



BIBLE STUDY SERIES

The Book Of
PROVERBS

Modern Narrative Project

A Contemporary Rendering, Context,

Meaning & Commentary

Based on the King James Version

ROOT-TO-FRUIT

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PROVERBS

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BIBLE:ESSENCE

Bible Study Project

The Book Of
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This publication is intended for educational, devotional, and study purposes. Readers are encouraged to consult additional biblical translations and scholarly resources when conducting biblical research and study.

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DEDICATED TO GOD AND MY SON
... MY SON, MAY YOUR HEART FIND THE LORD

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

GEMMA, for opening the door so I could see.

PASTOR PHIL, for acknowledging and encouraging me to believe big and be fearless - giving clarity to the path I was seeing.

PREFACE

First, thanks for picking up this book. If there is anything good in these pages, give credit to God; anything weak or flawed, that’s on me. I wrote this out of gratitude—a small way to give back, hoping maybe it lights the path for someone else, just like Scripture has done for me:

“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psalm 119:105).

My journey to faith wasn’t in a moment of crisis, in despair, or some dramatic story. No lightning bolts, no instant conversion. Honestly, it was more like water slowly carving its path over time.

Back at University, nearly 40 years ago, my friends were genuinely fired up about their faith and invited me along. They, and their invitation for me to believe there is a God, are the reason I got baptised. It wasn’t about church pressure; I just knew I wanted what they had, even if I didn’t truly understand what it was. But one thing was becoming clear to me: I was experiencing something I came to understand as the work of the Holy Spirit.

After University, the real world arrived. For years, my faith stayed quiet and private. I said the Lord’s Prayer every day. I tried to live with an open hand and hoped God had a plan for me, especially when life made no sense. I tried never to judge others too quickly, because I could never know the whole story or what was in another person's heart. God alone sees all things and judges perfectly.

Still, I rarely set foot in church. My life was busy, and I worked most Sundays. I also hardly knew anyone who talked about their faith openly.

I tried reading the Bible, but wrestling with the King James Version just felt impossible. When I was baptised, there wasn’t the choice of Bibles we have today. Sure, I believed there was something bright and life-giving in its words. I wasn't rejecting the King James Bible. I simply couldn't understand much of its language.

Then, a couple of years ago, everything shifted.

I lost my job in a way that wasn’t fair. My father passed away—not long after celebrating sixty years with my mother. My son was also close to a breakdown—he had been working too hard. Soon after that, I moved into my mother’s home so that I could care for her.

I believe Scripture calls us to care for our own (1 Timothy 5:8), and there are times when that responsibility has to come before my ability to attend church. Leaving my mother to attend church is not always safe, and that has made regular attendance difficult.

This has never been a rejection of the Church or of Christian fellowship. Quite the opposite. My heart is entirely with God, and I genuinely believe that caring for my mother is where God wants me to be. She is slowly losing her hearing and vision, with Alzheimer’s taking away more of who she is each day.

It is a hard season, and it continues to be. But I don't resent where I am. With all my heart, I believe this is where I am meant to be, and where I want to be.

The quick succession, timing and intensity of these events in my life began to feel like part of God’s plan for me.

It was then that I found solace in the Bible, just as life felt cracked wide open. And yet, in that brokenness, I noticed what I’d missed before—God actually draws close to people whose hearts are shattered (Psalm 34:18). When I ran out of my own strength, I learned how much I could lean on His:

“My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

The Bible became more than something I was trying to understand. It became something I needed, even a passion. I honestly cannot imagine where I would be now without it.

Caring for my mother meant I couldn’t run from thing to thing anymore, and I like to be busy. It also meant that I didn’t have as much time or access to friends, especially as I now lived in a new area. Life slowed down, and income dropped to just enough to cover bare necessities.

But in that quiet, a new door opened.

I started volunteering as a driver—just helping elderly and vulnerable people who simply needed a lift—and, in many cases, a lift in more ways than one. I also started sharing my faith. It’s a small thing, but it felt right—my passengers lifted me as much as I lifted them, and I felt comfortable sharing my faith.

James reminds us that caring for those in need is an important expression of faith (James 1:27).

That volunteering drew me back to church, and—probably for the first time ever—I found myself having real conversations with God. Not just polite, thank-you prayers that I had always done, but honest ones where I was asking for help. I no longer felt guilty about asking God for help, as though doing so somehow meant I didn't trust the path God had given me.

I was forming a relationship with God.

And something shifted. I started to realise that God doesn't just help; He guides us, and I was beginning to learn to listen (Proverbs 3:5–6). I also started seeing the Bible not simply as a set of instructions, but as a guide for how to live.

I also began to see something about Christian fellowship that I hadn't really considered before.

Human beings naturally form communities. We make friends, find people we are comfortable with, and over time those friendships become established. There is nothing wrong with that. But Scripture calls us to something beyond simply gathering with the people we already know.

My own circumstances have sometimes left me on the edge of those established friendships. Even when I am able to attend church or volunteer, I often have responsibilities waiting for me at home. Sometimes I have to leave as soon as I can. At other times, I stay longer than I should because there is work that needs doing before I can return home.

I don't want that to be mistaken for being unfriendly or uninterested. Quite the opposite. I want fellowship. I want friendship. I want to feel that I belong.

This experience has taught me to be cautious about judging what I see in another person. I may see someone who does not stay, does not talk much, or seems distant, but I cannot know the circumstances behind what I see. God sees the whole story; I see only a small part of it.

That does not mean we should never exercise discernment. There are times when we need to recognise what is right and wrong, protect ourselves or others, and act when something is clearly harmful. But I believe we should be very slow to turn an observation into an assumption, an assumption into a judgement, and a judgement into exclusion. This has become clearer, while studying the Bible.

There may be someone standing on the edge of a church who desperately wants to belong. There may be someone carrying a burden that nobody else knows about. There may be someone searching for God who is quietly watching how Christians treat one another.

And that matters.

There are already enough barriers between people and God without Christians unintentionally creating more.

Jesus gives us a powerful picture of this in the parable of the lost sheep. The shepherd has ninety-nine sheep, but when one goes astray, he goes looking for it. The ninety-nine are not unimportant. But neither is the one.

That image has stayed with me.

If someone is struggling to understand Scripture, perhaps we should not simply assume that they will eventually find their way. If someone is standing on the edge of a Christian community, perhaps we should not simply accept that they are outside it. If someone appears distant, perhaps we should remember that we do not know their whole story.

Sometimes all that is needed is for someone to notice them, make room for them, and make sure they are not quietly left on the outside.

I don't say any of this as a criticism of the Church, and I certainly don't claim to have all the answers. I say it because Scripture has made me increasingly aware that following Christ changes not only our relationship with God, but also the way we see and treat other people.

Perhaps that is one of the things God has been teaching me through this season:

I cannot know another person's whole story, but I can choose not to become another barrier in their way.

So, I decided to really read the Bible, cover to cover.

My memory has always been atrocious, so I started typing out every verse, hoping the hands-on effort would help me absorb the words more effectively. Next to each King James verse, I wrote out what I thought it meant in plain English and started researching to gain more clarity.

Partly, I did it because I'd missed years of church teaching, and because I had put down the Bible in the past because of the frustration of not understanding more clearly the words that I read. But mostly, I did it for my son—he's autistic, he's exhausted, and as his father, I wanted to understand Scripture well enough to explain it to him. So, I decided to tackle my frustration with the Bible head-on.

Breaking it down for him became my main reason for all this—a way to do what Deuteronomy 6:6–7 calls us to:

“And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children...”

After I finished the first chunk, I showed it to my pastor because I wanted to be sure I hadn't missed the mark. He encouraged me greatly and told me to keep going.

So, I did.

Book by book, it grew, and I kept one thing front and centre:

“Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it” (Habakkuk 2:2).

“Let me be clear about what this is, and what it's not.”

This is not a rewrite of the Bible, or any sort of replacement for it. Scripture is the foundation:

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16).

I haven't altered the Scripture itself. Every King James verse is there in full, so you can clearly see what is Scripture and what is my attempt to explain it. What I have written alongside it is simply plain-English meaning and explanation—for people who are new to the Bible, even the young, to help them move towards understanding what is being said.

“Call it a companion, not a substitute. I call it Bible:Essence Project as it is simply that, the essence of the Bible.”

That line matters to me. I’ve tried to make the language simpler, not shrink the meaning. Where a verse is difficult to put into plain English, or where faithful Christians have understood it in more than one way, I try to say so rather than pretend there is only one possible interpretation.

This isn’t a new idea. In Nehemiah 8:8, the Levites read God's law and then explained it so everyone could understand. When Philip came across the Ethiopian man in Acts 8, that man admitted he couldn't understand Scripture without help. And Paul wrote to the Corinthian church:

“Unless you speak words that are easy to understand, how will anyone know what you’re saying?” (1 Corinthians 14:9).

Helping people understand Scripture has always been part of the life of God's people. I'm simply trying, in a very small way, to do the same.

There are many Bible studies and guides written by people who have a passion for God and a desire to share what they have learned. I make no claim to be different in that respect. I am simply another person who has found something in Scripture that I want others to have the opportunity to discover.

I didn’t write this as a scholar, and I don’t expect you to read it as though you’re taking a course. I’m simply an ordinary person whose faith deepened later in life, who still gets stuck on difficult passages, and who wanted to find a way into Scripture—for myself, for my son, and perhaps for you too.

Perhaps coming to a deeper understanding later in life has given me a perspective that can help someone else who is only just beginning that journey.

I’m not claiming to have all the answers, and I certainly don’t want you to take my explanations as a substitute for Scripture. Please check what I’ve written against the Scripture alongside it, and where something is difficult or open to more than one interpretation, I will try to say so.

My hope is not that you take my word for anything, but that my efforts might help you engage with God's Word for yourself.

If you already know the Bible well, I hope you'll forgive the simplicity of some of the explanations. They aren't written because I think Scripture is simple, but because I remember what it felt like when it wasn't.

And if you find that I've misunderstood something, I hope you'll test my words against Scripture, as I have tried to do myself.

I’m not looking for money or recognition. Most of these last few years, I’ve been caring for my mother and using whatever spare time I could find to chip away at this project. In a strange way, the two have gone hand in hand.

My prayer is that these efforts, offered to God, will do the quiet work in your heart that His Word began in mine.

I’m trusting, as Isaiah says, that God's word never returns empty—it always does what He intends (Isaiah 55:11).

Honestly, my hope is simple:

“That these pages help you move from feeling stuck with the text to beginning to understand it—and that, somewhere along that journey, you encounter God, as I did.

I hope you come to feel the love of the Bible as I do, and feel blessed by the wisdom of God’s Word as it shines through its pages.

I am continually in awe of the Bible. Although it was written more than 2,000 years ago, the wisdom it contains is just as relevant today as it has ever been—and, perhaps more than ever, that wisdom is needed now in our world.”

And if that happens for even one person, then all the time and effort that went into these pages will have been worth it.

Don’t worry if you struggle like me to remember Bible verses. Be assured that as you read, the verses will enter your heart, soul — and even your bones!

May God bless you, and may His Word do in your heart what it has done in mine. **Amen.**

Methodology Declaration:

The research for this Bible Study was conducted using a variety of sources, including Bible study plans available through YouVersion, other Bible study books, websites, and AI tools.

AI was used as a research and reference tool, rather than as a means of generating the Bible Study itself. Where AI was used, I used a platform that allowed me to submit the same prompts to multiple AI models and compare their responses. I then analysed and cross-referenced the information provided, with the aim of identifying inaccuracies, inconsistencies, or potential AI “hallucinations.”

The research from these various sources, including the AI-assisted research, helped me to develop my understanding of the subjects discussed and influenced some of my thinking. However, the content and wording presented in this Bible Study were written by me, based on my own understanding, analysis, and interpretation of the research.

If you’ve enjoyed what this Bible study has revealed to you, why not visit my website, where you’ll find many more resources that reveal the wonder and awe of the Bible? www.root-to-fruit.faith

Book Summary: Proverbs

The Book of Proverbs is a collection of ancient wisdom, mostly written by King Solomon, designed to guide people in living a righteous and successful life. Its main message is that genuine wisdom begins with a deep reverence and respect for God. The book presents practical advice on various aspects of life, contrasting the path of the wise with the path of the foolish. It teaches listeners how to make good decisions, act with integrity, avoid pitfalls, and understand the consequences of their choices, ultimately aiming to develop character and moral excellence through divine instruction.

CHAPTER 1

Chapter Summary: Proverbs 1

Proverbs Chapter 1 introduces King Solomon's wise teachings, explaining that the true foundation of all real knowledge is to respect and honour God, whereas foolish people despise good advice and discipline. Solomon warmly urges young people to listen to their parents' guidance and strongly warns them against falling in with bad company who try to lure them into crime and greed, explaining that dishonest shortcuts to wealth only destroy the people who take them. The chapter then personifies Wisdom as a caring guide calling out loudly in the busy streets, urging everyone to turn away from their stubborn mistakes before trouble strikes. Wisdom warns that those who ignore sensible advice will face disaster with no one to help them, while those who listen and make wise choices will enjoy a safe, peaceful life free from fear.

1:1 *(KJV)* The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel;
(B:E Project) This book is a collection of wise sayings from Solomon, son of King David, king of Israel.

Context: This is the title line of the whole book of Proverbs, naming its principal author and setting the historical scene before the purpose statement begins in verse 2.

Meaning: Like a book's title page, this line tells you who's speaking and why you should listen. Solomon was famous in ancient tradition for being the wisest ruler of his time — a king known for sharp judgement and deep insight into human nature. Naming him here isn't about celebrity; it's a signal that what follows isn't abstract philosophy but hard-won, practical wisdom about how to actually live well.

Lesson: I don't hand you wisdom as a distant rulebook — it comes to you through real people, real history, a whole thread running through scripture that all points the same way: towards a life of love and clear sight. Receive what's written here as something meant personally for you, not a museum piece to admire from a distance.

See Also: 1 Kings 4:29-34 describes Solomon's legendary wisdom in more detail; Ecclesiastes 1:1 opens with a similar royal attribution and wrestles with many of the same themes about how to live well.

1:2 *(KJV)* To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding;
(B:E Project) The purpose of this book is to help you gain wisdom and self-discipline, and to help you grasp deep, insightful sayings.

Context: This begins the extended purpose statement (verses 2-6) that explains, before any actual proverbs are given, exactly what this book is trying to achieve for its reader.

Meaning: Notice that wisdom and discipline are paired together right from the start. The book isn't offering clever one-liners for their own sake — it's offering a training

programme for how you think and how you act. 'Instruction' here carries the idea of correction, the kind that shapes character rather than just adding trivia to your head.

Lesson: Understanding, to me, was never about winning arguments — it's about seeing clearly enough to love people well. Ask me for this kind of understanding, honestly, and I will never turn you away for asking.

See Also: James 1:5 promises that anyone who lacks wisdom can simply ask God for it; Proverbs 4:7 calls wisdom the most important thing you can get.

1:3 *(KJV) To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity;*
(B:E Project) It's meant to help you take on board wise, disciplined living — the kind that is fair, just, and treats people rightly.

Context: Continuing the purpose statement, this verse adds an ethical dimension to wisdom: it isn't just cleverness, it's linked directly to justice and fairness towards other people.

Meaning: This is an important corrective for anyone who thinks 'wisdom' just means being smart or getting ahead. Biblical wisdom is inseparable from how you treat others — justice, judgment, and equity aren't optional extras, they're what wisdom actually looks like in practice. A 'wise' person who cheats others isn't wise at all by this book's definition.

Lesson: Fairness isn't a rule imposed on you from outside — it's what love looks like whenever it meets another person's life. Let me shape your sense of what's fair, especially towards people who have less power to demand it than you do.

See Also: Micah 6:8 sums up what God requires as doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly; Matthew 23:23 has Jesus criticising people who keep religious rules while neglecting justice and mercy.

1:4 *(KJV) To give subtlety to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion.*
(B:E Project) It's meant to give street-smarts to the naive, and give young people knowledge plus the ability to think before they act.

Context: The purpose statement now names its intended audience specifically: those who are inexperienced or easily fooled, and the young who haven't yet been tested by life.

Meaning: 'Subtlety' here doesn't mean sneakiness — it means shrewdness, the ability to spot when you're being manipulated or when a situation is more complicated than it looks. Proverbs assumes youth and inexperience aren't shameful, just something wisdom can genuinely fix, if you're willing to learn.

Lesson: You don't have to stay naive in order to stay good-hearted. I want you sharp and discerning, not gullible — real wisdom protects a soft heart, it doesn't require you to grow a hard one.

See Also: Proverbs 22:3 notes that a shrewd person sees danger and takes cover, while the naive walk straight into it; 1 Corinthians 14:20 urges believers to be infants in evil but mature in their thinking.

1:5 *(KJV) A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels:*
(B:E Project) A wise person will listen and gain even more learning; someone with good understanding will pick up sound advice.

Context: Still within the purpose statement, this verse makes clear this book has something to offer even people who are already wise — not just beginners.

Meaning: This quietly challenges the idea that wisdom is a box you tick and then you're done. The genuinely wise person is marked precisely by their continued willingness to learn — it's the person who thinks they've already arrived who's usually in the most danger of stagnating.

Lesson: However much you already know, stay teachable. I have more to show you than you currently have room for — come to me open-handed, not as someone who thinks they're finished learning.

See Also: Proverbs 9:9 says to instruct a wise person and they'll be wiser still; Matthew 13:12 speaks of more being given to those who already have.

1:6 *(KJV) To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings.*
(B:E Project) This book will help you understand proverbs and their meaning, the sayings of wise people, and their riddles.

Context: This final line of the purpose statement (verses 2-6) explains the literary forms readers should expect — short sayings, parables, and puzzling riddles that need working out.

Meaning: This is a hint about how to read the whole book: some of it will be immediately obvious, but some proverbs are deliberately compressed or puzzling, designed to make you stop and think rather than nod along passively. Wisdom you've had to work for tends to stick better than wisdom simply handed to you.

Lesson: I often taught using parables and puzzling stories for the same reason — because truth you have to work for lands deeper than truth handed over too easily. Sit with the hard sayings; don't rush past the ones that don't make immediate sense.

See Also: Psalm 78:2 speaks of opening one's mouth in a parable and uttering dark, ancient sayings; Matthew 13:34-35 notes Jesus taught the crowds only in parables.

1:7 *(KJV) The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.*

- (B:E Project)** Taking God seriously — genuinely respecting him — is where real knowledge starts. But fools sneer at wisdom and refuse discipline.

Context: This is the thesis statement of the entire book of Proverbs — the foundational claim everything that follows builds on, functioning almost like a motto placed right after the introduction.

Meaning: 'Fear of the Lord' can sound off-putting if you picture terror or dread, but that's not really what's meant here — it's closer to profound respect and humility, the recognition that there's something bigger and wiser than yourself, and that your own perspective isn't the final word on everything. That posture of humility, the book argues, is the necessary starting point for any real learning; arrogance closes the door to it before you've even begun.

Lesson: This kind of respect isn't about cowering — it's about finally getting your size right in a universe far bigger than your own ego. Start there, in humility, and everything else opens up to you. Refuse it, and you've shut the door on your own growth before you've even started.

See Also: Proverbs 9:10 repeats this idea almost word for word; Psalm 111:10 and Job 28:28 both make the same claim, that this reverence is where wisdom truly begins.
- 1:8** ***(KJV)** My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother:*
(B:E Project) Listen to your father's teaching, son, and don't abandon what your mother has taught you.

Context: This opens a new section (verses 8-19) — a father's direct, urgent appeal to his son, warning him specifically about falling in with a violent criminal gang.

Meaning: Notice both parents are named as sources of wisdom, which was a notably balanced view for its time. This isn't blind obedience being demanded for its own sake — the whole rest of the section makes clear the parent's motive is protective love, trying to keep the son out of real, physical danger.

