline are loving and caring parents and that correction helps you become a better person.

Questions for Lesson Eleven

Assigned Reading: Prov. 3:11-12; 22:15; 23:14; 29:15; Heb. 12:3-11; James 1:2-6.

1. Is discipline a blessing or a curse? Why?
2. The world views people who have no discipline as free spirited. How does the bible picture such a person? Use scripture for your answer.
3. Which is better, verbal discipline or physical discipline? Explain.
4. Who pays the consequences when a child is not disciplined properly? Explain.
5. In the world physical disciplining of a child is condemned because many people believe it to be cruel. Is God a cruel God because of Prov. 23:13?
6. In light of the previous question, explain when discipline can be misused. Also explain what is required of true godly discipline. (Hint, consider 1 Cor. 13)
7. How or in what way does disciplining a child save him from death? Explain your answer.

Lesson Twelve

What it means to fear God

The word “fear” can mean many things; we want our children understanding that God wants us to fear Him in the sense of respecting Him and taking Him seriously. If we are sinners then we also need stand in terror of His coming Judgment (Hebrews 10:31).

Fearing God is not a bad thing, rather, it is very liberating. Because a proper respect of God will release one from all lesser fears. The child who holds God in awe will not be impressed by peer pressure, or what people think. In fact if they do not hold God in awe, they will end up fearing everything else (Matthew 10:28). Fearing God will also prevent one from being a coward as well (Revelation 21:8).

Prov. 1:7: This thought is also found in many other passages (Prov. 9:10); Psalm 111:10; Job 28:28). While the world may contain many “clever and crafty” people, there is a big difference between true knowledge or wisdom and human cleverness. The initial step or starting option of real knowledge is a heart that holds God and His Word in the highest esteem and respect. “Knowledge, then, in its fullest sense, is a relationship, dependent upon revelation and inseparable from character...When we fence off (as we must) limited fields of knowledge for special study, the missing context must be remembered, or our knowing is precocious and distorted, as at the fall, and we end up knowing less (3:7; Romans 1:21, 22), not more” (Kidner p. 59). Note that Solomon didn’t leave times of the day. “The Bible’s assessment of smart person without God is ‘fool’ (1 Corinthians 1:20), and the humblest, least literate, untutored, but pious person is, in God’s eyes, truly wise. How reversed we usually have it!” (Alden p. 22).

What this passage says is so true! The foundation for learning, not only the Bible, but virtually every subject is humility towards self and reverence towards God. So many fields of knowledge can become instruments of evil, when this basic principle is discarded. When we fear God, medicine will be used to heal. When we don’t fear God the same medical technology will be often used for evil purposes.

Our children, what impresses them? Are they impressed with God and His works or are they more impressed with modern fashions, music, toys, the opinions of their peers or sports heroes?

God is the Creator, He made us and is the source of all blessings (James 1:17). He gave Jesus to die for us, He is worthy of tremendous respect (Malachi 1:6-10).

Prov. 1:29: One doesn’t end up a fool by accident, and neither is one born a fool or genetically prone to become one. Rejecting God and His truth is a deliberate decision, it takes continual work and persistence. One must “hate” truth, one must deliberately defy God, one must determine not to listen – if one is to become an unbeliever. The word “spurn” means to sneer or turn up the nose at. Fearing the Lord is something we can choose!

Prov. 1:33: Fearing God liberates us from all other fears! Compare with 3:25

Prov. 3:7: Respecting God means turning away from what is wrong. Compare with 8:13. It is not enough to avoid wrong, one must also develop disgust for evil.

Prov. 10:24: Bad things will come to bad people. “What the wicked fears will come upon him”: Even the wicked man who is living it up, still can’t escape from a guilty conscience.

The sinner, who is involved in constant pleasure, still is forced, and still finds himself contemplating the future and eternity (Eccl. 3:11). “In the ultimate sense, it is inescapable, for what the wicked man shrinks from is, in the end, God; and he must stand before Him” (Kidner p. 89). In addition, the sinner will never find complete satisfaction, in contrast all the desires of the righteous person will be granted and fulfilled. The wicked will truly experience everything they dread. “Freedom from fear is such a great blessing; we simply don’t appreciate it until it is taken away” (Alden p. 90).