Lesson: I honoured my own parents, even while I pushed back hard against religious leaders who twisted good rules into heavy burdens. There's a real difference between blind obedience and treasuring people who genuinely want the best for you — let that shape how you listen to the people in your life who actually love you.

See Also: Ephesians 6:1-2 tells children to obey their parents, calling it the first commandment with a promise attached; Exodus 20:12 is that original commandment, to honour your father and mother.
- 1:9** ***(KJV)** For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck.*
(B:E Project) This teaching will look good on you — like a beautiful wreath on your head or a fine chain round your neck.

- Context:** The father's appeal continues with a striking image: wisdom pictured as jewellery, something that adorns rather than restricts.

Meaning: There's a deliberate irony worth noticing here — 'chains' usually mean bondage, something that restrains you. But this verse flips that on its head: this particular kind of chain is a decoration, something that makes you more attractive and more free, not less. The wisdom this book offers isn't a cage; it's presented as something that genuinely enhances your life.

Lesson: What looks like restriction at first — taking advice, staying teachable — I promise becomes your beauty rather than your burden. Trust me that real discipline, held rightly, decorates a life instead of caging it.

See Also: Proverbs 4:9 uses the same image of wisdom as an ornament and a crown; 1 Peter 3:3-4 says true beauty is found in inner character rather than outward decoration.
- 1:10** ***(KJV)** My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.*
(B:E Project) Son, if wrongdoers try to lure you in, don't go along with them.

Context: This verse pivots from general parental appeal into the specific warning that follows (verses 10-19), about a gang recruiting the son into violent crime.

Meaning: The verse is refreshingly direct: temptation is named as a real, ordinary thing that will happen, not a hypothetical. The instruction is equally simple — refuse consent. Wisdom here isn't about avoiding every dangerous person forever; it's about holding firm in the actual moment you're pressured.

Lesson: Peer pressure is as old as humanity itself. I know the pull to belong, even when belonging costs you your own integrity. Have the courage to say no — I will stand with you when it costs you a friendship, or a laugh at your expense.

See Also: Psalm 1:1 blesses the one who doesn't walk in the counsel of the wicked; Romans 12:2 urges believers not to be conformed to the pattern of the world around them.
- 1:11** ***(KJV)** If they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause:*
(B:E Project) They might say: 'Come with us — let's ambush someone, let's hide and wait to attack some innocent person, just because we can.'

Context: This dramatises the criminal gang's actual recruiting pitch, quoted directly for vivid effect within the father's warning to his son.

Meaning: The proverb doesn't just warn in the abstract — it puts the temptation's actual words in your ear, so you can recognise it when you hear something similar. Violence here is presented not as a means to an end but almost as sport, which is exactly what should sound the alarm.

- Lesson:** Violence dressed up as adventure or excitement is still violence. I call you to see clearly through the thrill of the group and notice, honestly, who actually ends up getting hurt.

See Also: Psalm 10:8-9 describes the wicked lying in wait like a lion for its prey; Isaiah 59:7 says their feet run to evil and they're swift to shed innocent blood.
- 1:12

(KJV) *Let us swallow them up alive as the grave; and whole, as those that go down into the pit:*

(B:E Project) 'Let's swallow them whole and alive, like the grave does — devour them completely, like people falling into a pit.'

Context: The gang's boastful recruiting speech continues, using exaggerated, almost mythic imagery to make their violence sound powerful rather than criminal.

Meaning: The language here is deliberately over-the-top — comparing themselves to the grave itself, an unstoppable force of death. It's a warning about how crime often dresses itself up in grand, exciting language to make something genuinely ugly sound thrilling.

Lesson: Boasting about harming others usually reveals a hollow, frightened soul underneath the bravado. I look past the swagger to the person hiding beneath it, and I invite that person — even now — back towards real life.

See Also: Psalm 55:15 speaks of the wicked going down alive into the grave; Numbers 16:33 recounts the earth literally swallowing Korah's rebellion.
- 1:13

(KJV) *We shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil:*

(B:E Project) 'We'll get all kinds of valuable loot, we'll fill our houses with everything we've stolen.'

Context: Still quoting the gang's pitch, this verse names the promised payoff of the crime — material wealth gained through robbery.

Meaning: This exposes the real motive behind the violence described in the previous verses: not ideology, just greed. Proverbs consistently treats the desire for quick, dishonest wealth as one of the most dangerous traps a young person can fall into.

Lesson: Stolen comfort never actually satisfies — I've seen what wealth built on other people's loss does to a person's heart over time. Choose the harder, honest road; it's the only one that leads somewhere genuinely good.

See Also: Luke 12:15 warns that life doesn't consist in the abundance of possessions; James 5:1-3 pronounces judgment on the wealthy who've hoarded riches unjustly.
- 1:14

(KJV) *Cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse:*

(B:E Project) 'Throw in your lot with us — we'll share everything, one common purse for all of us.'

- Context:** This closes the gang's recruitment speech (verses 11-14) with an offer of belonging and shared reward, the final and perhaps most persuasive part of the pitch.

Meaning: This line names something genuinely appealing — the desire for community, for belonging to something bigger than yourself. That desire isn't wrong in itself; the tragedy is that here it's being offered as a counterfeit, built on shared guilt rather than shared honesty and care.

Lesson: The offer of instant belonging — 'come, share with us' — is one of the oldest tricks there is. I offer you real belonging instead, in a community built on honesty and genuine care rather than shared secrets and shared guilt.

See Also: Acts 5:1-4 shows the early church's sharing was voluntary and honest, a real contrast to this counterfeit; Proverbs 13:11 warns that wealth gained hastily by dishonest means dwindles away.
- 1:15

(KJV) *My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path:*

(B:E Project) My son, don't walk that road with them — keep your feet off their path.

Context: The father's own voice resumes here after quoting the gang directly, giving the core command of this whole section: simply refuse to join them.

Meaning: After all the dramatic quoting of the gang's speech, the instruction itself is refreshingly simple: don't walk with them. Wisdom often isn't complicated to state — the difficulty is in actually doing it when the pressure is real.

Lesson: You get to choose which road you walk, one decision at a time. If a path is heading somewhere you don't want to end up, you're always free to turn your feet the other way — and I will meet you exactly wherever you turn.

See Also: Psalm 1:1 blesses the one who doesn't walk in step with the wicked; 1 Corinthians 15:33 warns that bad company corrupts good character.
- 1:16

(KJV) *For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood.*

(B:E Project) These people rush towards wrongdoing; they're quick to commit violence.

Context: The father explains the underlying nature of the gang, giving the reason behind his warning — their eagerness for harm reveals who they really are.

Meaning: The speed described here is telling — genuine wisdom tends to move carefully and think ahead, while destructive impulses tend to rush. Noticing how urgently someone or something is pushing you towards a decision can itself be a warning sign.

Lesson: Notice how urgently harm tends to move, and let that urgency warn you rather than excite you. Slow down — the hurried path is rarely the wise one.

See Also: Isaiah 59:7 uses almost identical language about feet that run to evil; Romans 3:15 quotes this very idea when describing human sinfulness.

1:17 *(KJV) Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird.*
(B:E Project) It's pointless to spread a net right where the bird can see it — it won't be caught.

Context: A standalone observational proverb inserted here as a pause for reflection, before the next verse reveals its ironic point — that the gang, despite thinking themselves clever, are actually the ones about to be trapped.

Meaning: On the surface this sounds like simple nature observation, but its placement here is the key: it sets up the twist in verse 18, where the trap the gang thinks they're setting for others turns out to be one they've set for themselves. A trap in plain sight rarely works — and dishonest schemes rarely stay hidden from their own consequences either.

Lesson: Even a bird can spot an obvious trap — don't let excitement or flattering words blind you to danger that's plainly visible if you're honest with yourself. Trust what your own eyes are telling you.

See Also: Psalm 7:15-16 describes the wicked falling into the very pit they dug; Psalm 9:15-16 says the nations are caught in the very net they hid.

1:18 *(KJV) And they lay wait for their own blood; they lurk privily for their own lives.*
(B:E Project) These people are actually setting an ambush for their own lives — laying a trap that will catch themselves.

Context: This is the turning point of the section (verses 8-19): the father reveals the deep irony that violent crime ultimately destroys the criminal too, not only the intended victim.

Meaning: This is one of the sharpest ironies in the whole passage — the very violence the gang plans for others circles back and destroys them. It's not framed as external punishment so much as a natural, almost mechanical consequence: this is simply what a life built on harming others tends to do to the person living it.

Lesson: Harm done to others has a way of circling back to harm the person who did it. I don't say this to threaten you but to free you from a road that was never going to end well for you either, whatever it promised at the start.

See Also: Psalm 7:15-16 says the same — trouble falls back on the one who caused it; Galatians 6:7 warns that whatever a person sows, they will also reap.

1:19 *(KJV) So are the ways of every one that is greedy of gain; which taketh away the life of the owners thereof.*
(B:E Project) That's what happens to everyone who's obsessed with grabbing wealth by dishonest means — it ends up costing them their own life.

Context: This closing verse of the warning section (8-19) broadens the specific gang story into a general statement about greed as a destructive force.

Meaning: The father widens the lesson beyond just this one gang: this is what greed does to anyone, in any era. Wealth gained by taking from others carries a hidden cost, and the proverb states plainly that the cost ultimately lands on the person chasing it.

Lesson: Greed convinces you it's building your life, while quietly taking it apart piece by piece. I invite you to measure wealth differently — by something that can't be stolen from you and doesn't cost you your own soul to keep.

See Also: 1 Timothy 6:9-10 warns that the love of money leads people into ruin; Luke 12:20 tells of the rich fool who dies the very night he plans to enjoy his hoarded wealth.

1:20 *(KJV) Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets:*
(B:E Project) Wisdom shouts out in the open air; she raises her voice in the public streets.

Context: A new section begins here (verses 20-33), in which Wisdom is personified as a woman publicly calling out in the city, urging everyone who'll listen to turn towards her.

Meaning: Personifying wisdom as a person calling out was a striking literary device — it makes wisdom vivid, urgent, and above all accessible. She isn't locked away in a temple or reserved for scholars; she's shouting in the busiest, most ordinary parts of everyday life, available to absolutely anyone willing to stop and listen.

Lesson: Wisdom isn't hidden away somewhere only the privileged can reach it — I taught on hillsides and in marketplaces too, in the most ordinary places, so that everyone could hear, not just the educated few. Wisdom, like me, is calling out for you specifically.

See Also: Proverbs 8:1-3 continues Wisdom's public speech in even more detail; Proverbs 9:1-3 pictures Wisdom building a house and inviting people in to a feast.

1:21 *(KJV) She crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words, saying,*
(B:E Project) She calls out at the busiest street corners, at the city gates where everyone passes through.

Context: This continues describing Wisdom's chosen locations for speaking — the most public, high-traffic places in an ancient city, where legal and business life actually happened.

Meaning: City gates in the ancient world were where court cases were heard, deals were struck, and community decisions were made — the genuine centre of public life. By placing Wisdom exactly there, the proverb is saying wisdom belongs right at the heart of ordinary, everyday decision-making, not off in some quiet, private retreat.

Lesson: I chose crowded, ordinary places to speak the truth, because that's where real people actually spend their lives. Don't wait for some perfectly quiet, peaceful moment to listen for wisdom — it's already calling out to you in the middle of your everyday life.

See Also: Proverbs 8:2-3 repeats this same image of Wisdom calling at the gates and doorways; Ruth 4:1 shows the city gate functioning as the place where public and legal life happened.

1:22 *(KJV) How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?*

(B:E Project) Wisdom asks: 'How long will you naive people go on loving your naivety? How long will mockers enjoy their mocking, and fools go on hating knowledge?'

Context: Wisdom's public speech opens with a direct, pointed question, naming three distinct types of people who reject her: the naive, the cynical mocker, and the fool.

Meaning: These three categories — the naive, the scorner, and the fool — recur throughout Proverbs as different flavours of resistance to wisdom. The naive simply haven't learned yet; the mocker has hardened into cynicism; the fool actively despises correction. The question isn't rhetorical scorn — it's a genuine, urgent appeal for change, however long it's been ignored.

Lesson: I ask you the same question, with love rather than contempt: how long will you keep choosing what keeps you stuck? It's never too late to answer differently, whatever category you might currently fit.

See Also: Psalm 1:1 sorts people into similar categories — the wicked, sinners, and mockers; Hosea 4:6 laments that people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.

1:23 *(KJV) Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.*

(B:E Project) 'Turn round when I correct you — I'll pour out my thoughts to you, I'll make everything clear to you.'

Context: Wisdom's appeal continues with a genuine invitation, promising full, generous sharing to anyone willing to respond to her correction.

Meaning: Notice the shift here from confrontation to invitation — Wisdom isn't simply scolding, she's actively offering everything she has to anyone who turns towards her. Correction, in this view, isn't punishment; it's the doorway into real understanding, if you're willing to walk through it.

Lesson: Turn towards correction rather than away from it, and I promise I will hold nothing back from you. My correction is never designed to shame you — only to free you into something better.

See Also: Joel 2:28 speaks of God pouring out his spirit on all people; John 7:37-38 has Jesus offering living water freely to anyone who's thirsty.

1:24 *(KJV) Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded;*

(B:E Project) 'But because I called and you refused to listen, because I reached out my hand and no one paid attention...'

Context: Wisdom's tone shifts here to describe past rejection, beginning the build-up towards the warning of consequences that follows.

Meaning: This introduces a sobering theme: wisdom, like an outstretched hand, can genuinely be refused. The proverb doesn't pretend that calling out is enough on its own — it depends on someone actually being willing to respond.

Lesson: I have stood at the door and knocked more times than you probably realise. I don't force my way in, but I never stop wanting you to open it, however many times you've turned away before.

See Also: Isaiah 65:12 describes God calling and people not answering; Jeremiah 7:13 makes the same complaint about a people who wouldn't listen.

1:25 (KJV) But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof:

(B:E Project) '...because you brushed off all my advice and wanted nothing to do with my correction...'

Context: This continues cataloguing the rejection of Wisdom's appeals, building the case towards the warning that follows.

Meaning: The repetition here isn't accidental — piling up the language of rejection across several verses underlines just how deliberate and sustained the refusal has been. This isn't one bad moment; it's a pattern.

Lesson: Rejecting good counsel doesn't make you strong — it just leaves you alone with your own limited view of things. Let the people who genuinely love you speak into your blind spots, rather than shutting them out.

See Also: Zechariah 7:11-12 describes people who refused to listen and made their hearts hard as flint.

1:26 (KJV) *I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh;*

(B:E Project) '...so I will laugh when disaster strikes you; I'll mock you when panic hits.'

Context: This is Wisdom's pronounced consequence for sustained rejection — deliberately shocking, poetic language that reflects back the indifference shown towards her.

Meaning: This verse can sound harsh out of context, so it's worth being honest about it: this is poetic irony, not literal cruelty. It's describing, in vivid terms, the natural outcome of ignoring warnings for a long time — by the time disaster hits, wisdom's earlier voice can feel painfully absent, because it was never invited in. It's a warning meant to be heeded now, before it applies to you, not a threat to be feared as inevitable.

- Lesson:** This is hard poetry meant as an urgent warning, not a threat from me personally — it describes what happens when warnings go unheeded for so long that the consequences simply catch up. I would rather you turned back long before it ever gets there, and the door is open right now, this moment.

See Also: Psalm 2:4 pictures God laughing at rebellious human plans; Galatians 6:7 warns that whatever is sown will eventually be reaped.
- 1:27** *(KJV) When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you.*
(B:E Project) '...when your fear arrives like a devastating storm, when disaster sweeps in like a whirlwind, when trouble and anguish overwhelm you.'

Context: This continues the description of consequence using vivid weather imagery — sudden, overwhelming catastrophe arriving without warning.

Meaning: The whirlwind and storm imagery emphasises how unprepared people can be caught out — disaster often doesn't announce itself politely in advance. The point isn't to instil fear for its own sake, but to underline why it matters to build wisdom into your life while things are calm, rather than waiting until a crisis forces the issue.

Lesson: Storms in life rarely announce themselves politely in advance. Build your foundation now, while the skies are still calm, so that when real trouble does come you're not caught without shelter.

See Also: Job 21:18 compares the wicked to chaff swept away by a storm; Matthew 7:26-27 tells of the house built on sand that collapses when the storm hits.
- 1:28** *(KJV) Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me:*
(B:E Project) 'Then they'll call out to me, but I won't answer; they'll search hard for me but won't find me.'

Context: The consequence speech continues, describing a moment of desperate, too-late searching after disaster has already struck.

Meaning: This isn't describing a God or wisdom that's cruelly withholding help out of spite. It's a sobering observation about timing: wisdom sought only once a crisis has already unfolded often can't undo damage that months or years of neglected preparation have already set in motion. The urgency of the whole passage is precisely to encourage seeking wisdom now, in the calm, rather than waiting for the storm.

Lesson: There's a kind of searching that only happens once trouble has already landed, and by then some doors have already quietly closed themselves through years of neglect. So don't wait for the crisis — seek me now, while it's still easy to find me.

See Also: Jeremiah 11:11 describes a similar warning of crying out without being heard; Luke 13:25 pictures a door shut once the moment for entering has passed.

- 1:29** *(KJV) For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD:*
(B:E Project) 'That's because they hated knowledge and refused to take God seriously.'

Context: This explains the underlying reason behind the coming disaster, essentially restating the thesis of verse 7 but from the negative side.

Meaning: The proverb circles back deliberately to the book's opening claim: reverence for God is where knowledge begins. Refusing that starting posture, the text argues, isn't a neutral choice — it closes off the path to real understanding altogether.

Lesson: Hatred of correction is usually just fear of what it might ask you to change. I'm not asking you to be perfect — only honest enough to keep learning, even when it's uncomfortable.

See Also: John 3:19-20 says people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.
- 1:30** *(KJV) They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof.*
(B:E Project) 'They wanted nothing to do with my advice; they despised all my correction.'

Context: This repeats and reinforces the charge of rejection stated in earlier verses, building rhythm before the final verdict of the passage.

Meaning: The deliberate repetition across these verses functions almost like a courtroom summary — stating the charge plainly and clearly one more time before the consequence is pronounced. It underlines that this outcome wasn't sudden or unfair; it followed a long, clear pattern of refusal.

Lesson: Every person who has ever loved me has, at some point, still resisted correction. Don't let past resistance define you permanently — come back to listening today, whatever ground you feel you've already lost.

See Also: Acts 7:51 describes people who always resist good guidance, just as their ancestors did.
- 1:31** *(KJV) Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.*
(B:E Project) 'So they'll eat the fruit of their own choices, they'll be stuffed full of their own schemes.'

Context: This pronounces the consequence as a natural cause-and-effect outcome, using an agricultural 'fruit' metaphor rather than describing an externally imposed punishment.

Meaning: The image of eating your own fruit is key: this isn't presented as arbitrary punishment handed down from outside, but as the natural harvest of seeds already planted through earlier choices. What you consistently plant in your life, this proverb argues, is eventually what you'll find yourself living on.

Lesson: Life has a way of returning to us the fruit of our own choices. I want to help you plant something genuinely worth eating, before the harvest actually arrives.

See Also: Galatians 6:7-8 makes the identical point about sowing and reaping; Job 4:8 observes that those who plant trouble reap it.

1:32 *(KJV) For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them.*

(B:E Project) 'Because it's the naive person's own stubborn drifting that kills them, and the fool's own careless ease that destroys them.'

Context: This sums up the fate of those who reject wisdom, with an interesting twist — noting that comfortable complacency, not only outright disaster, can be just as dangerous.

Meaning: The mention of 'prosperity' destroying fools is a subtle but important point: it's not only crisis that's dangerous, but false security too. Someone who feels comfortable and untroubled can be lulled into never examining their choices at all, which the proverb treats as just as fatal, in its own slower way, as any dramatic disaster.

Lesson: Complacency can be just as dangerous as crisis — the person who thinks they're already fine is often in more spiritual danger than the one who knows they're struggling. Stay humble, and stay awake to your own life.

See Also: Luke 12:19-20 tells of the rich fool who feels completely secure the very night his life is demanded of him.

1:33 *(KJV) But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.*

(B:E Project) 'But whoever listens to me will live in safety and rest easy, free from the fear of harm.'

Context: This is the closing verse of chapter 1 — a final, hopeful contrast to everything just described, resolving the whole chapter on a positive note about the reward of listening to wisdom.

Meaning: After the stark warnings of the previous verses, the chapter deliberately ends on hope rather than dread. The security promised here isn't about a life with no problems at all, but about a settled, trustworthy inner peace that comes from walking a path you actually believe in, rather than living anxiously ahead of consequences you know are coming.

Lesson: Peace isn't the absence of danger in the world — it's the security of walking a path you can genuinely trust, together with me. Listen, and I promise you a rest that fear can't reach.

See Also: Psalm 91:1 promises rest in God's shelter for those who dwell there; Matthew 7:24-25 describes the wise person's house standing firm through the storm because it was built on rock.

CHAPTER 2

Chapter Summary: Proverbs 2

Proverbs Chapter 2 serves as a powerful encouragement for a young person to actively seek and embrace wisdom and understanding. It promises that if one diligently pursues knowledge as if searching for hidden treasure, they will ultimately come to truly know and respect God. The chapter explains that God is the source of all wisdom and provides it as a shield to protect those who live righteously. This divine wisdom will guard the individual from the dangers of dishonest and deceptive people, as well as from the destructive allure of immoral individuals. Ultimately, the chapter concludes by contrasting the fate of the wise and righteous, who will prosper and live securely, with the fate of the wicked, who will be removed from the earth.

2:1 *(KJV) My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee;*
(B:E Project) My son, if you accept my teaching and keep my instructions safely stored within you...

Context: This opens chapter 2, which forms one long, extended 'if... then' sentence urging the son to actively pursue wisdom; verses 1-4 give the conditions ('if'), and verses 5-9 give the reward ('then').

Meaning: The phrase 'hide within you' suggests something deeper than merely remembering facts — it's about internalising teaching so thoroughly that it becomes part of how you naturally think, not just something you can recite on demand.

Lesson: Keep my words close, not pinned up as rules on a wall somewhere, but folded into how you actually think and feel day to day. That's what it really means to receive them.

See Also: Deuteronomy 6:6 tells the people to keep these words on their hearts; Psalm 119:11 says the word is hidden in the heart so as not to sin against God.

2:2 *(KJV) So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding;*
(B:E Project) ...tuning your ear to wisdom and directing your heart towards understanding...

Context: This continues the list of conditions (verses 1-4) — wisdom requires deliberate, active effort of both ear and heart, not passive reception.

Meaning: Both 'ear' and 'heart' are mentioned deliberately — hearing information alone isn't enough; it needs to reach and shape your inner life, your motivations and desires, not just your knowledge.

- Lesson:** Wisdom asks for your full attention, not just your polite agreement — tune your ear and your heart together, and real understanding will follow.

See Also: Proverbs 4:20-21 makes a very similar appeal to attend closely to these words and keep them within sight.
- 2:3

(KJV) *Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and lithest up thy voice for understanding;*
(B:E Project) ...if you cry out for knowledge and call out loudly for understanding...

Context: The conditions continue, intensifying the imagery from quiet listening to urgent, vocal desire.

Meaning: The shift from 'incline your ear' to 'cry out' marks a real escalation — this isn't casual curiosity anymore, it's urgent, active longing. Proverbs is suggesting that real wisdom tends to come to those who want it badly enough to actually ask.

Lesson: Don't be embarrassed to want wisdom badly, even to cry out for it honestly. I welcome desperate, sincere asking far more than polite indifference.

See Also: James 1:5 promises that God gives wisdom generously to anyone who asks.
- 2:4

(KJV) *If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures;*
(B:E Project) ...if you search for wisdom like silver, hunt for it like buried treasure...

Context: This final and most vivid of the 'if' conditions (verses 1-4) compares wisdom to valuable, hidden material wealth that's worth serious effort to find.

Meaning: Silver and hidden treasure don't turn up by accident — you have to actually dig, search, and put in real effort to find them. The proverb is deliberately raising the bar: wisdom isn't something you stumble upon passively, it's something worth genuinely working for.

Lesson: Treat wisdom like treasure worth digging for, not information you'll simply absorb by accident. What you go looking for with real effort, you tend to actually find.

See Also: Matthew 13:44 compares the kingdom of heaven to treasure hidden in a field, worth selling everything to obtain; Job 28:12-18 argues wisdom is more valuable than any gem.
- 2:5

(KJV) *Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.*
(B:E Project) ...then you will understand what it means to take God seriously, and you'll find real knowledge of him.

Context: This begins the 'then' section (verses 5-9) — the payoff promised for meeting the conditions laid out in verses 1-4.

Meaning: The promise here is straightforward: genuine effort to seek understanding leads somewhere real. This isn't presented as a lucky outcome for the gifted few, but as the natural, expected result of sincere searching.

- Lesson:** Seek and you will find — this is one of the oldest versions of a promise I made myself, much later. Real searching for understanding, and for God, is never wasted effort, however long it takes.

See Also: Jeremiah 29:13 promises that seeking God with all your heart means finding him; Matthew 7:7-8 has Jesus saying ask, seek, knock, and it will be given, found, opened.
- 2:6

(KJV) *For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.*
(B:E Project) Because God is the one who gives wisdom — knowledge and understanding come from him.

Context: This grounds the whole book's outlook: wisdom is described here as a gift given by God, not simply the product of raw human cleverness.

Meaning: This is a key theological claim of the passage — wisdom isn't purely self-generated intelligence, it's something received. Even for a reader who approaches this less as literal theology and more as ancient insight, the point still lands: real wisdom often comes from beyond your own limited perspective, whether through humility, community, tradition, or something greater than yourself.

Lesson: Every genuinely good insight you've ever had ultimately traces back beyond yourself, whether or not you noticed the source at the time. Stay grateful about your own understanding, rather than self-congratulating.

See Also: James 1:5 again promises wisdom given generously by God; 1 Kings 3:9-12 shows Solomon himself asking God for wisdom rather than claiming it as his own achievement.
- 2:7

(KJV) *He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly.*
(B:E Project) He stores up good sense for honest people; he's like a shield for those who live with integrity.

Context: This continues describing God as both the source of wisdom and the protector of those who pursue right living, using military shield imagery.

Meaning: The shield image is deliberate — it isn't describing wisdom as something that stops you from ever facing hardship, but as something that covers and protects you as you walk through it, particularly when you're trying to live with integrity.

Lesson: I want to be your shield, not your cage — protecting your integrity rather than restricting your freedom. Walk uprightly, and you'll find me covering your back, even when you can't see the danger coming.

See Also: Psalm 84:11 calls God a sun and shield; Ephesians 6:16 describes faith itself as a shield against fiery attacks.

2:8 *(KJV) He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints.*
(B:E Project) He watches over the paths of justice and guards the way of those who are faithful to him.

Context: This continues the theme of divine protection offered to those who pursue right living, extending the shield imagery of the previous verse.

Meaning: There's a comforting rhythm building across these verses — wisdom, protection, and justice are woven together as one connected reality, rather than separate concerns. Pursuing a just path, the proverb suggests, isn't a lonely or unguarded endeavour.

Lesson: I'm watching over the paths of people trying to do right, even in moments when they can't see me doing it. You are never navigating any of this completely alone.

See Also: Psalm 121:8 promises God watches over your going out and coming in; 1 Samuel 2:9 speaks of God guarding the feet of his faithful ones.

2:9 *(KJV) Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path.*
(B:E Project) Then you'll understand what's righteous, fair, and just — every good way to live.

Context: This closes the 'then' consequence section (verses 5-9), deliberately echoing the ethical list from verse 3 — justice, judgment, equity — bringing the passage full circle back to the book's opening purpose statement.

Meaning: By repeating the same ethical language used near the very start of the book, this verse ties the whole chapter's promise back to the book's founding purpose: wisdom isn't abstract, it results in practical fairness and good living, visible in how you actually treat other people.

Lesson: Righteousness, fairness, and honesty aren't separate goals — they're all one thing, lived out in practice. Pursue real understanding, and this whole way of living opens up together, not piece by piece.

See Also: Micah 6:8 sums up exactly this combination — doing justly, loving mercy, walking humbly with God.

2:10 *(KJV) When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul;*
(B:E Project) When wisdom settles into your heart and knowledge feels genuinely good to your very soul...

Context: This opens the next section (verses 10-19), describing what internalised wisdom actually does for a person — namely, protect them from two named dangers: corrupt men (11-15) and a seductive, unfaithful woman (16-19).

Meaning: This verse marks an important shift — wisdom stops being merely instruction from outside and becomes something pleasurable, felt from the inside. Once that

happens, the passage argues, wisdom starts functioning less like a rule and more like an instinct that protects you almost automatically.

Lesson: When truth finally feels good to you, not just correct, you know it's actually taken root. I want wisdom to be a genuine pleasure for you, not just a duty you grudgingly perform.

See Also: Psalm 19:10 describes God's word as sweeter than honey; Jeremiah 15:16 speaks of God's words becoming the joy and delight of the heart.

2:11 *(KJV) Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee:*
(B:E Project) ...good judgement will protect you, understanding will guard you.

Context: This continues describing wisdom's protective role, picturing it almost like an active bodyguard watching over the reader.

Meaning: The language of protection here is deliberately physical and active — discretion and understanding aren't passive knowledge sitting unused, they're pictured as actively working on your behalf, standing guard even when you're not consciously thinking about them.

Lesson: Good judgement isn't there to restrict your fun — it's there to watch your back when you can't see the danger coming yourself.

See Also: Proverbs 4:6 says not to forsake wisdom, and it will protect you in return.

2:12 *(KJV) To deliver thee from the way of the evil man, from the man that speaketh froward things;*
(B:E Project) ...it will save you from following men who do evil, people whose talk is twisted and corrupt.

Context: This begins describing the first specific danger wisdom protects from: dishonest, corrupt men, in a section running through verse 15.

Meaning: Notice the danger is identified partly by speech — 'froward things', meaning twisted or perverse talk. Proverbs consistently treats the way someone speaks as a genuine window into their character, worth paying close attention to.

Lesson: I will help you see through corrupt company before it costs you something precious. Trust the discomfort you feel around dishonest people — it's often wisdom quietly speaking to you.

See Also: Psalm 1:1 warns against the counsel of the wicked; Psalm 12:2-3 describes deceptive, flattering speech as genuinely dangerous.

2:13 *(KJV) Who leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness;*
(B:E Project) ...men who've abandoned honest paths to walk in dark ways.

2:18 *(KJV) For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead.*
(B:E Project) ...her house leads down towards death; her paths lead to the realm of the dead.

Context: This warns of the severe, destructive end that this path leads to, using deliberately stark, uncompromising language.

Meaning: The bluntness here is meant to jolt you into taking the danger seriously — not necessarily literal physical death in every case, but a genuine, real deterioration of a life: broken trust, wrecked relationships, and a kind of living death that infidelity and self-deception can bring.

Lesson: Some paths look like excitement at the doorway but are actually heading somewhere destructive — emotionally, relationally, sometimes further still. I want you to notice the destination clearly, not just the inviting doorway.

See Also: Proverbs 5:5 uses very similar language, her feet going down to death; Proverbs 7:27 says her house is the road to the grave.

2:19 *(KJV) None that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life.*
(B:E Project) ...nobody who goes to her ever really comes back; none of them ever finds their way onto the path of life again.

Context: This closes the warning (verses 16-19) with its starkest statement yet, describing this path as one that's exceptionally difficult to walk back from.

Meaning: This isn't claiming that redemption is literally impossible for anyone who's been unfaithful — it's poetic, urgent language about how deeply damaging and hard to undo this particular choice can be. The point is prevention: better by far to never take the first step than to try climbing back afterwards.

Lesson: I know some choices are genuinely hard to walk back from. That's exactly why I plead with you before you take the first step, not only after the damage is already done.

See Also: Proverbs 5:22-23 warns that the wicked are trapped by their own sins; Proverbs 6:32 says a man who commits adultery destroys his own soul.

2:20 *(KJV) That thou mayest walk in the way of good men, and keep the paths of the righteous.*
(B:E Project) All this is so that you'll walk in the way good people walk, and stick to the paths the righteous take.

Context: This opens the closing section of the chapter (verses 20-22), stating the ultimate purpose behind everything taught so far in the chapter.

Meaning: After two extended warnings — about corrupt men and about sexual betrayal — the chapter now states its actual aim plainly: not fear for its own sake, but a genuinely good life, walked among genuinely good company. The warnings exist in service of this positive goal, not as an end in themselves.

Lesson: All of this teaching has one real aim: that you'd walk a good path, among good people. I'm not interested in rules for their own sake — only in the life those rules are actually meant to protect.

See Also: 3 John 1:11 urges imitating what is good rather than what is evil; Psalm 1:6 says the Lord watches over the way of the righteous.

2:21 *(KJV) For the upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it.*
(B:E Project) Because honest, upright people will remain settled in the land; those who are blameless will stay there.

Context: This continues the closing promise, echoing the language of secure, lasting inheritance in the land — tying moral living directly to lasting stability.

Meaning: The imagery of 'dwelling in the land' draws on the tradition of the Promised Land as a place of security and belonging. The underlying idea, stripped of that specific historical setting, still holds broadly: honest, steady living tends to build something that actually lasts, rather than something built on shortcuts that eventually collapses.

Lesson: Steady, honest living builds a life that lasts. I want you rooted somewhere solid, not scattered by every shortcut that promises more, faster, but delivers less in the end.

See Also: Psalm 37:29 says the righteous will inherit the land and dwell there forever; Matthew 5:5 says the meek will inherit the earth.

2:22 *(KJV) But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it.*
(B:E Project) But the wicked will be cut off from the land, and those who betray what's right will be torn out, like a plant pulled up by its roots.

Context: This closing verse of chapter 2 gives a final, sharp contrast between the fates of the righteous and the wicked — a style of strong antithetical parallelism that anticipates the standalone two-line proverbs found throughout chapters 10-29.

Meaning: The 'rooted out' image is deliberately the opposite of the settled, lasting security promised to the upright in the previous verse — a plant torn out by its roots simply cannot survive. The chapter ends, as it began, insisting that the choices you make about how to live aren't neutral; they genuinely shape whether your life holds together or eventually comes apart.

Lesson: Betraying what's right eventually uproots a person from the very stability they were hoping to secure by taking shortcuts. I'd rather warn you plainly now than watch you discover this the hard way, later, when it's harder to undo.

See Also: Psalm 37:9-10 contrasts evildoers being cut off with the righteous inheriting the land; Matthew 15:13 says every plant not planted by the Father will be pulled up by its roots.

CHAPTER 3

Chapter Summary: Proverbs 3

Proverbs Chapter 3 acts as a loving parent's guide, urging a "son" (or child) to embrace God's wisdom and live a life of integrity. It highlights the incredible benefits of trusting in the Lord completely, following His guidance, and valuing wisdom above all material wealth. The chapter promises blessings like a long and peaceful life, divine favour, security, and good health for those who obey, are generous, and receive God's loving correction. It also provides practical advice on how to treat others, discouraging selfishness, envy, and conflict, and concludes by emphasising that God opposes the proud and wicked but blesses the humble and righteous.

3:1 *(KJV)* My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments:
(B:E Project) Don't forget what I've taught you, son - hold on to these instructions with your whole heart, not just your memory.

Context: Opens chapter 3's continuation of the father's discourse to his son (the connected teaching of chapters 1-9), a direct appeal to internalise wisdom rather than merely recall it.

Meaning: This isn't about rote memorisation - it's about letting guidance shape how you actually live, not just what you can recite. Many people know good advice but don't act on it; this verse asks for a deeper kind of "keeping" - lived commitment, not passive knowledge.

Lesson: I'm not asking you to memorise rules like a script - I'm asking you to let truth genuinely rearrange your heart, so good actions become instinct rather than performance.

See Also: Deuteronomy 6:6 (keep God's words "in thine heart"); James 1:22 ("be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only") - both stress lived practice over passive knowledge.

3:2 *(KJV)* For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee.
(B:E Project) Living this way will add years to your life and bring you real peace.

Context: Continues the opening exhortation of chapter 3, giving the practical payoff for holding onto wisdom.

Meaning: Wisdom literature often links wise living with longevity and inner peace - not as a magic guarantee, but because avoiding reckless choices and staying honest genuinely reduces the chaos that shortens and unsettles lives. Modern understanding of stress and relationships backs this up.

Lesson: Peace isn't a reward I dangle in front of you - it's what naturally grows when you stop fighting yourself and living against your own values. I want that steadiness for you because I love you, not as a bribe.

See Also: Psalm 34:12-14 (a good, long life tied to turning from evil and pursuing peace); Ephesians 6:2-3 ("long life" tied to right living).

3:3 *(KJV)* Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart:
(B:E Project) Never let kindness and honesty leave you - wear them like a necklace, carve them into your heart.

Context: Part of the father's opening appeal in chapter 3, pairing two core virtues - mercy (loyal kindness) and truth (honesty) - as things to visibly and permanently embody.

Meaning: The imagery is deliberately physical: a necklace is visible to everyone, and something carved on the heart can't be erased. Kindness and honesty shouldn't be occasional choices - they should become part of your identity, obvious to others and unshakeable in you.

Lesson: Kindness and truthfulness aren't accessories for special occasions - they're meant to be who you are, all the way through. Wear them so naturally that people know exactly what they'll get from you.

See Also: 2 Corinthians 3:3 (a letter "written... in fleshy tables of the heart"); Colossians 3:12 (put on kindness like clothing).

3:4 *(KJV)* So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man.
(B:E Project) Do that, and you'll earn genuine respect and good standing with both God and the people around you.

Context: Concludes the mercy-and-truth couplet (3:3-4) in the father's opening discourse.

Meaning: Consistent kindness and honesty build real trust - both a sense of being right with the divine and a solid reputation among people. It's a practical observation: people trust and favour those who are reliably kind and truthful.

Lesson: Live with real integrity and I promise you won't need to chase approval - it will come and find you, because trustworthy people are rare and deeply valued.

See Also: Luke 2:52 (Jesus grew in favour with God and man); 1 Samuel 2:26 (Samuel grew similarly in favour with God and men).

3:5 *(KJV)* Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.
(B:E Project) Put your full trust in God - don't rely only on your own reasoning.

Context: One of the most famous verses in Proverbs, part of the father's opening discourse in chapter 3, urging total reliance on God over pure self-reliance.

Meaning: This isn't anti-intelligence - Proverbs elsewhere praises careful thinking. It's a warning against believing your own judgement is always sufficient, especially under pressure. It asks for humility: recognising there's wisdom bigger than your own perspective.

Lesson: When you're overwhelmed and can't see the way forward, you don't have to solve everything alone through sheer willpower - there's a wisdom bigger than your fear, and you're allowed to lean on it instead of gripping everything so tightly.

See Also: Psalm 37:5 ("Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him"); James 1:5 (ask God for wisdom when you lack it).

3:6 *(KJV) In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.*
(B:E Project) Involve God in everything you do, and he'll keep you on the right track.

Context: Completes the famous "trust in the LORD" couplet begun in 3:5, part of the father's core instruction in chapter 3.

Meaning: "Acknowledge" here means actively factoring God into decisions big and small, not compartmentalising faith away from daily choices. The promise is guidance, not necessarily an easy or obstacle-free path.

Lesson: Bring me into the small decisions too, not just the crises - the daily choices about how you treat people, spend your time, and spend your money. That's where real direction gets built, one honest step at a time.

See Also: Psalm 32:8 ("I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go"); Philippians 4:6-7 (bringing everything to God brings peace).