People can put up a good front. “Many know they are not right, but outwardly they seem to act as if there is nothing to worry about...As instantly as men cry out for God’s mercy when they think they may suddenly die shows they have done some thinking ahead of time about their manner of life knowing it was not right” (Hunt p. 121). So don’t believe the person, who while defiantly rejecting God, claims that they have never been happier. Sinners, are also expert liars. The verse also infers that many people consciously know the choice they have made when they start living apart from God. Many sinners know they have traded the eternal for the temporary and eternal happiness for immediate pleasure.

Prov. 14:26: A healthy respect for God will keep one from temptation and foolishness (1:7). Such a man also demonstrates to his children that there is something stronger and better than what the world offers. A tremendous amount of confidence, peace, security and safety is gained when one is right with God. Children are blessed when their parents have a respect for God. Exodus 20:5, 6 makes it clear that children will reap the benefits of righteous parents if they love the Lord too. The expression a “fountain of life” means that such a man departs from evil, and a healthy respect for God produces and leads to so many other virtues, knowledge, wisdom, purity, holiness, kindness, mercy, and so on. A godly parent is like a fountain in the home, which is continually giving refreshment to the family.

Prov. 15:15-16: Circumstances are not as important as character and attitude. “The finest meat is found on the tables of the rich while vegetables are normal fare for the poor. Yet the menu is inconsequential...what is important is who you eat with; those you love or those you hate” (Alden p. 120). Hence, sacrificing all your principles to climb the social ladder is a foolish decision. Nice things and a beautiful environment cannot make up for a lack of character in the guests or the family. “Many people have found that a home where material possessions are few but love for each other...hatred undoes all the enjoyments that good food might otherwise bring (Bible Knowledge comm.. p. 938). Verse 16 suggests that a family is in trouble when respect for God is missing. Standing in awe of God is a great preventative against worry, anxiety, distrust, hate, strife and so on. This is a good verse if our children complain that they do not have as many material things as the family next door. Having Christian parents is far more valuable to any physical house or possession.

Prov. 29:25: The fear of man ensnares in the sense that one’s actions are controlled or confined by the person who is dreaded. Security in the Lord removes intimidation by man. See John 12:42-43. The desire to please men locks us into transit and imperfect goals. “**The**

proverb's teaching is clear; wean yourself away from other people expect and do what god expects" (Alden p. 204).

Fearing the Lord – releases us from every other fear (Acts 5:39). This verse describes any situation in which one is anxious about not offending another person. “For example, someone might be afraid to oppose the unethical actions of a superior out of fear of losing a job. The verse tells the reader to do what is right and trust the outcome of Yahweh” (Garrett. P. 233).

Our children, are they moving in the direction of being men-pleasers or God-pleasers? (Galatians 1:10). Are they seeking after divine praise or human praise (Matthew 6:1-4)?

Prov. 23:17: “24:1, 19 and Psalm 37:1, 8; 73:1ff. expose the simultaneous admiration and resentment which make up envy, springing from an undue preoccupation with oneself and with the present” (Kidner p. 152). Envy of sinners, wanting to do what they do, and thinking that they are living a happier life, is senseless because they have no hope. Note that envy is a choice, “Do not let.” The remedy for such a temptation is to look up (“life in the fear of the Lord”), and up past the present (“Surely there is a future”). How can anyone envy the lifestyle of a man or woman who is facing eternal condemnation? (John 3:36). Therefore, what are we doing to our children when we start suggesting that God will save people who aren't obedient to His will? If God will save the non-Christian, then Solomon's argument of not envying sinners is false!

Questions for Lesson Twelve

Assigned Reading: Prov. 1:7, 29, 33: 3:7; 10:24; 14:26; 15:15-16; 23:17; 29:25

1. Describe the two basic ways a person can fear God.
 - 1.
 - 2.
2. Where can we find true and reliable knowledge and wisdom? How does fearing God help us to attain that?
3. When one truly fears God is it enough for that person to simply not do what is wrong? What else is required of such a person?
4. The people in 2 Kings 17:33 feared the Lord, but how did their fear differ from that of a wise man? List some ways that people can fear God but still be guilty of the same thing as those in 2 Kings 17:33.
5. The scriptures teach that fearing God and only having a little to eat is far greater than not fearing Him and having a great feast. Why is this true? Of what nature are our blessings? As an on going project you might ponder how you can teach your friends how to understand and possibly understand these blessings.
6. Why and how does fearing the Lord release us from every other fear? Using scripture list those things which prevent us from fearing God in such a way (ex. Pride – because it causes us to fear the way people look at us).