3:7 *(KJV) Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.*
(B:E Project) Don't think you know it all - respect God, and stay away from wrongdoing.

Context: Continues the father's instruction in chapter 3, warning against self-satisfied overconfidence.

Meaning: This targets a specific danger: the person convinced of their own cleverness who stops being teachable. Real wisdom includes ongoing humility, paired with actively steering clear of harmful behaviour, not just avoiding obviously "big" sins.

Lesson: The moment you think you've got life figured out is the moment you stop growing. Stay curious, stay humble, and keep choosing the harder right thing over the easier wrong one - that's real maturity.

See Also: Romans 12:16 ("Be not wise in your own conceits"); Proverbs 26:12 (a fool is more hopeful than someone wise in their own eyes).

3:8 *(KJV) It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones.*

(B:E Project) This kind of humble, godly living will be like medicine for your whole body - health right down to your bones.

Context: Gives the physical payoff of the humility described in 3:7, continuing the father's discourse in chapter 3.

Meaning: Ancient Hebrew thought didn't sharply separate spiritual and physical wellbeing. Modern understanding of how chronic stress and guilt physically wear the body down, versus a settled conscience, makes this surprisingly accurate.

Lesson: Peace of mind isn't just a nice feeling - it seeps into your whole body. When you stop wrestling with pride and guilt, you free up energy that was being spent on self-protection.

See Also: Proverbs 14:30 ("a sound heart is the life of the flesh"); Proverbs 17:22 ("a merry heart doeth good like a medicine").

3:9 *(KJV) Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase:*
(B:E Project) Honour God with your money and possessions - give him the very first and best of everything you earn.

Context: Shifts the father's instruction in chapter 3 to generosity and giving, using the ancient agricultural image of "firstfruits" - the first portion of a harvest.

Meaning: Giving the "firstfruits" - the first and best, before you know how much you'll have left - is a statement of trust and priority, the opposite of giving only leftovers once everything else is paid for.

Lesson: What you do with your money reveals what you actually trust. Give generously and first, not just from what's spare - that's how you loosen money's grip on your heart instead of letting it grip you.

See Also: Malachi 3:10 (bringing the whole tithe, a firstfruits principle); 2 Corinthians 9:7 (God loves a cheerful giver).

3:10 *(KJV) So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.*
(B:E Project) Do that, and your storerooms will overflow, your wine vats will burst with abundance.

Context: Completes the giving couplet from 3:9, part of the father's discourse in chapter 3, using farming imagery familiar to its original agricultural audience.

Meaning: This states a general principle of Proverbs, not an ironclad formula: a generous, well-ordered life tends towards abundance, partly because generosity builds trust and community while stinginess erodes both.

- Lesson: Don't give hoping to calculate a return - give because it opens your hands and your heart. Abundance often follows generosity, but even when it doesn't, generosity itself is already the reward: it makes you freer.

See Also: Luke 6:38 ("give, and it shall be given unto you... good measure, pressed down"); 2 Corinthians 9:6 (sow generously, reap generously).
- 3:11

(KJV) My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction:

(B:E Project) Son, don't resent it when God disciplines you, and don't get worn out by his correction.

Context: Opens a short section (3:11-12) on how to respond to difficulty and correction, within the father's larger discourse in chapter 3.

Meaning: This addresses a human reaction: bristling at criticism or hardship, or growing bitter and exhausted when life corrects us repeatedly. The verse asks for a different posture - staying open to what hard experiences might be teaching.

Lesson: When life corrects you - through consequences, honest feedback, or hard seasons - don't take it as proof you're unloved. Stay soft enough to actually learn from it; that's harder than getting defensive, but it's how you grow.

See Also: Hebrews 12:5-6 (quotes this verse directly, on divine discipline); James 1:2-4 (trials producing patience and maturity).
- 3:12

(KJV) For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.

(B:E Project) Because God disciplines the people he loves - just like a father corrects the son he delights in.

Context: Completes the correction couplet (3:11-12), reframing hardship and discipline in the father's discourse in chapter 3.

Meaning: The verse reframes correction as evidence of relationship, not rejection. A parent who doesn't care wouldn't bother correcting a child at all - the corrective effort itself is a sign of investment and love.

Lesson: If someone truly loves you, they won't just tell you what you want to hear. I correct out of love, not to control you - the same way a good parent pushes back precisely because they're invested in who you become.

See Also: Hebrews 12:6-7 (directly reflects this verse); Revelation 3:19 ("as many as I love, I rebuke and chasten").
- 3:13

(KJV) Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getheth understanding.

(B:E Project) Truly happy is the person who finds wisdom, who gains real understanding.

- Context: Opens a new section (3:13-20) in the father's discourse praising wisdom's supreme value, personifying wisdom poetically as something to be "found."

Meaning: This launches an extended celebration of wisdom as life's real prize - more valuable than material wealth, as the following verses develop. "Happy" here means deep flourishing, not just a passing good mood.

Lesson: I want you to find the kind of happiness that doesn't depend on your circumstances - the settled, deep-down flourishing that comes from understanding how to actually live well. That's worth pursuing over anything you can buy.

See Also: Matthew 5:3-12 (the Beatitudes, similarly redefining true "blessedness"); Ecclesiastes 7:12 (wisdom is a defence, like money, but it preserves life).
- 3:14

(KJV) For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.

(B:E Project) Wisdom's profit beats the profit from trading silver, its return beats even fine gold.

Context: Continues the wisdom-praise section (3:13-20), using trade and commerce imagery that would resonate with the original audience's economic life.

Meaning: The verse deliberately speaks the language of business and profit - wisdom isn't just morally superior to wealth, it "pays" better in the things that actually matter for a good life.

Lesson: Chase the kind of wealth that can't be taken from you in a crash or a bad decision - understanding, character, good judgement. That's an investment that keeps paying out no matter what happens to your bank balance.

See Also: Job 28:15-19 (wisdom cannot be bought with gold or precious stones); Matthew 6:19-20 (store up treasure that doesn't decay).
- 3:15

(KJV) She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her.

(B:E Project) Wisdom is worth more than rubies - nothing you could want compares to her.

Context: Continues personifying wisdom as a figure of supreme worth, part of the wisdom-praise section in chapter 3.

Meaning: The comparison to rubies (rare, beautiful, costly) pushes the point further: not just more valuable than money, but more valuable than literally anything else a person might desire - status, pleasure, possessions.

Lesson: Ask yourself honestly what you want most in life, then hold it up next to real wisdom and see which one actually lasts. I'm not asking you to give up desire - I'm asking you to desire the right thing most.

- See Also:** Job 28:18 ("the price of wisdom is above rubies"); Proverbs 8:11 (wisdom again better than rubies, in Wisdom's own speech).
- 3:16

(KJV) Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour.
(B:E Project) In her right hand, wisdom holds long life; in her left, wealth and respect.

Context: Continues describing wisdom personified as a generous figure offering good gifts, within the wisdom-praise section of chapter 3.

Meaning: The imagery of wisdom holding gifts in both hands presents her as a source of the good things people naturally want - not because wisdom guarantees these mechanically, but because living wisely tends to produce them as by-products.

Lesson: The things you're chasing directly - money, status, a long comfortable life - often arrive as side effects of something else: living wisely and well. Chase wisdom, and watch what tends to follow.

See Also: 1 Kings 3:11-13 (Solomon asks for wisdom, and God adds riches and honour besides); Matthew 6:33 ("seek ye first the kingdom of God... and all these things shall be added").
- 3:17

(KJV) Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.
(B:E Project) Wisdom's paths are pleasant to walk, and all her roads lead to peace.

Context: Continues the wisdom-praise section of chapter 3, describing the character of the wise life itself, not just its rewards.

Meaning: This corrects the misconception that moral living means constant self-denial and grimness. The wise life is actually more pleasant and peaceful than the alternative, because it avoids the chaos and guilt that unwise living generates.

Lesson: Living well isn't a joyless discipline you grit your teeth through - it's meant to bring you genuine peace and pleasantness, day to day. If your path feels like constant conflict and misery, that's worth questioning.

See Also: Matthew 11:29-30 ("my yoke is easy, and my burden is light"); Psalm 119:165 ("great peace have they which love thy law").
- 3:18

(KJV) She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her.
(B:E Project) Wisdom is a tree of life to those who grab hold of her - happy is everyone who keeps her close.

Context: Closes the extended wisdom-praise poem (3:13-18), using the "tree of life" image that echoes the garden of Eden.

- Meaning:** The "tree of life" callback deliberately links wisdom to the vitality lost in Genesis - wisdom offers a way back to that kind of life-giving relationship with the world. "Lay hold" and "retaineth" stress active, ongoing effort.

Lesson: Wisdom isn't something you find once and file away - it's something you keep reaching for and holding onto, every day. Do that, and you tap into something genuinely life-giving.

See Also: Genesis 2:9 (the tree of life in Eden); Revelation 22:2 (the tree of life reappearing, its leaves for healing).
- 3:19

(KJV) The LORD by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens.
(B:E Project) God used wisdom to lay the earth's foundations, understanding to set the heavens in place.

Context: Opens a short cosmic section (3:19-20) shifting from wisdom's value to wisdom's role in creation itself, within chapter 3's discourse.

Meaning: This elevates wisdom from a practical human virtue to a cosmic principle - the very thing God used to build the universe's order. Living wisely means aligning yourself with the same order that structures reality itself.

Lesson: The wisdom I'm offering you isn't a human invention or a set of cultural rules - it's woven into the structure of reality itself. When you live wisely, you're moving with the grain of the universe, not against it.

See Also: Proverbs 8:22-31 (wisdom personified present at creation); Psalm 104:24 ("in wisdom hast thou made them all").
- 3:20

(KJV) By his knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew.
(B:E Project) By his knowledge the deep waters were split open, and the clouds let fall the dew.

Context: Continues the brief creation section (3:19-20), pairing wisdom with the natural processes of oceans and rain.

Meaning: This reinforces the previous verse - God's knowledge governs the natural world down to its everyday rhythms, not just its grand original founding. It's a reminder that the same wisdom sustaining creation is available to guide a person's life.

Lesson: The same intelligence that keeps the natural world running in rhythm and order is available to bring order to your own life. You're not meant to navigate chaos alone with guesswork.

See Also: Job 38:25-28 (God questions Job about who directs rain and dew); Genesis 1:6-7 (the waters divided at creation).
- 3:21

(KJV) My son, let not them depart from thine eyes: keep sound wisdom and discretion:

- (B:E Project)** Son, don't lose sight of these things - hold on to sound judgement and good sense.

Context: Opens a new section (3:21-26) returning to direct fatherly address, urging the son to hold onto wisdom for practical, everyday safety.

Meaning: After the cosmic praise of wisdom, the father brings it back to daily life: keep wisdom and discretion close and visible, like something never let out of sight.

Lesson: Don't let good judgement become something you only think about in a crisis - keep it in view every day, in the small decisions, so it's already there when you need it most.

See Also: Proverbs 4:21 (a near-identical charge in the next chapter); Proverbs 2:11 (discretion preserving a person).
- 3:22** *(KJV)* So shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck.
(B:E Project) They'll be life itself for you, and grace to wear like an ornament.

Context: Continues the practical-benefits section (3:21-26), describing what sound wisdom and discretion actually give a person.

Meaning: The imagery echoes 3:3's necklace image - wisdom becomes something visible and attractive about a person, as well as something deeply sustaining ("life unto thy soul"). It's both inward vitality and outward grace.

Lesson: Wisdom doesn't just protect you privately - it changes how you show up in the world, making you someone people are drawn to, not because you're performing, but because you're genuinely at peace.

See Also: Proverbs 1:9 (instruction as an ornament of grace); Proverbs 4:9 (wisdom giving "an ornament of grace" to the head).
- 3:23** *(KJV)* Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble.
(B:E Project) Then you'll walk your path safely, and your foot won't trip you up.

Context: Continues the practical-benefits section of chapter 3, promising steady, confident movement through life to the one who holds onto wisdom.

Meaning: "Stumble" is used both literally and metaphorically throughout Proverbs - wisdom prevents both careless physical mistakes and moral missteps that trip a person up in life.

Lesson: When you know your own values and act from them consistently, you stop second-guessing every step. That confidence isn't arrogance - it's the natural steadiness of someone not fighting their own conscience.

See Also: Psalm 37:23-24 ("the steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD"); Proverbs 4:19 (the wicked "know not at what they stumble").

- 3:24** *(KJV)* When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid: yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet.
(B:E Project) When you lie down, you won't be afraid - your sleep will actually be sweet.

Context: Continues the practical-benefits section of chapter 3, moving from daytime confidence to night-time peace of mind.

Meaning: A wise, honest, unburdened conscience produces genuinely restful sleep - a strikingly concrete, relatable promise, since anxiety and unresolved guilt are common causes of insomnia even today.

Lesson: If you're lying awake at night with a racing mind, ask what you're carrying that you haven't dealt with honestly. Peace with yourself and with others tends to bring peace to your sleep too.

See Also: Psalm 4:8 ("I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep"); Psalm 127:2 (God gives sleep to those he loves, contrasted with anxious toil).
- 3:25** *(KJV)* Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh.
(B:E Project) Don't be terrified by sudden disaster, or by the ruin that wicked people bring, when it happens.

Context: Continues the section on wisdom's protective power in chapter 3, addressing fear of unpredictable calamity or harm caused by bad people.

Meaning: This doesn't promise bad things won't happen - it addresses the crippling fear of them. A person grounded in wisdom doesn't need to live braced for catastrophe; they can face sudden trouble without being undone by it.

Lesson: You don't have to live your life bracing for the next disaster. Build your life on something solid enough that even sudden trouble doesn't shatter you.

See Also: Psalm 91:5-6 ("thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night"); Psalm 112:7 ("he shall not be afraid of evil tidings").
- 3:26** *(KJV)* For the LORD shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken.
(B:E Project) Because God will be your confidence, and he'll keep your foot from getting caught in a trap.

Context: Closes the practical-benefits section (3:21-26) in chapter 3, grounding the son's fearlessness and safety directly in God.

Meaning: "Confidence" here means security or trust rather than swagger - ultimate steadiness doesn't come from controlling every outcome, but from trusting something reliable beyond yourself.

Lesson: Real confidence isn't about never being afraid - it's about knowing you're held by something bigger than your own strength, so fear doesn't get the final word.

- See Also:

Psalm 25:15 ("he shall pluck my feet out of the net"); Philippians 4:6-7 (peace guarding heart and mind).
- 3:27

(KJV)

Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it.

(B:E Project)

Don't hold back a good deed from someone who deserves it when you're actually able to do it.

Context:

Opens a new section (3:27-32) of practical ethics about treating neighbours, shifting from personal wisdom to social conduct.

Meaning:

This targets the specific failure of delaying or withholding kindness you're fully capable of giving - not grand heroics, just doing the good you're already positioned to do, right when it's needed.

Lesson:

If you can help someone right now and you're just choosing not to, ask yourself why. Don't wait for a more convenient moment to do good - the good in front of you today is the good that counts.

See Also:

James 4:17 ("to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin"); Galatians 6:10 ("as we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men").
- 3:28

(KJV)

Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to morrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee.

(B:E Project)

Don't tell your neighbour "come back tomorrow, I'll give it to you then" when you've already got what they need right there.

Context:

Continues the neighbour-ethics section of chapter 3, giving a concrete, almost comic example of the general principle in 3:27.

Meaning:

This calls out procrastinating generosity - having the means to help immediately but stalling anyway, whether from laziness, inconvenience, or a subtle desire to hold power over someone in need.

Lesson:

Delayed kindness can feel like kindness withheld to the person waiting on it. If you can give now, give now - don't make someone beg twice for what you already have to offer.

See Also:

Proverbs 27:1 ("boast not thyself of to morrow"); Luke 12:33 (the call to give without delay or excessive hoarding).
- 3:29

(KJV)

Devise not evil against thy neighbour, seeing he dwelleth securely by thee.

(B:E Project)

Don't plot harm against your neighbour, especially when they trust you and feel safe living near you.

Context:

Continues the neighbour-ethics section of chapter 3, warning against betraying the trust implicit in close, everyday relationships.

- Meaning:

This isn't just a warning against extreme violence - it targets the betrayal of ordinary, earned trust: a neighbour who feels safe around you, not suspecting you'd ever plan to harm them.
- Lesson:

The people closest to you, who trust you without a second thought, deserve your loyalty most, not least. Don't let familiarity become an opening for betrayal.
- See Also:

Romans 13:10 ("love worketh no ill to his neighbour"); Psalm 41:9 (betrayal by a trusted close friend as a particular grief).
- 3:30

(KJV)

Strive not with a man without cause, if he have done thee no harm.

(B:E Project)

Don't pick a fight with someone for no reason, if they haven't actually done you any wrong.

Context:

Continues the neighbour-ethics section of chapter 3, warning against needless conflict and quarrelsomeness.

Meaning:

This targets manufactured or unnecessary conflict - arguing or attacking someone who's given you no real cause. It's a call to examine whether your grievance is actually justified before acting on it.

Lesson:

Not every irritation deserves a fight. Before you go after someone, ask honestly whether they've actually wronged you, or whether you're just looking for somewhere to put your frustration.

See Also:

Romans 12:18 ("if it be possible... live peaceably with all men"); Proverbs 17:14 ("the beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water").
- 3:31

(KJV)

Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways.

(B:E Project)

Don't envy people who get ahead by mistreating others, and don't copy how they operate.

Context:

Continues the neighbour-ethics section of chapter 3, warning against admiring or imitating those who succeed through exploitation or cruelty.

Meaning:

This addresses the temptation to envy the apparent success of ruthless people, and the danger of concluding their tactics must "work" and are therefore worth copying. The verse insists their methods should be rejected outright.

Lesson:

Just because someone's cruelty seems to be "working" for them doesn't mean it's a path worth walking. Don't let their apparent success rewrite what you believe is right.

See Also:

Psalm 37:1 ("fret not thyself because of evildoers"); Psalm 73:3-17 (the psalmist wrestling with envy of the wicked's prosperity).
- 3:32

(KJV)

For the froward is abomination to the LORD: but his secret is with the righteous.

(B:E Project) God detests the crooked, twisted person, but he shares his friendship with those who do right.

Context: Gives the reasoning behind 3:31's warning, continuing the neighbour-ethics section of chapter 3, and introducing the closing contrast between wicked and righteous developed through 3:35.

Meaning: "His secret" implies intimacy - close, trusted friendship. The verse contrasts the exploiter's spiritual isolation with the righteous person's closeness to God.

Lesson: A life built on manipulating and harming others might get results, but it costs you real intimacy - with people, and with whatever is good and true. Integrity is what lets you actually be known and trusted.

See Also: Psalm 25:14 ("the secret of the LORD is with them that fear him"); John 15:15 (Jesus calling his followers friends, sharing what he knows).

3:33 *(KJV) The curse of the LORD is in the house of the wicked: but he blesseth the habitation of the just.*
(B:E Project) God's curse hangs over the home of the wicked, but he blesses the household of those who do right.

Context: Continues the closing wicked-versus-righteous contrast in chapter 3, applied specifically to households.

Meaning: This isn't a promise that bad things never happen to good families - it's a general proverbial pattern describing the deeper trajectory of a household built on wrongdoing versus one built on integrity.

Lesson: What you build your home on matters more than what you put in it. A household rooted in honesty and care tends to flourish in ways one built on exploitation and deceit can't sustain.

See Also: Proverbs 15:6 ("in the house of the righteous is much treasure: but in the revenues of the wicked is trouble"); Psalm 112:1-3 (blessing on the household of the one who fears God).

3:34 *(KJV) Surely he scorneth the scorners: but he giveth grace unto the lowly.*
(B:E Project) God mocks the mockers, but gives grace to the humble.

Context: Continues the closing contrast in chapter 3, this time focused on attitude - arrogance versus humility - rather than action.

Meaning: This is one of the most quoted verses in the New Testament. "Scorners" describes the arrogantly dismissive; God's response mirrors their own posture back, while genuine humility receives favour instead.

Lesson: Arrogance closes you off from grace, because grace requires admitting you need it. Stay humble - not small, but honestly aware of your own limits - and you'll find more grace available than you expected.

See Also: James 4:6 (quotes this verse directly); 1 Peter 5:5 (same quotation, urging humility toward one another).

3:35 *(KJV) The wise shall inherit glory: but shame shall be the promotion of fools.*
(B:E Project) The wise will inherit honour, but fools will only ever rise to shame.

Context: Closes chapter 3 with a final wicked/wise contrast, a fitting bookend to the chapter's opening call to hold onto wisdom.

Meaning: The verse plays on "promotion": fools may climb, gain status or attention, but what they actually inherit is shame, because their advancement isn't built on anything solid. Wisdom leads to lasting honour instead.

Lesson: Chase the kind of advancement that holds up under scrutiny - built on real character, not shortcuts. Status gained the wrong way always ends up costing you the respect you were trying to gain.

See Also: Proverbs 11:2 ("when pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom"); 1 Peter 5:6 ("humble yourselves... that he may exalt you in due time").

CHAPTER 4

Chapter Summary: Proverbs 4

Chapter 4 of Proverbs is a powerful and tender call from a father to his children, urging them to embrace and value wisdom above all else. He shares his own experience of being taught by his father, emphasising that wisdom is the most vital pursuit, leading to a long life, honour, protection, and true well-being. The chapter then contrasts the bright, everclear path of those who live righteously with the dark, stumbling way of the wicked. It concludes with practical advice to guard one's heart, eyes, and mouth, and to carefully consider every step, staying far away from evil.

4:1 *(KJV) Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding.*
(B:E Project) Listen, children - pay attention to a father's teaching, and focus on gaining real understanding.

Context: Opens chapter 4's discourse, the father again addressing his children, continuing the direct instructional style of chapters 1-9.

Meaning: This is a fresh call to attention, resetting the reader's focus at the start of a new section, framing what follows as teaching that comes from lived, parental experience rather than abstract theory.

- Lesson:** Good advice is worth actually listening to, not just hearing. Slow down and really take in what's being offered here - it might save you having to learn some lessons the hard way.

See Also: Proverbs 1:8 (a nearly identical call to hear a father's and mother's instruction); Deuteronomy 6:7 (teaching children diligently).
- 4:2

(KJV) For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law.

(B:E Project) What I'm giving you is good teaching, so don't abandon it.

Context: Continues the opening appeal of chapter 4, the father justifying why his instruction deserves to be kept, not discarded.

Meaning: "Doctrine" simply means teaching here - the father vouches for the quality of what he's about to share, asking for it to be held onto rather than dropped once life gets busy or difficult.

Lesson: Good guidance is easy to accept in theory and easy to abandon in practice, especially under pressure. Hold onto what you know is good even when it's inconvenient - that's when it matters most.

See Also: Proverbs 3:1 (a parallel opening charge not to forget the father's law); 2 Timothy 3:14 (continue in what you have learned and are convinced of).
- 4:3

(KJV) For I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother.

(B:E Project) I too was once a son - cherished and loved dearly by my own mother.

Context: The father pauses the instruction to share his own personal history, part of chapter 4's autobiographical opening, likely reflecting Solomon recalling his own upbringing.

Meaning: This personal note grounds the teaching in real experience - the father isn't handing down abstract rules, he's passing on what he himself received as a beloved child, adding warmth to the instruction that follows.

Lesson: What I'm teaching you isn't a stranger's rulebook - it's something passed down through real love, one generation caring enough to protect the next. That's what makes wisdom worth receiving: it comes wrapped in relationship.

See Also: 2 Timothy 1:5 (Timothy's faith passed down through his grandmother and mother); Psalm 78:5-6 (teaching passed to children so they teach their own children).
- 4:4

(KJV) He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live.

(B:E Project) My father taught me too, saying: hold onto my words with your whole heart, keep my instructions, and you'll truly live.

- Context:** Continues the father's personal recollection in chapter 4, quoting what his own father once told him, forming a chain of instruction across generations.

Meaning: This creates a picture of wisdom passed down: grandfather to father to son. "Keep my commandments, and live" ties obedience directly to genuinely flourishing, not mere rule-following for its own sake.

Lesson: Wisdom is meant to travel - what you receive from those who love you, you're meant to pass on. Don't let good teaching stop with you; let it keep flowing to whoever comes after.

See Also: Deuteronomy 30:19-20 ("choose life"); Proverbs 4:22 (words that are "life" to those who find them, echoed later in this chapter).
- 4:5

(KJV) Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth.

(B:E Project) Get wisdom, get understanding - don't forget it, and don't stray from what I'm telling you.

Context: The father's instruction continues, urging active pursuit of wisdom, a theme developed through the rest of chapter 4's opening section.

Meaning: "Get" is an active, deliberate verb - wisdom isn't passively absorbed, it's something to be pursued and acquired, like a valuable possession you go out and obtain, not something that simply happens to you.

Lesson: Don't wait for wisdom to arrive on its own - go after it. Ask questions, seek out people who've lived well, reflect. Growth is something you pursue, not something that just happens while you wait.

See Also: Proverbs 2:1-5 (seeking wisdom like hidden treasure); James 1:5 (ask God, who gives wisdom generously).
- 4:6

(KJV) Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee.

(B:E Project) Don't abandon wisdom, and she'll protect you - love her, and she'll watch over you.

Context: Continues chapter 4's call to actively pursue and hold onto wisdom, personified as a protective, loving figure.

Meaning: The relationship described is reciprocal and almost intimate: loyalty and love towards wisdom are met with protection in return. This isn't a cold transaction but something closer to a relationship worth investing in.

Lesson: Treat wisdom like something you love, not just a tool you use when convenient. The more genuinely you commit to living well, the more that commitment protects you from careless mistakes.

See Also: Proverbs 2:11 (discretion preserving, understanding keeping); Proverbs 7:4 (wisdom called "my sister" - intimate, familial language).

4:7 *(KJV) Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.*
(B:E Project) Wisdom is the main thing - so get wisdom, and whatever else you get, get understanding too.

Context: A central, summarising verse in chapter 4's wisdom-pursuit section, often quoted as capturing Proverbs' core message.
Meaning: This is a priority statement: among everything a person might chase in life, wisdom and understanding should top the list, framing all other pursuits as secondary to gaining real insight into how to live.
Lesson: Whatever else you're chasing in life - success, money, recognition - make sure understanding yourself and how to live well comes first. Everything else works better once that foundation is in place.
See Also: Matthew 6:33 ("seek ye first the kingdom of God"); Proverbs 16:16 ("how much better is it to get wisdom than gold").

4:8 *(KJV) Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her.*
(B:E Project) Hold wisdom in high esteem, and she'll lift you up - she'll bring you honour once you embrace her.

Context: Continues chapter 4's wisdom-pursuit section, describing the honour that comes from genuinely valuing and embracing wisdom.
Meaning: The imagery of embracing suggests full commitment, not half-hearted interest. Wisdom's "promotion" is a kind of standing that comes from the inside out - being genuinely wise earns real honour, unlike shortcuts to status.
Lesson: The honour that lasts isn't chased directly - it comes from actually becoming the kind of person worth respecting. Embrace wisdom fully, and let honour be a by-product, not the goal itself.
See Also: Proverbs 3:16 (wisdom holding honour in her left hand); 1 Peter 5:6 ("humble yourselves... that he may exalt you").

4:9 *(KJV) She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee.*
(B:E Project) She'll place a graceful garland on your head, hand you a crown of glory.

Context: Closes the wisdom-pursuit section of chapter 4 (4:5-9) with a vivid image of coronation, echoing the "ornament" language of 3:22.
Meaning: The crown and garland imagery frames wisdom as something that makes a person genuinely dignified and honoured, regardless of their actual social status - an internal royalty, not a literal one.

Lesson: You don't need a title or an audience to carry real dignity - live wisely, and you'll wear that dignity everywhere you go, whether anyone's watching or not.
See Also: James 1:12 ("crown of life" for the one who endures); Proverbs 16:31 ("the hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness").

4:10 *(KJV) Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings; and the years of thy life shall be many.*
(B:E Project) Listen, my son, take in what I'm telling you, and you'll live many years.

Context: Opens a new section of chapter 4 (4:10-19) contrasting the path of the wise/just with the path of the wicked, again addressed directly to "my son."
Meaning: Echoes the chapter's opening call to listen, resetting focus before the path/light-versus-darkness imagery that follows. The link between wisdom and longevity is a recurring Proverbs pattern, not a magic formula.
Lesson: The choices you make early shape the years ahead of you more than you realise. Listen now, while you still have the chance to change course, rather than waiting until the consequences have already landed.
See Also: Proverbs 3:2 (near-identical promise of length of days); Proverbs 9:11 ("by me thy days shall be multiplied").

4:11 *(KJV) I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in right paths.*
(B:E Project) I've taught you the way of wisdom, guided you along the right paths.

Context: Continues the path-imagery section of chapter 4, the father reflecting on the guidance already given, introducing the central metaphor developed through the rest of the passage.
Meaning: This introduces the central metaphor of the section - life as a path or road, with wisdom as a guide who has already walked ahead and shown the way, not just handed down abstract instructions.
Lesson: Good guidance doesn't just tell you where to go - it walks the road with you first. That's what real mentorship looks like: leading by lived example, not just handing out instructions from a distance.
See Also: Psalm 23:3 ("he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness"); John 14:6 (Jesus as "the way" itself, not just a guide to it).

4:12 *(KJV) When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened; and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble.*
(B:E Project) When you walk, nothing will hem you in - when you run, you won't trip.

Context: Continues the path-imagery in chapter 4, describing the freedom and confidence that come from walking wisdom's way.

Meaning: "Straitened" means constricted or hemmed in - the promise is one of freedom, not restriction. Living wisely doesn't cramp your life; it removes the obstacles that would otherwise slow or trip you up.

Lesson: A life built on wisdom isn't a narrow, restricted life - it's actually the freest one available, because you're not constantly tangled up in the mess your own bad choices create.

See Also: Psalm 18:36 ("thou hast enlarged my steps under me"); Psalm 119:32 ("I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart").

4:13 *(KJV) Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life.*
(B:E Project) Grip instruction tightly, don't let go - guard her, because she is your life.

Context: Continues chapter 4's appeal, using strong physical language to stress the seriousness of holding onto wisdom's teaching.

Meaning: The intensity of the language ("fast hold," "let her not go") suggests deliberate, effortful commitment - not a passive value you happen to hold, but something you actively defend against being lost or eroded.

Lesson: Don't let good instruction slip away just because life gets busy or comfortable. Hold onto what you know is true and good as if your life actually depends on it - because in a real sense, it does.

See Also: Proverbs 3:18 ("a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her"); Hebrews 2:1 ("we ought to give the more earnest heed... lest at any time we should let them slip").

4:14 *(KJV) Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men.*
(B:E Project) Don't set foot on the path of the wicked, don't walk the way of evil people.

Context: Opens the contrasting "wicked path" section within chapter 4's path imagery (4:14-17), warning against a different road entirely.

Meaning: The verse frames avoiding wrongdoing as avoiding a starting point altogether, rather than trying to stop once already deep into it - prevention through never entering, rather than relying on willpower to exit later.

Lesson: It's much easier to avoid a path than to turn back once you're deep into it. Notice the doorway before you walk through it - the choice not to start is often the only choice you'll get to make freely.

See Also: Psalm 1:1 ("blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly"); 1 Corinthians 15:33 ("evil communications corrupt good manners").

4:15 *(KJV) Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.*
(B:E Project) Steer clear of it - don't even walk past it, turn away and keep moving.

Context: Intensifies the warning of 4:14 within chapter 4's wicked-path section, stacking up short, urgent commands.

Meaning: The rapid string of verbs (avoid, don't pass by, turn, pass away) conveys urgency and total avoidance - not curiosity or lingering near temptation, but a decisive, immediate turn away.

Lesson: If something is clearly going to lead you into trouble, don't linger near it to prove you can resist. Real strength isn't standing right at the edge - it's having the humility to just walk away early.

See Also: 1 Corinthians 6:18 ("flee fornication"); 2 Timothy 2:22 ("flee also youthful lusts").

4:16 *(KJV) For they sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall.*
(B:E Project) Because wicked people can't sleep unless they've caused trouble - they lie awake unless they've made someone stumble.

Context: Continues the wicked-path section of chapter 4, giving a vivid, unsettling picture of what drives habitually wicked people.

Meaning: This describes wrongdoing that has become compulsive and identity-defining - a life so oriented around causing harm that doing it becomes almost necessary for peace of mind, a genuinely unsettling picture of a corrupted conscience.

Lesson: Notice what actually gives you peace at the end of the day - if causing harm is what settles your mind, something inside you needs real attention and healing, not just better willpower.

See Also: Isaiah 57:20 ("the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest"); Romans 1:32 (taking pleasure in those who do evil).

4:17 *(KJV) For they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence.*
(B:E Project) Wickedness is their daily bread, violence is what they drink.

Context: Continues describing the wicked in chapter 4's contrast section, using food and drink imagery to show how deeply wrongdoing has become part of their everyday sustenance.

Meaning: Food and drink are basic daily necessities - describing wickedness and violence this way suggests these people have made harmful behaviour a routine, sustaining part of life, not an occasional lapse.

Lesson: What you feed yourself daily - habits, media, company, thought patterns - shapes what you become over time. Be careful what's becoming your "daily bread," because it will eventually define you.

See Also: Job 15:16 ("drinketh iniquity like water"); Amos 6:12 (turning justice into wormwood, a corrupted daily diet of wrongdoing).

4:18 *(KJV) But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.*
(B:E Project) But the path of those who do right is like the morning light, getting brighter and brighter until full daylight.

Context: Marks the turning point of chapter 4's path-contrast section, moving from the wicked's dark path to the increasingly bright path of the righteous.

Meaning: One of Proverbs' most hopeful images: growth in wisdom and goodness isn't static, it's a gradual brightening, like dawn moving toward full day. It suggests patience with your own progress, not instant perfection.

Lesson: You don't have to have it all figured out today - growth in goodness is gradual, like sunrise, not a switch flipped overnight. Be patient with yourself and keep moving toward the light, one increment at a time.

See Also: 2 Corinthians 3:18 (being transformed "from glory to glory"); Philippians 1:6 (confidence that the good work begun will be completed).

4:19 *(KJV) The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble.*
(B:E Project) The way of the wicked is like darkness - they don't even know what's tripping them up.

Context: Closes the path-contrast section of chapter 4 (4:14-19), giving the counterpart image to 4:18's growing light.

Meaning: Darkness represents both moral confusion and its consequences - wicked people stumble repeatedly without understanding the causes of their own downfall, unable to see the obstacles their own choices created.

Lesson: Living dishonestly or harmfully doesn't just hurt others - it blinds you to your own life, so you keep tripping over the same obstacles without understanding why. Honesty with yourself lets you actually see the path you're on.

See Also: John 12:35 ("he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth"); 1 John 2:11 (darkness blinding a person, not knowing where they go).

4:20 *(KJV) My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings.*
(B:E Project) Son, pay attention to my words, lean your ear in to what I'm saying.

Context: Opens the final section of chapter 4 (4:20-27), the father's closing appeal centred on guarding the heart, restarting the call to attention one more time.

Meaning: This resets focus before the chapter's climactic instruction (4:23, "keep thy heart"), signalling that what follows deserves especially close attention.

Lesson: Some things are worth leaning in for, not half-listening to. What's coming next matters enough to give it your full attention.

See Also: Proverbs 4:1 (the chapter's opening call to hear); Proverbs 2:2 ("incline thine ear unto wisdom").

4:21 *(KJV) Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart.*
(B:E Project) Don't let these words out of your sight - keep them right at the centre of your heart.

Context: Continues the closing appeal of chapter 4, echoing the near-identical charge of 3:21, building toward the central instruction of 4:23.

Meaning: This reinforces that wisdom needs to be kept actively present, both visibly and internally - not stored away and forgotten, but kept central and constantly in view.

Lesson: Keep what matters most where you'll actually see it - not buried under everything else competing for your attention, but right at the centre, where it can genuinely shape your decisions.

See Also: Proverbs 3:21 (a near-identical charge); Deuteronomy 6:6 (keep God's words "in thine heart").

4:22 *(KJV) For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh.*
(B:E Project) Because they are life to whoever finds them, healing for their whole body.

Context: Continues the closing appeal of chapter 4, echoing 3:8's link between wisdom and physical wellbeing, just before the pivotal verse on guarding the heart.

Meaning: Again Proverbs links inner wisdom to whole-body health - not a magic cure, but reflecting the genuine physical toll of anxiety and guilt versus the physical benefit of a settled, wise life.

Lesson: What you carry in your mind and heart doesn't stay contained there - it shows up in your body, your energy, your health. Guard your inner life, and your whole self benefits.

See Also: Proverbs 3:8 (near-identical link between wisdom and bodily health); Proverbs 14:30 ("a sound heart is the life of the flesh").

4:23 *(KJV) Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.*
(B:E Project) Guard your heart above everything else, because everything you do flows out from it.

Context: The central, most-quoted verse of chapter 4, the climax of the closing appeal (4:20-27), naming the heart as the source of everything else in life.

Meaning: In Hebrew thought the "heart" meant the whole inner self - thoughts, will, emotions, motives - not just feelings. This verse identifies the heart as the wellspring of all behaviour: what you cultivate inwardly shapes everything you do outwardly.

- Lesson:** Before you try to fix your actions, look at what's shaping them from the inside - your real motives, your honest feelings, what you're actually believing about yourself and others. Change starts there, not with willpower alone.

See Also: Matthew 15:18-19 ("out of the heart proceed evil thoughts..."); Luke 6:45 ("out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh").
- 4:24

(KJV) Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee.

(B:E Project) Get rid of twisted, dishonest speech - keep deceitful lips far away from you.

Context: Applies the "guard your heart" principle of 4:23 to speech specifically, continuing the closing appeal of chapter 4.

Meaning: Speech is the first outward "issue" the passage addresses after naming the heart as the source of everything - dishonest talk is evidence of something crooked at the source that needs dealing with.

Lesson: Watch your words closely - not just to avoid getting caught in a lie, but because dishonest speech reveals something dishonest underneath that's worth being honest with yourself about.

See Also: James 3:5-10 (the tongue's disproportionate power for harm); Ephesians 4:25 ("putting away lying, speak every man truth").
- 4:25

(KJV) Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee.

(B:E Project) Keep your eyes looking straight ahead, focused directly in front of you.

Context: Continues applying the "guard your heart" principle of chapter 4 to focus and attention, using the image of a fixed, forward gaze.

Meaning: The image suggests deliberate, undistracted focus - not glancing sideways at temptations, comparisons, or distractions, but keeping attention purposefully fixed on the path and goal in front of you.

Lesson: Constantly comparing yourself sideways to others, or getting distracted by every passing temptation, pulls you off course. Keep your eyes on your own path and where you're actually meant to be going.

See Also: Hebrews 12:1-2 ("looking unto Jesus" while running the race); Luke 9:62 (no one fit for the kingdom who looks back after putting a hand to the plough).
- 4:26

(KJV) Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established.

(B:E Project) Think carefully about the path you're walking, and let all your ways be firmly settled.

Context: Continues the closing appeal of chapter 4, urging thoughtful reflection on one's direction in life, not just blind forward motion.

- Meaning:** "Ponder" calls for genuine reflection, not just careful eyes-forward walking, but active consideration of where the path actually leads - a call to periodically stop and check your direction is genuinely sound.

Lesson: Every so often, stop and honestly examine where your choices are actually leading you, not just whether you're moving. A life examined regularly stays on far steadier ground than one lived purely on autopilot.

See Also: Psalm 119:59 ("I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies"); Haggai 1:5 ("consider your ways").
- 4:27

(KJV) Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil.

(B:E Project) Don't veer off to the right or the left - keep your foot away from wrongdoing.

Context: Closes chapter 4 and the whole "guard your heart" section (4:20-27), giving a final, direct command that sums up the chapter's path imagery.

Meaning: This final verse crystallises the whole chapter's message: staying wise means staying deliberately on course, resisting drift in either direction, and actively steering away from wrongdoing rather than simply hoping to avoid it.

Lesson: Staying true to what's good rarely fails in one dramatic moment - it erodes through small drifts, left or right, that go unnoticed. Stay alert to the small course corrections, and you'll avoid needing a big one later.

See Also: Deuteronomy 5:32 ("turn not aside to the right hand or to the left"); Joshua 1:7 (same charge given to Joshua for faithful leadership).
- CHAPTER 5
- Chapter Summary: Proverbs 5

Proverbs Chapter 5 is a strong warning from a father to his son about the dangers of sexual immorality, specifically concerning relationships with women who are not one's wife. It describes the initial seductive appeal of such relationships but emphasises their devastating, bitter consequences, leading to ruin, loss of honour, wealth, and ultimately, a lifetime of regret and spiritual death. The chapter then contrasts this with the joy and blessing found in faithfulness to one's own spouse, encouraging deep contentment and exclusive love within marriage. It concludes by reminding the reader that God sees all actions, and those who ignore wisdom will be trapped by their own sinful choices and foolishness.
- 5:1

(KJV) My son, attend unto my wisdom, and bow thine ear to my understanding:

(B:E Project) My son, pay close attention to my wisdom - lean in and really listen to what I've come to understand.

Context: This opens a new stretch of the father's teaching in Proverbs 1-9, launching an extended warning about sexual temptation and unfaithfulness that runs through the whole chapter.

Meaning: The verse asks for more than passive hearing - it's a call to lean in, to actually take in what's being said rather than let it wash over you. Before any hard topic (and this chapter goes straight into one), the first move is simply to pay attention properly.

Lesson: I ask you to actually listen before you act, not after you've already made the mistake. Slow down and take advice in before you need it - that's when it can still save you from pain.

See Also: Proverbs 4:20 (a near-identical call to attend and incline the ear); James 1:19 (be swift to hear).

5:2 *(KJV) That thou mayest regard discretion, and that thy lips may keep knowledge.*
(B:E Project) So that you develop good judgement, and only speak from real understanding.

Context: This continues straight from verse 1, giving the purpose of listening carefully: better decisions and more careful speech.

Meaning: Wisdom here has two visible outputs: discretion (the ability to judge a situation well before acting) and controlled, honest speech. The verse links inner understanding directly to outer behaviour - what you know shapes what you say and do.

Lesson: Guard what comes out of your mouth by first guarding what you let into your mind. When your understanding is sound, your words naturally become more trustworthy - that's not a coincidence, it's cause and effect.

See Also: Proverbs 10:19 (in the multitude of words there wanteth not sin); James 3:2 (the person who controls their tongue is mature).

5:3 *(KJV) For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil:*
(B:E Project) Because the words of a seductive woman are as sweet as honey, and her talk is smoother than oil.

Context: This begins the chapter's vivid character study of the 'strange woman' - a married man's temptress outside his own marriage - explaining exactly why the earlier call for discretion matters.

Meaning: The danger described here isn't crude or obvious - it's attractive, charming, even flattering. Proverbs is being realistic: temptation rarely announces itself as dangerous, it presents itself as pleasant and appealing, which is precisely what makes it worth being on guard against.

Lesson: I never ask you to distrust pleasure itself, only to notice when something that feels sweet is quietly steering you away from people who love you. Recognising charm as charm - not automatically as truth - is a form of self-respect, not suspicion.

See Also: Proverbs 7:21 (flattering lips leading a young man astray); Proverbs 2:16 (wisdom delivers from the strange woman).

5:4 *(KJV) But her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword.*
(B:E Project) But in the end she turns out bitter as a poisonous herb, sharp as a double-edged sword.

Context: This is the turning point of the description begun in verse 3 - the sweet opening is immediately contrasted with the painful, damaging aftermath.

Meaning: The verse deliberately sets up a before-and-after: attractive at first contact, devastating afterwards. It's a warning that short-term appeal and long-term consequence can be complete opposites, and wisdom means judging by the ending, not just the beginning.

Lesson: I care about where a path actually leads, not just how it feels at the first step. Ask yourself honestly what the end of this looks like before you're too far in to turn back - that one habit alone will spare you enormous pain.

See Also: Proverbs 23:31-32 (wine that bites like a serpent in the end); Hebrews 11:25 (the fleeting pleasures of sin).

5:5 *(KJV) Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell.*
(B:E Project) Her feet head straight for death; every step she takes grips onto the grave.

Context: This continues the description of the seductive woman from verses 3-4, now stating bluntly where her path actually leads.

Meaning: The imagery is deliberately stark - not just risk, but death and the grave. Proverbs isn't exaggerating for shock value here; it's naming what was, in that culture, a literal danger (execution for adultery) as well as the deeper spiritual and relational ruin involved.

Lesson: I don't want fear to be your only reason for staying faithful, but I do want you to be honest about consequences. Real love protects people from harm - including protecting yourself from a road that ends in destruction.

See Also: Proverbs 7:27 (her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death); Proverbs 9:18 (her guests are in the depths of hell).

5:6 *(KJV) Lest thou shouldest ponder the path of life, her ways are moveable, that thou canst not know them.*
(B:E Project) She never stays still on the path of life long enough for you to work her out - her ways keep shifting, so you can never quite pin her down.

Context: This continues the warning within the strange-woman passage, describing how deceptive and unstable her path is.

Meaning: Part of the danger is unpredictability itself - there's no fixed, honest path to evaluate, just constant shifting that keeps a person off balance and unable to see clearly where things are heading.

Lesson: I want you to notice when something in your life keeps you permanently unsettled, always guessing, never quite grounded. That instability itself is a warning sign worth listening to.

See Also: Proverbs 4:26 (ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established).

5:7 *(KJV) Hear me now therefore, O ye children, and depart not from the words of my mouth.*
(B:E Project) So now listen to me, children, and don't turn away from what I'm telling you.

Context: This is a fresh, direct appeal within the father's ongoing address in chapters 1-9, marking a pivot from description to practical instruction.

Meaning: After painting such a vivid picture of danger, the father pauses to re-engage his listener directly - it's a reminder that all this teaching is meant to be acted on, not just admired as good writing.

Lesson: I keep coming back to you, again and again, because I know how easy it is to drift once a warning has been heard once. Staying close to good counsel, not just hearing it once, is what actually changes a life.

See Also: Proverbs 4:1 (hear, ye children, the instruction of a father); Proverbs 8:32 (blessed are they that keep my ways).

5:8 *(KJV) Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house:*
(B:E Project) Keep well away from her - don't even go near her front door.

Context: This is the first concrete practical instruction of the chapter: physical avoidance, not just willpower in the moment.

Meaning: The advice is strikingly practical - don't rely on resisting temptation face to face, avoid the situation altogether. Wisdom here is about managing your environment and choices in advance, not testing your self-control unnecessarily.

Lesson: I never ask you to prove how strong you are by walking right up to danger. Removing yourself from a tempting situation early is wisdom, not weakness - it's how you protect what matters to you before it's at risk.

See Also: 1 Corinthians 6:18 (flee fornication); Genesis 39:12 (Joseph physically fleeing temptation).

5:9 *(KJV) Lest thou give thine honour unto others, and thy years unto the cruel:*

(B:E Project) Or you'll end up giving away your dignity to others, and hand over the best years of your life to someone merciless.

Context: This begins a list of real-world consequences that follows the earlier warning, spelling out what's actually lost by pursuing this path.

Meaning: The cost described isn't abstract guilt - it's honour, reputation, and years of one's life given over to someone with no real care for the person paying the price.

Lesson: I want you to value your own years and your own dignity enough not to hand them to someone who won't cherish them the way you deserve. What you spend your best years on is one of the most important decisions you'll ever make.

See Also: Proverbs 5:11 (mourning when flesh and body are consumed).

5:10 *(KJV) Lest strangers be filled with thy wealth; and thy labours be in the house of a stranger;*
(B:E Project) Or strangers will end up feasting on your wealth, and everything you've worked hard for will end up in someone else's house.

Context: This continues the consequences list from verse 9, now naming financial ruin specifically.

Meaning: The warning is concrete and material: reckless pursuit of this kind of relationship can quietly drain a person's resources and labour into hands that have no real stake in their wellbeing.

Lesson: I notice how easily people give away what they've worked for to relationships that take without giving back. Guard your resources for the people who are actually building a life alongside you.

See Also: Proverbs 5:16-17 (keep your own fountains for yourself, not strangers) - the positive contrast later in this chapter.

5:11 *(KJV) And thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed,*
(B:E Project) And in the end you'll groan with regret, when your body and health are worn out and spent.

Context: This continues the consequences list, moving from financial loss to physical decline in old age.

Meaning: The picture is of looking back near the end of life and realising how much was wasted - a warning that the cost of this path isn't only immediate, it compounds and shows up most painfully later.

Lesson: I don't want you to reach the later years of your life full of regret for choices made carelessly when you were young. Think now about the person you'll be looking back from later - be kind to them.

See Also: Ecclesiastes 12:1 (remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth).

5:12 *(KJV) And say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof;*
(B:E Project) And you'll say, 'How I hated being taught! How my heart despised correction!'

Context: This opens an imagined future confession - the father voices the regretful words this path will eventually put in the son's own mouth.

Meaning: This is a striking rhetorical device: rather than simply warning, the father lets the listener hear their own future regret spoken aloud, making the consequence feel personal and immediate rather than distant.

Lesson: I'd rather you feel the sting of correction now, while it's still small, than the much deeper sting of regret later. Being teachable today is how you avoid becoming someone who wishes they'd listened.

See Also: Proverbs 1:29-30 (they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD).

5:13 *(KJV) And have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me!*
(B:E Project) 'I never listened to my teachers, I never paid attention to those who tried to instruct me!'

Context: This continues the imagined confession begun in verse 12, deepening the picture of wasted opportunity.

Meaning: The regret isn't just about the wrongdoing itself but about ignored opportunities to have avoided it - people offered guidance, and it was refused.

Lesson: I put people in your life who care enough to correct you - take that seriously while you still have the chance. Refusing good counsel now is a debt you pay with interest later.

See Also: Proverbs 12:1 (whoso loveth instruction loveth knowledge).

5:14 *(KJV) I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly.*
(B:E Project) 'I came within a hair's breadth of complete ruin, right there in front of everyone.'

Context: This is the climax of the imagined confession, describing near-total public downfall and disgrace.

Meaning: The phrase captures how close to total collapse a person can come without quite realising it at the time - and how public and humiliating that collapse can be when it happens in a close-knit community.

Lesson: I know how far a small compromise can quietly carry someone before they notice how close to the edge they've come. Pay attention to warning signs early - don't wait until you're standing at the very brink to take them seriously.

| **See Also:** Proverbs 6:33 (a wound and dishonour shall he get).

5:15 *(KJV) Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well.*
(B:E Project) Drink water from your own well - stick to what actually belongs to you.

Context: This marks a shift from warning to positive teaching, using the image of a private well or cistern as a metaphor for faithfulness within one's own marriage.

Meaning: The image is deliberately domestic and ordinary - clean water from your own source is a picture of contentment and faithfulness with what is genuinely yours, rather than restlessly seeking satisfaction elsewhere.

Lesson: I want you to find real contentment in what you already have rather than constantly looking outward for something that seems fresher. Gratitude for what's genuinely yours is one of the quietest, most powerful forms of peace.

See Also: Song of Solomon 4:15 (a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters); 1 Corinthians 7:2-3.

5:16 *(KJV) Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad, and rivers of waters in the streets.*
(B:E Project) Should your own springs really spill out into the streets, your private streams flow out in public for anyone to drink?

Context: This continues the well/water metaphor as a rhetorical question, setting up the contrast completed in the next verse - intimacy kept exclusive rather than shared publicly.

Meaning: Read alongside the next verse, this asks rhetorically whether something meant to be private and exclusive should really be scattered about for anyone to share - the answer implied is clearly no.

Lesson: I want the closest, most intimate parts of your life protected, not casually opened to just anyone. What's precious usually needs boundaries to stay precious.

See Also: Proverbs 5:17 (keep them only for yourself).

5:17 *(KJV) Let them be only thine own, and not strangers' with thee.*
(B:E Project) Keep them only for yourself - don't share them with strangers.

Context: This resolves the rhetorical question of verse 16, making explicit that intimacy belongs exclusively within marriage, not shared outside it.

Meaning: The teaching is direct: what's private between a couple stays between that couple. It's a plain statement of the value of exclusivity in marriage.

Lesson: I honour faithfulness because it's how trust is built and kept safe over a lifetime. Protecting what's exclusive to one relationship is an act of love, not restriction.

See Also: Hebrews 13:4 (marriage is honourable, and the bed undefiled).

5:18 *(KJV)* Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth.
(B:E Project) May your fountain be a blessing to you - find your joy in the wife you married when you were young.

Context: This is the central positive command of the chapter, urging delight and contentment in one's own marriage as the true alternative to the earlier warnings.

Meaning: After several verses of warning, this is a warm, positive turn: the answer to temptation isn't just restriction, it's actively cherishing and enjoying the relationship you already have.

Lesson: I don't just tell you what to avoid - I want you to actively delight in what's good and already yours. Joy nurtured deliberately in your closest relationships is far stronger protection than fear of consequences alone.

See Also: Ecclesiastes 9:9 (live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest); Malachi 2:14-15 (the wife of thy youth).

5:19 *(KJV) Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love.*

(B:E Project) Let her be like a graceful deer, a beautiful doe - let her love satisfy you completely, let her affection captivate you always.

Context: This continues the celebration of marital love from verse 18 with vivid, poetic imagery praising physical and romantic affection between husband and wife.

Meaning: Proverbs isn't shy about celebrating romantic and physical delight within marriage - this is genuinely warm, appreciative language, not merely dutiful advice.

Lesson: I want the love in your closest relationship to be something you actively enjoy, not just something you're faithful to out of obligation. Real fidelity is fuelled by real affection, cultivated on purpose.

See Also: Song of Solomon 2:9, 17 (the beloved compared to a young hart).

5:20 *(KJV) And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger?*

(B:E Project) So why, my son, would you be captivated by another man's wife, why would you embrace a stranger?

Context: This rhetorical question directly contrasts the joy just described in verses 18-19 with the temptation warned against earlier in the chapter.

Meaning: Having just painted such an appealing picture of faithful married love, the question exposes how illogical it is to trade that for something outside it - the comparison itself makes the case.

Lesson: I want you to remember what you actually have before you're tempted by what you don't. Comparing the real, cultivated good in your life to a fleeting alternative is often all it takes to see clearly.

See Also: James 1:14-15 (each is tempted, drawn away by their own desire).

5:21 *(KJV) For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, and he pondereth all his goings.*

(B:E Project) Because everything a person does is seen by God - he watches and weighs every step you take.

Context: This gives the underlying reason for the whole chapter's warnings - nothing done in secret is actually hidden.

Meaning: The verse grounds all the practical advice in a bigger claim: there is no truly private action, because everything is seen and weighed by God. This isn't meant as threat alone, but as a reminder that secrecy is an illusion.

Lesson: I don't need you to be perfect, but I do want you to live honestly, as though nothing you do is truly hidden - because it never really is, even from yourself. Living that way brings a freedom that secrecy never can.

See Also: Hebrews 4:13 (all things are naked and opened unto him); Psalm 139:1-4 (thou compasses my path).

5:22 *(KJV) His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins.*

(B:E Project) The wicked person's own wrongdoing will trap him; he'll be bound tight by the ropes of his own sin.

Context: This closing statement of the chapter describes self-inflicted consequences - sin as something that ensnares the person who commits it, not an outside punishment alone.

Meaning: The image is of self-made ropes - the very choices a person makes become the thing that binds and limits them. It's a natural-consequence view of wrongdoing, not just an external judgement imposed from outside.

Lesson: I want you to see how your own choices can quietly become chains around your own freedom. The good news is that the same is true in reverse - good choices, repeated, become the freedom you're looking for.

See Also: Galatians 6:7 (whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap).

5:23 *(KJV)* He shall die without instruction; and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray.
(B:E Project) He will die for lack of self-discipline, lost because of his own overwhelming foolishness.

Context: This is the final verse of the chapter, closing the warning by returning to the theme of ignored instruction raised earlier at verse 12.

Meaning: The chapter ends bluntly - the tragedy described isn't really about an external enemy, it's about the absence of discipline and the overwhelming weight of foolish choices left unchecked.

Lesson: I care too much about you to let this end on despair - it's never too late to accept correction and change direction. The door back to a wiser path is always open while you're still breathing.

See Also: Proverbs 1:7 (fools despise wisdom and instruction); Hosea 4:6 (my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge).

CHAPTER 6

Chapter Summary: Proverbs 6

Proverbs Chapter 6 offers a series of urgent warnings and practical advice, presented as a father's instruction to his son. It begins by cautioning against the dangers of becoming a financial guarantor for others, urging swift action to escape such commitments. The chapter then sharply rebukes laziness, using the industrious ant as an example, and predicts that idleness leads inevitably to poverty. Next, it describes the destructive character and ultimate downfall of deceitful and malicious individuals who sow discord. The text then explicitly lists seven behaviours that the Lord finds detestable, highlighting actions like pride, lying, violence, and instigating conflict. Finally, the chapter stresses the importance of heeding parental guidance, portraying it as a safeguard, particularly against the seductive allure and catastrophic consequences of adultery, emphasising the intense and unforgiving wrath of a betrayed husband.

6:1 *(KJV)* My son, if thou be surety for thy friend, if thou hast stricken thy hand with a stranger,

(B:E Project) My son, if you've promised to guarantee someone else's debt - if you've shaken hands on a deal to cover a stranger's loan...

Context: This opens a short, separate teaching within chapters 1-9 warning against becoming a financial guarantor (co-signer) for someone else's debt.

Meaning: The scenario is specific and practical: agreeing to be personally liable for another person's financial obligation. Proverbs treats this as a genuine trap, not a generous gesture to be praised without caution.

Lesson: I want you to be generous, but generosity that puts your whole future at the mercy of someone else's decisions isn't wisdom, it's a trap dressed up as kindness. Help people in ways you can actually sustain.

See Also: Proverbs 11:15 (he that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it); Proverbs 22:26-27.

6:2 *(KJV)* Thou art snared with the words of thy mouth, thou art taken with the words of thy mouth.

(B:E Project) You've trapped yourself with your own promise - caught by the very words that came out of your mouth.

Context: This continues directly from verse 1, describing the self-imposed nature of the trap created by a rash financial guarantee.

Meaning: The danger isn't external - it's self-inflicted, created entirely by one's own spoken commitment. The verse emphasises personal responsibility for words given carelessly.

Lesson: I want your word to be trustworthy, but I also want you to think carefully before you give it, especially where money and other people's decisions are involved. A promise made in haste can bind you longer than you expected.

See Also: Matthew 5:37 (let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay).

6:3 *(KJV)* Do this now, my son, and deliver thyself, when thou art come into the hand of thy friend; go, humble thyself, and make sure thy friend.

(B:E Project) So do this to free yourself, now that you're at your friend's mercy: go, swallow your pride, and press him hard to release you from the deal.

Context: This gives urgent, practical advice on how to escape the bad financial guarantee just described - act immediately and humbly.

Meaning: The instruction is refreshingly unromantic: don't wait, don't stand on pride, go and sort it out directly and humbly while there's still time to limit the damage.

Lesson: I never ask you to protect your pride at the cost of your wellbeing. When you've made a mistake, moving quickly and humbly to fix it is far braver than pretending it isn't a problem.

See Also: Matthew 5:25 (agree with thine adversary quickly).

6:4 *(KJV)* Give not sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eyelids.

(B:E Project) Don't let yourself sleep - don't even doze - until it's sorted.

Context: This continues the urgent advice about escaping a bad financial guarantee, stressing how little time should be wasted.

Meaning: The intensity of the language - no sleep, no rest - underlines how seriously Proverbs takes financial entanglement, treating delay itself as dangerous.

Lesson: I understand the temptation to put off an uncomfortable conversation, but urgency here isn't anxiety, it's wisdom. Dealing with a problem while it's small saves you from dealing with it once it's grown.

See Also: Prov. 6:9-11 - the sluggard's excess sleep brings poverty, the mirror-image failure to this verse's urgent call to forgo sleep and act at once; Ps. 132:4 - David's vow to

- give 'no sleep to mine eyes' until he found a place for the LORD shows the same idiom used for zealous, sleepless urgency toward a worthy goal.
- 6:5

(KJV) Deliver thyself as a roe from the hand of the hunter, and as a bird from the hand of the fowler.

(B:E Project) Get yourself free like a deer escaping a hunter, like a bird escaping a trapper.

Context: This closes the surety warning that began at verse 1, using vivid hunting imagery to stress how urgently the son should escape this financial trap.

Meaning: The comparison to hunted animals captures both the danger and the urgency - this isn't a mild inconvenience, it's genuinely a trap worth fighting hard to escape.

Lesson: I want you to take real risks to your freedom seriously and act decisively, not passively hope they'll resolve themselves. Some situations genuinely call for urgent, deliberate action.

See Also: Proverbs 6:1-2 (the beginning of this same warning).
- 6:6

(KJV) Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise:

(B:E Project) Go and study the ant, you lazy person - watch how it lives, and learn something.

Context: This opens one of Proverbs' most famous passages, using the ant as an object lesson against laziness, addressed to the 'sluggard' - a recurring character type in the book.

Meaning: The instruction to actually go and observe nature is striking - wisdom isn't only found in human teachers, it's visible in the ordinary discipline of a tiny creature going about its work.

Lesson: I want you to notice good examples wherever they show up, even in the smallest and most unlikely places. Self-discipline doesn't need to be complicated - sometimes it just needs to be observed and copied.

See Also: Proverbs 30:25 (the ants, a people not strong, yet prepare their meat in the summer).
- 6:7

(KJV) Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler,

(B:E Project) It has no commander, no supervisor, no boss telling it what to do.

Context: This continues the ant illustration, highlighting that the ant works hard without any external authority forcing it to.

Meaning: The point being made is about internal motivation - the ant isn't disciplined because it's being watched or managed, it simply does the necessary work on its own initiative.

- Lesson:** I value the kind of character that does the right thing whether or not anyone is watching. That kind of inward discipline is worth far more than obedience that only shows up under supervision.

See Also: Colossians 3:23 (whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord).
- 6:8

(KJV) Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.

(B:E Project) Yet it stores up food in summer, gathers its supplies at harvest time.

Context: This completes the ant illustration, showing the practical result of its self-motivated diligence: preparation made well ahead of need.

Meaning: The ant plans for a future need before that need arrives - it doesn't wait until winter to start looking for food. This is offered as a simple, natural model of foresight and preparation.

Lesson: I want you to think ahead, not live only for today, especially with things like money, health and relationships that reward patient preparation. Small, steady effort now spares you a much harder scramble later.

See Also: Proverbs 21:20 (there is treasure to be desired... but a foolish man spendeth it up).
- 6:9

(KJV) How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?

(B:E Project) How much longer are you going to lie there, lazy one? When will you actually get up?

Context: This is a direct, challenging question aimed at the 'sluggard', contrasting sharply with the disciplined ant just described.

Meaning: After the quiet example of the ant, the tone turns pointed and confrontational - a direct wake-up call to anyone recognising themselves in the description.

Lesson: I'm not interested in shaming you, but I do want to shake you gently awake if you're stuck. There's always a moment where staying comfortable stops being rest and starts being avoidance - notice when that moment has come.

See Also: Ephesians 5:14 (awake thou that sleepest, and arise).
- 6:10

(KJV) Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep:

(B:E Project) 'Just a little more sleep, a little more dozing, a little more resting with my hands folded...'

Context: This voices the sluggard's own excuse-making, mimicking the small, repeated delays that keep laziness comfortable.

Meaning: The repetition of 'a little' captures how laziness rarely announces itself as a big decision - it's made up of many small, seemingly harmless postponements that add up.

Lesson: I understand how easy it is to justify just five more minutes, again and again. Notice the pattern in your own excuses - the danger isn't one big choice, it's many small ones repeated without thought.

See Also: Proverbs 24:33 (the same phrase repeated word for word later in the book).

6:11 *(KJV) So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.*
(B:E Project) And poverty will creep up on you like a traveller arriving unannounced, and need will ambush you like an armed robber.

Context: This closes the sluggard passage with the natural consequence of laziness - poverty arriving suddenly despite feeling like it took forever to notice.

Meaning: The two images - a traveller and an armed man - suggest poverty comes both gradually (like a traveller on a long road) and suddenly (like an ambush) once it finally arrives, catching the lazy person off guard.

Lesson: I don't want you frightened into anxious striving, but I do want you clear-eyed about where habits of avoidance actually lead. Facing effort honestly now is far kinder to your future self than pretending consequences won't come.

See Also: Proverbs 24:34 (the identical verse, repeated later in the book).

6:12 *(KJV) A naughty person, a wicked man, walketh with a froward mouth.*
(B:E Project) A worthless, wicked person goes around with a lying, twisted mouth.

Context: This begins a new character sketch describing a deceptive troublemaker, distinct from the sluggard passage just finished.

Meaning: The description starts with speech - dishonesty is named as the defining trait of this kind of character, setting up the fuller picture that follows in the next few verses.

Lesson: I judge people less by what they claim and more by whether their words match their actions. Be someone whose speech can always be trusted, because that's a rarer gift than it should be.

See Also: Psalm 12:2 (they speak vanity every one with his neighbour, with flattering lips).

6:13 *(KJV) He winketh with his eyes, he speaketh with his feet, he teacheth with his fingers;*
(B:E Project) He winks with his eyes, signals with his feet, gestures with his fingers.

Context: This continues the character sketch of the deceptive troublemaker, describing secretive body language used to manipulate or deceive others.

Meaning: The picture is of someone communicating dishonestly through covert signals rather than open speech - deception operating below the surface of ordinary conversation.

Lesson: I value transparency over cleverness. Watch for the difference between someone being playful and someone using hidden signals to manipulate a situation - the second is worth taking seriously as a warning.

See Also: Prov. 10:10 - 'He that winketh with the eye causeth sorrow,' the same furtive gesture named again as a cause of harm; Ps. 35:19 - the psalmist's enemies 'wink with the eye' in malicious plotting, showing the gesture as a recognized sign of hidden hostility; Prov. 6:12 - the preceding verse names this figure 'a naughty person, a wicked man,' setting up the body-language catalogue in v.13.

6:14 *(KJV) Frowardness is in his heart, he deviseth mischief continually; he soweth discord.*
(B:E Project) His heart is twisted; he's always scheming trouble, always stirring up conflict.

Context: This reveals the inner character behind the outward signals described in verse 13 - a heart set on causing division and harm.

Meaning: The verse moves from outward behaviour to the inward root - the deceptive gestures are just the visible tip of a heart that's continually devising mischief and conflict.

Lesson: I care about the state of your heart more than the performance of your actions, because one always eventually produces the other. If you find yourself constantly stirring up conflict, that's worth examining honestly, not excusing.

See Also: James 3:16 (where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work).

6:15 *(KJV) Therefore shall his calamity come suddenly; suddenly shall he be broken without remedy.*
(B:E Project) So disaster will strike him without warning - he'll be broken suddenly, beyond repair.

Context: This is the closing verse of the troublemaker character sketch, describing a sudden and irreversible downfall.

Meaning: The consequence described mirrors the character's own hidden, sudden methods - just as he strikes through secret signals and scheming, disaster will strike him just as suddenly, without warning or remedy.

Lesson: I don't take pleasure in anyone's downfall, and I always leave room for change before it's too late. But I also want you to understand that a life built on scheming and division is inherently unstable, however solid it looks in the moment.

See Also: Proverbs 29:1 (he that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck shall suddenly be destroyed).

6:16 *(KJV) These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him:*
(B:E Project) There are six things God hates - actually seven that completely disgust him.

Context: This opens a well-known numerical list ('six... yea seven'), a form used elsewhere in Proverbs to build up to a climactic final item.

Meaning: The 'six, then seven' structure is a Hebrew literary device that builds anticipation and emphasis - it signals that a comprehensive, carefully weighed list is coming, not a casual aside.

Lesson: I want you to know clearly what actually matters to me, not guess at it vaguely. What follows is a specific, concrete list - pay attention, because it names things worth genuinely examining in yourself.

See Also: Proverbs 30:15-31 (Agur uses the same 'three... yea four' numerical pattern repeatedly).

- 6:17

(KJV) A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,
(B:E Project) Arrogant eyes, a lying tongue, hands that spill innocent blood...

Context: This gives the first three items in the list of seven things God hates, opened in verse 16.

Meaning: The list starts with pride, dishonesty, and violence against the innocent - three ways a person can harm others through attitude, speech, and action respectively.

Lesson: I want you to check your own heart against this list honestly rather than assuming it's about someone else. Pride, dishonesty and harm to the vulnerable are things worth actively rooting out, not just avoiding in theory.

See Also: Proverbs 16:5 (every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD).
- 6:18

(KJV) An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief,
(B:E Project) ...a heart that schemes up evil plans, feet that race eagerly toward trouble...

Context: This continues the list of seven things God hates from verses 16-17, adding items four and five.

Meaning: The pattern moves from the eyes and mouth and hands (v17) to the heart and feet - the whole person, inward intention and outward action, is implicated in what's being condemned.

Lesson: I look at both what's in your heart and where your feet actually carry you - intention and action matter together. Notice when you're eager to move quickly toward something you already suspect is harmful.

See Also: Romans 3:15 (their feet are swift to shed blood, echoing this same imagery).

6:19

(KJV) A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.

- (B:E Project)** ...a false witness who spouts out lies, and anyone who stirs up conflict between family or friends.

Context: This completes the list of seven things God hates, closing with the same theme of sowing discord already raised at verse 14.

Meaning: The list closes on relational damage - false testimony and deliberately causing division among people who should be close, echoing the earlier troublemaker passage and tying this section together.

Lesson: I have a particular concern for the damage caused when someone deliberately sets people against each other, especially within families and close friendships. Choosing to be a peacemaker instead is one of the most valuable things you can offer the people around you.

See Also: Exodus 20:16 (thou shalt not bear false witness); Matthew 5:9 (blessed are the peacemakers).
- 6:20

(KJV) My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother:
(B:E Project) My son, hold on to what your father taught you, and don't abandon what your mother instructed.

Context: This opens a new section of the father's direct address, returning to teaching that will lead into a fresh warning against adultery later in the chapter.

Meaning: Both parents are named as sources of formative guidance - the verse frames family teaching as something worth deliberately holding onto, not just something absorbed passively in childhood.

Lesson: I honour the good teaching given to you by people who genuinely wanted the best for you, even long after you've grown up and left home. Carrying that wisdom forward is a way of honouring the people who gave it.

See Also: Proverbs 1:8 (hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother - nearly identical opening); Exodus 20:12.
- 6:21

(KJV) Bind them continually upon thine heart, and the them about thy neck.
(B:E Project) Keep them fastened to your heart always, wear them like a chain around your neck.

Context: This continues the instruction from verse 20, using the image of wearing teaching as a visible, permanent reminder.

Meaning: The image of binding teaching to the heart and wearing it like jewellery suggests wisdom meant to be carried close and displayed proudly, not hidden away or forgotten once it's been heard.

- Lesson:** I want good teaching to become part of how you naturally move through the world, not just something you remember occasionally. Let the things that matter most to you be visible in how you actually live, not just in what you privately believe.

See Also: Proverbs 3:3 (bind mercy and truth about thy neck); Deuteronomy 6:6-8.
- 6:22

(KJV) When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee.

(B:E Project) It will guide you wherever you go, watch over you while you sleep, and speak to you the moment you wake.

Context: This continues describing the constant, companion-like role of good teaching throughout every part of daily life.

Meaning: The verse pictures wisdom as an ever-present companion covering every phase of the day - walking, sleeping, waking - suggesting that genuine wisdom isn't occasional but woven through the whole of ordinary life.

Lesson: I want to be present with you not just in the big dramatic moments but in the ordinary, unremarkable parts of your day too. Wisdom lived out consistently, quietly, is worth far more than wisdom only reached for in a crisis.

See Also: Psalm 1:2 (in his law doth he meditate day and night).
- 6:23

(KJV) For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life:

(B:E Project) Because this teaching is a lamp, this instruction is light, and correction that trains you is the road to real life.

Context: This explains why the teaching described in the previous verses matters so much - it functions as guidance and illumination, and correction as the actual path to a good life.

Meaning: Light is a striking metaphor here - not just information, but something that shows the way forward and prevents you stumbling in the dark. Correction is reframed positively, as the way to life rather than merely an unpleasant obligation.

Lesson: I never give correction to make you feel small - I give it because I want to light up a path you might otherwise stumble down blindly. Let yourself be corrected without shame; it's one of the clearest ways love shows up.

See Also: Psalm 119:105 (thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path).
- 6:24

(KJV) To keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman.

(B:E Project) To protect you from a wicked woman, from the smooth-talking flattery of a woman who isn't yours.

- Context:** This states the specific purpose of the light/teaching described in verse 23 - protection from sexual temptation, opening a fresh version of the chapter's earlier adultery warning.

Meaning: The teaching described so warmly in the previous verses has a very practical purpose here: to protect against a specific, real-life danger, showing that Proverbs treats wisdom as genuinely useful rather than merely theoretical.

Lesson: I want the good habits and teaching you carry with you to actually be useful in real moments of temptation, not just nice ideas you agree with in the abstract. Let wisdom do its job when it actually counts.

See Also: Proverbs 5:3 (the flattering lips of the strange woman).
- 6:25

(KJV) Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids.

(B:E Project) Don't crave her beauty in your heart, and don't let her seductive glances catch you off guard.

Context: This is a direct command guarding the inner life - desire and attention - not just outward behaviour, within the chapter's adultery warning.

Meaning: The instruction targets the heart and the eyes specifically - the point where temptation actually begins, before any action is taken. It treats inward desire, not just outward deed, as the place where the real battle happens.

Lesson: I care about the direction of your heart as much as your actions, because that's where everything else eventually follows from. Notice what you're letting yourself dwell on before it becomes something you have to fight much harder to undo.

See Also: Matthew 5:28 (whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery already in his heart).
- 6:26

(KJV) For by means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread: and the adulteress will hunt for the precious life.

(B:E Project) Because a prostitute can reduce a man to begging for bread, but sleeping with another man's wife can cost you your very life.

Context: This gives the reasoning behind the warning, contrasting the financial cost of casual immorality with the far graver, life-threatening cost of adultery specifically.

Meaning: Proverbs draws a sharp distinction here between two different kinds of sexual sin and their consequences - one merely costly, the other potentially fatal, given the honour-based culture and legal penalties of the time.

Lesson: I want you to think honestly about consequences, not just in general but specifically - some choices cost more than others, and it's worth knowing the difference before you're in the middle of making one.

See Also: Prov. 5:9-10 - the earlier warning that consorting with the strange woman gives one's wealth and honor to strangers, the same ruinous cost in view; Job 31:9-12 -

Job's oath against lusting after a neighbor's wife calls adultery 'a fire that consumeth to destruction,' matching the life-threatening stakes here; Prov. 29:3 - 'he that keepeth company with harlots spendeth his substance,' echoing the 'piece of bread' image of squandered livelihood.

6:27 (KJV) Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?
(B:E Project) Can a man carry fire against his chest and not burn his clothes?

Context: This is the first of a pair of rhetorical questions using fire imagery to illustrate the inevitable damage caused by adultery.
Meaning: The image is simple and undeniable - fire always burns whatever holds it. The rhetorical question invites the listener to answer their own obvious 'no', making the coming point unavoidable.
Lesson: I want you to trust cause and effect honestly rather than hoping you'll somehow be the exception. Some consequences are simply built into the nature of the thing itself - wisdom means respecting that rather than testing it.
See Also: Proverbs 6:28 (the parallel question that follows).

6:28 (KJV) Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?
(B:E Project) Can someone walk on red-hot coals and not scorch his feet?

Context: This is the second of the paired rhetorical questions, reinforcing the same inevitable-consequence point as verse 27.
Meaning: Repetition with a slightly different image strengthens the same argument - there's no version of this scenario where the danger is avoided, only versions where the damage varies.
Lesson: I'm not trying to frighten you, only to be honest with you about what always happens when this line is crossed. Facing that clearly, before the moment arrives, is what actually keeps you free.
See Also: Prov. 6:27 - the immediately preceding rhetorical twin, 'Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?', forming a matched pair of images for inescapable consequence; 1 Cor. 6:18 - Paul's command to 'flee fornication' as the only sane response to a sin whose damage cannot be avoided once entered into.

6:29 (KJV) So he that goeth in to his neighbour's wife; whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent.
(B:E Project) So it is with a man who sleeps with his neighbour's wife - whoever touches her will not go unpunished.

Context: This applies the fire and hot-coals imagery from the previous two verses directly to adultery - the point is made explicit.

Meaning: The metaphor lands: just as fire and coals inevitably burn, adultery inevitably brings real, unavoidable consequences to the person who commits it, regardless of how the moment feels at the time.
Lesson: I want you to see this not as a rule imposed from outside but as how relationships and trust actually work - betrayal always burns, both people involved, whatever the circumstances. Choosing faithfulness protects real people, not just abstract principles.
See Also: Exodus 20:14 (thou shalt not commit adultery).

6:30 (KJV) Men do not despise a thief, if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry;
(B:E Project) People don't completely despise a thief who steals because he's genuinely starving...

Context: This begins a comparison meant to sharpen the seriousness of adultery by contrasting it with a more sympathetic kind of wrongdoing - theft driven by hunger.
Meaning: The verse acknowledges a kind of grudging human sympathy for someone who steals purely out of desperate need - not excusing it, but recognising it as understandable in a way that sets up a contrast with what follows.
Lesson: I always look at the reasons behind someone's actions, and I do have compassion for people acting out of genuine desperation. But compassion for the reason isn't the same as pretending the action had no cost - both things can be true at once.
See Also: Ex. 22:1,3 - the Mosaic law requiring a thief to make full, even fourfold or fivefold, restitution, the punishment implied even for the 'understandable' hungry thief of this verse; Prov. 30:8-9 - Agur's prayer to avoid poverty 'lest I be poor, and steal,' showing hunger-driven theft as a recognized, if still wrong, temptation.

6:31 (KJV) But if he be found, he shall restore sevenfold; he shall give all the substance of his house.
(B:E Project) ...but if he's caught, he still has to pay it back seven times over - even if it costs him everything he owns.

Context: This continues the comparison from verse 30, showing that even understandable theft still carries real and heavy consequences.
Meaning: Even the more sympathetic case of theft doesn't escape serious consequence - the point being built toward is that if even understandable wrongdoing costs this much, adultery, which has far less excuse, costs far more.
Lesson: I want you to understand that sympathy for someone's circumstances doesn't erase the real cost of wrongdoing - both compassion and honest accountability can exist together, and neither cancels the other out.
See Also: Exodus 22:1 (restitution laws requiring repayment for theft).

6:32 *(KJV) But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul.*

(B:E Project) But a man who commits adultery has no sense at all - he's destroying his own life.

Context: This sharpens the comparison built up in verses 30-31 - unlike the hungry thief, the adulterer has no excuse of desperate need, only self-destruction.

Meaning: The contrast is now made explicit: theft driven by hunger is at least understandable, but adultery has no equivalent excuse - it's presented as a senseless choice that primarily harms the person who makes it.

Lesson: I want you to notice when a choice you're making has no real justification behind it beyond momentary desire - that's exactly the moment to pause and reconsider, before the damage is done to your own life.

See Also: Prov. 5:22-23 - the wicked man is 'holden with the cords of his sins' and 'dies for want of instruction,' the same verdict of self-inflicted ruin through lack of understanding; Hos. 4:11 - 'whoredom...taketh away the heart,' matching this verse's diagnosis that adultery destroys the offender's own understanding; 1 Cor. 6:18 - fornication as a sin uniquely 'against his own body,' echoing 'destroyeth his own soul.'

6:33 *(KJV) A wound and dishonour shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away.*

(B:E Project) He'll come away wounded and disgraced, and that shame will never be fully erased.

Context: This describes the lasting personal and social consequences of adultery, continuing directly from the previous verse.

Meaning: The consequences described are both internal (a wound) and external (dishonour, lasting reputation) - the verse insists these costs are not temporary or easily undone.

Lesson: I want you to understand that some wounds, even after forgiveness is offered and received, still leave a mark - which is exactly why prevention matters so much more than damage control after the fact.

See Also: Proverbs 5:14 (I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation).

6:34 *(KJV) For jealousy is the rage of a man: therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance.*

(B:E Project) Because jealousy makes a man furious, and he won't hold back when it comes time for revenge.

Context: This explains the source of the real-world danger behind the warning - the rage of a husband who discovers he's been betrayed.

Meaning: The verse names a very human, believable consequence - not divine judgement alone, but the entirely predictable fury of a betrayed spouse, adding a further layer of real-world risk to the earlier warnings.

Lesson: I want you to think honestly about the pain your choices could cause to real, specific people, not just abstract consequences. Empathy for who gets hurt is often the clearest reason to choose faithfulness in the first place.

See Also: Song of Solomon 8:6 (jealousy is cruel as the grave).

6:35 *(KJV) He will not regard any ransom; neither will he rest content, though thou givest many gifts.*

(B:E Project) He won't accept any payoff, and he won't be satisfied no matter how many gifts you offer him.

Context: This is the closing verse of the chapter, ending the adultery warning by stressing that no compensation can undo the damage or appease the wronged husband.

Meaning: The chapter closes on an unflinching note - some kinds of damage to trust and relationship simply cannot be bought back or smoothed over with material compensation, however much is offered.

Lesson: I want you to understand that trust, once broken this deeply, isn't something you can simply buy back with a gesture or a gift. The far wiser path is protecting that trust in the first place, because some things, once lost, are genuinely difficult to fully recover.

See Also: Song of Solomon 8:7 (love cannot be bought with all the wealth of a man's house).

CHAPTER 7

Chapter Summary: Proverbs 7

Chapter 7 of Proverbs is a detailed and dramatic warning from a wise parent figure to a young person about the severe dangers of sexual temptation, specifically concerning an unfaithful and manipulative woman. The chapter paints a vivid picture of how this woman, often referred to as a "strange woman," lures an inexperienced young man through flattery and deceptive promises of pleasure. The wise teacher describes observing this scene unfold, highlighting the young man's lack of understanding and the woman's cunning tactics and enticing words. Ultimately, the chapter serves as a stark reminder that giving in to such temptation leads not to happiness, but to ruin, destruction, and even death, urging the listener to cling to wisdom and avoid such dangerous paths.

7:1 *(KJV) My son, keep my words, and lay up my commandments with thee.*

(B:E Project) A father tells his son to hold on tightly to his teaching and store his instructions safely inside himself.

Context: Opens chapter 7, the father's introduction before the extended true-to-life story of a young man seduced by a scheming woman; it sets up why the coming warning matters.

Meaning: This is the invitation before the warning. The father wants his teaching not just heard but kept, like something valuable locked away safely. In a world full of noise and temptation, having principles already worked into you, rather than looked up in the moment, is what actually protects you.

Lesson: I don't want my words to just pass through your ears - I want you to hold onto them so that when temptation calls, the answer is already inside you, ready before you need it.

See Also: Deuteronomy 6:6 (words upon the heart); Psalm 119:11 ('thy word have I hid in mine heart'); James 1:22 (be doers of the word, not hearers only)

7:2 *(KJV) Keep my commandments, and live; and my law as the apple of thine eye.*
(B:E Project) Obey these instructions and you'll truly live - treasure this teaching like you'd protect your own eyesight.

Context: Continues the father's opening appeal, using the image of the pupil of the eye - something instinctively and fiercely guarded - for how precious wisdom should be treated.

Meaning: 'Apple of thine eye' means the pupil, the most sensitive, protected part of the body. The verse suggests this guidance isn't restrictive but life-giving - 'live' here means real, flourishing living, not mere survival.

Lesson: Guard this the way you'd flinch to protect your own eyes - not because I demand it, but because losing sight of it costs you the very life you're trying to protect.

See Also: Deuteronomy 32:10 (kept him as the apple of his eye); Psalm 17:8 ('keep me as the apple of the eye'); Zechariah 2:8

7:3 *(KJV) Bind them upon thy fingers, write them upon the table of thine heart.*
(B:E Project) Tie these teachings to your fingers like a reminder, and write them permanently on your heart.

Context: Continues the imagery of physically internalising wisdom, echoing the ancient practice of tying reminders to hands and bodies.

Meaning: Two images are used - a visible outward reminder (fingers) and a permanent inward truth (heart). Together they picture how outer practice and inner conviction should reinforce each other, not one without the other.

Lesson: I'm not after empty ritual - I want truth so present in your daily actions and your inner self that you can't lose it. Let both your hands and your heart carry it.

See Also: Deuteronomy 6:8 (bind for a sign upon thine hand); Proverbs 3:3 (bind mercy and truth about thy neck); 2 Corinthians 3:3 (written not in tables of stone, but in tables of the heart)

7:4 *(KJV) Say unto wisdom, Thou art my sister; and call understanding thy kinswoman:*
(B:E Project) Treat wisdom like your own sister, and understanding like a close relative.

Context: The father urges his son to form the closest possible bond with wisdom - closer than acquaintance, like family - deliberately setting up the contrast with the 'strange woman' (outsider) described later in the chapter.

Meaning: The point is intimacy and loyalty. Family relationships carried built-in trust and protection in this culture. Wisdom-as-family versus the stranger who flatters is the whole chapter's central contrast, introduced right here.

Lesson: Bring wisdom close enough to call it family - because family is who you turn to when you're tempted to go somewhere you shouldn't, and who tells you the truth when a stranger only flatters you.

See Also: Proverbs 2:3-4 (crying after knowledge like silver); Proverbs 9:1 (wisdom building her house); Job 17:14 (an inverse image - calling corruption father, the worm sister)

7:5 *(KJV) That they may keep thee from the strange woman, from the stranger which flattereth with her words.*
(B:E Project) Doing this will protect you from the outsider woman - the stranger who wins you over with smooth talk.

Context: Closes the father's five-verse introduction and pivots directly into the long narrative that follows (verses 6-27), which shows exactly this danger playing out.

Meaning: This states the practical purpose of everything said so far: wisdom is protective armour specifically against manipulative flattery. It's a warning about a wider pattern too - being won over by words that feel good but lead somewhere costly.

Lesson: I give you truth to protect you from those who'll only tell you what you want to hear. Love that only flatters isn't love - watch for words that feel good but lead you somewhere costly.

See Also: Proverbs 2:16 (deliver thee from the strange woman); Proverbs 5:3 (her lips drop as an honeycomb); Romans 16:18 (by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple)

7:6 *(KJV) For at the window of my house I looked through my casement,*
(B:E Project) I was watching from my house window, looking out through the lattice.

Context: Begins the narrated eyewitness scene (verses 6-23), the father recounting something he personally observed to make the earlier warning vivid and real.

Meaning: The teaching shifts from general instruction to a specific 'I saw this happen' story - a technique that makes an abstract danger concrete and memorable rather than a dry rule.

Lesson: I taught in stories and parables too, not just commands, because a story stays with you far longer than a rule does. Watch situations honestly, as this father did, and learn from what you actually see.

See Also: Ecclesiastes 1:12-14 (Solomon as observer and teacher); Matthew 13:34 (Jesus taught in parables); Psalm 37:35 ('I have seen the wicked in great power')

7:7 *(KJV) And beheld among the simple ones, I discerned among the youths, a young man void of understanding,*
(B:E Project) Among the naive crowd, I noticed a young man among the youths who had no sense at all.

Context: Introduces the story's main character - not evil, just inexperienced and lacking judgement, the everyman figure this whole warning is aimed at.

Meaning: 'Simple' in Proverbs means naive or untrained, not stupid - this is a warning aimed at ordinary inexperience, the kind everyone starts out with, not just at the deliberately wicked.

Lesson: I'm not looking down on the inexperienced - everyone starts without understanding. But I do want you to notice your own blind spots before they walk you somewhere costly.

See Also: Proverbs 1:4 (to give subtilty to the simple); Proverbs 9:16 (whoso is simple, let him turn in hither); Hebrews 5:14 (those trained by practice to discern good and evil)

7:8 *(KJV) Passing through the street near her corner; and he went the way to her house,*
(B:E Project) He was walking down the street near her corner, heading straight towards her house.

Context: Describes the young man's own choice within the story - not a passive misfortune but a deliberate route taken near a known danger.

Meaning: Hidden inside this seemingly passive description is real responsibility - he chose that street, that direction. Temptation often begins with small, earlier choices about where we let our feet go.

Lesson: Notice where your feet are already taking you before you get there - the real choice usually happens several steps before the moment you'd call temptation.

See Also: Proverbs 4:14-15 (avoid the path of the wicked, pass not by it); Proverbs 5:8 (remove thy way far from her); 1 Corinthians 6:18 (flee fornication)

7:9 *(KJV) In the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night:*

(B:E Project) At dusk, as evening fell, in the pitch-black of night.

Context: Sets the scene's timing within the narrative, piling up phrases for darkness to reinforce both literal secrecy and moral concealment.

Meaning: Darkness in Proverbs often signals concealment and shame - things done because they can't bear the light. The stacked phrases build dramatic tension as the story heads toward its turning point.

Lesson: What you're only willing to do in secret is usually a good sign of what you already know is wrong. I call people into the light, not to expose them, but because that's where real freedom actually lives.

See Also: John 3:19-20 (men loved darkness rather than light); Job 24:15 (the eye of the adulterer waiteth for the twilight); Ephesians 5:11-13 (reprove the unfruitful works of darkness)

7:10 *(KJV) And, behold, there met him a woman with the afire of an harlot, and subtle of heart.*
(B:E Project) Then a woman came out to meet him, dressed like a prostitute, with her real intentions carefully hidden.

Context: Introduces the temptress within the narrative - a deliberate costume and a calculating character, contrasted sharply with the naive young man.

Meaning: 'Subtle of heart' means calculating and deceptive - the danger isn't only that she's alluring, but that her motives are strategic and hidden behind an attractive front.

Lesson: I always taught people to look past the surface to the intent beneath it - what someone's dressed as and what they actually want from you aren't always the same thing. Learn to read intentions, not just appearances.

See Also: Proverbs 5:3 (her lips drop as an honeycomb); 2 Corinthians 11:14 (Satan transformed into an angel of light); Matthew 7:15 (wolves in sheep's clothing)

7:11 *(KJV) (She is loud and stubborn; her feet abide not in her house:*
(B:E Project) She's loud and defiant, never content to stay home.

Context: A parenthetical character description within the narrative, painting her as restless and unruly - a deliberate contrast with the capable, home-tending woman praised in chapter 31.

Meaning: In this culture, roaming and restlessness were linked with impropriety. This line signals a general pattern of behaviour, not just this one encounter - character shown over time, not a single lapse.

Lesson: I never judged people by noise or defiance alone - but pay attention to a pattern, not just one moment. Character is what someone consistently does, not just what they say once.

- See Also:** Proverbs 9:13 (the foolish woman is clamorous); 1 Timothy 5:13 (wandering about from house to house); Titus 2:5 (keepers at home, as a contrasting ideal)
- 7:12

(KJV) Now is she without, now in the streets, and lieth in wait at every corner.
(B:E Project) One minute she's outside, the next in the streets, lurking around every corner waiting for someone.

Context: Continues the parenthetical description, emphasising her predatory, opportunistic movement across the city rather than a single chance meeting.

Meaning: The repeated 'now... now...' conveys restless, calculated searching - this is an active hunt for a victim, not an accident of timing.

Lesson: Watch for patterns of people who keep positioning themselves near your weak points. I want you alert, not paranoid - awareness protects you without needing you to become suspicious of everyone.

See Also: Proverbs 23:28 (she lieth in wait as for a prey); 1 Peter 5:8 (your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour)
- 7:13

(KJV) So she caught him, and kissed him, and with an impudent face said unto him,
(B:E Project) She grabbed him, kissed him, and looked him straight in the eye without a hint of shame.

Context: The narrative's turning point - physical initiative is taken, and her boldness ('an impudent face') is stressed as morally significant.

Meaning: 'Impudent' means shameless. Proverbs repeatedly notes that a loss of shame is itself a warning sign worth noticing - the boldness itself, not just the act, tells you something important.

Lesson: When someone shows no shame about crossing a line, that itself should tell you something. Shamelessness isn't confidence - it's usually a sign the line has already been crossed many times before.

See Also: Jeremiah 3:3 (thou hadst a whore's forehead); Proverbs 30:20 (an adulterous woman eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness); Zephaniah 3:5 (the unjust knoweth no shame)
- 7:14

(KJV) I have peace offerings with me; this day have I payed my vows.
(B:E Project) She tells him, 'I've just made my offerings at the temple today - I've fulfilled my vows.'

Context: Her opening line within the narrative, using religious language and practice as a respectable-sounding cover, claiming leftover meat from a fellowship offering at home.

- Meaning:** Peace offerings involved a shared meal, so she's using a spiritual pretext - having just worshipped - to seem trustworthy and to invite him along, a chilling example of religious appearance used as disguise.

Lesson: I warn against using religious language as a costume for something that has nothing to do with real devotion. What matters isn't the ritual you performed today, but whether your heart matches your actions right now.

See Also: Matthew 23:27-28 (whited sepulchres - outward show, inward corruption); Isaiah 29:13 (this people draweth near me with their mouth); 1 Samuel 15:22 (to obey is better than sacrifice)
- 7:15

(KJV) Therefore came I forth to meet thee, diligently to seek thy face, and I have found thee.
(B:E Project) 'That's why I came out looking for you - I searched hard to find you, and here you are.'

Context: Continues her persuasive speech within the narrative, flattering him by claiming he specifically was sought out and uniquely desired.

Meaning: Flattery often works by making the target feel uniquely chosen. It's a manipulative tactic worth recognising, since genuine care rarely opens with such sudden, intense pursuit.

Lesson: Real love doesn't need to convince you how uniquely wanted you are within minutes of meeting - it proves itself slowly, through faithfulness, not through urgency and flattering words.

See Also: Proverbs 29:5 (a man that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a net for his feet); Psalm 12:2-3 (flattering lips); Romans 16:18 (fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple)
- 7:16

(KJV) I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry, with carved works, with fine linen of Egypt.
(B:E Project) 'I've made my bed beautiful - fine embroidered covers, carved decorations, imported Egyptian linen.'

Context: She continues enticing him with sensory, luxurious detail describing the setting she's prepared, still within the same speech.

Meaning: The appeal to luxury is deliberate - sin is rarely sold as ugly, it's dressed up as attractive and desirable, hence the vivid, expensive imagery here.

Lesson: I always taught that what looks most polished isn't always what's most good for you. Learn to ask not 'does this look appealing?' but 'where does this actually lead?'

See Also: Proverbs 9:17 (stolen waters are sweet); 1 John 2:16 (the lust of the eyes); James 1:14-15 (lust, when it hath conceived, bringeth forth sin)

7:17 *(KJV) I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon.*
(B:E Project) 'I've scented my bed with myrrh, aloes and cinnamon.'

Context: Continues the sensory seduction, appealing to smell after sight and touch - a full sensory pull designed to overwhelm judgement before it can act.

Meaning: These were expensive imported spices, again showing premeditation - this encounter was planned in careful detail, not spontaneous or accidental.

Lesson: Beware of things engineered to overwhelm your senses before your judgement gets a say. I'd rather you pause and think than be swept along by whatever feels most immediately good.

See Also: Song of Solomon 4:14 (similar spice imagery in a legitimate context, for contrast); Proverbs 21:17 (he that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man); 1 Peter 5:8 ('be sober, be vigilant')

7:18 *(KJV) Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning: let us solace ourselves with loves.*
(B:E Project) 'Come on, let's enjoy ourselves with love until morning - let's take our pleasure together.'

Context: Her direct invitation, the climax of her seductive speech, explicit and urgent.

Meaning: The word 'love' here is used cynically, detached from real commitment or care - a warning that even a word like 'love' can be hollowed out and used as a tool of manipulation.

Lesson: Don't let anyone borrow the word 'love' for something with no patience, no faithfulness and no future in it. Real love can wait until morning; it doesn't need darkness to survive.

See Also: 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (love suffereth long... love never faileth, for contrast); Proverbs 5:19-20 (be thou ravished always with her love, of the true wife); Galatians 5:19-21 (the works of the flesh)

7:19 *(KJV) For the goodman is not at home, he is gone a long journey:*
(B:E Project) 'My husband isn't home - he's gone away on a long trip.'

Context: She reassures him of safety and secrecy by explaining her husband's absence, removing his fear of being caught.

Meaning: This line reveals the sin as adultery, not just promiscuity - she has a husband. Her appeal to secrecy ('no one will know') is exposed later in the chapter as a false, hollow comfort.

Lesson: I see what's done in secret as clearly as what's done in daylight, so don't let 'no one will know' be your only reason for holding back. Let your integrity be the same whether you're watched or not.

See Also: Proverbs 5:21 (his ways are before the eyes of the LORD); Job 24:15 (no eye shall see me - the adulterer's false comfort); Hebrews 4:13 (all things are naked and opened unto his eyes)

7:20 *(KJV) He hath taken a bag of money with him, and will come home at the day appointed.*
(B:E Project) 'He's taken a bag of money with him and won't be back until a set date.'

Context: Continues her reassurance, giving a precise timeline to remove any remaining hesitation on his part.

Meaning: The exact detail (a set return date) shows premeditation on her part, and possibly a husband himself absorbed in wealth and travel - an ironic detail underneath the surface of the temptation.

Lesson: Watch for people who have every detail of the deception already planned out before you've even said yes - that level of preparation on someone else's part should be a warning, not a comfort.

See Also: Proverbs 6:34-35 (jealousy is the rage of a man; he will not spare in the day of vengeance); Ecclesiastes 8:11 (because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily)

7:21 *(KJV) With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him.*
(B:E Project) With all her persuasive talk she wore him down, and with her flattering words she pushed him into it.

Context: Marks the pivot in the narrative - his resistance breaks down under the weight of her words, not physical force but sustained persuasion.

Meaning: 'Forced' here means overcome by persuasion rather than literal coercion - it captures how words alone, given enough persistence, can wear down someone's better judgement.

Lesson: Guard against the slow wearing-down of your convictions by repeated flattery - it rarely happens in one blow, it happens gradually, word by word, until you've talked yourself into something you knew was wrong.

See Also: Proverbs 5:3-4 (her end is bitter as wormwood); 2 Peter 2:18 (great swelling words of vanity); Ephesians 4:14 (carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men)

7:22 *(KJV) He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks;*
(B:E Project) He follows her at once, like an ox being led to slaughter, or like a fool being marched off to be punished in the stocks.

Context: Uses two blunt animal and legal images to show his blindness to what's really happening as he walks straight into it, still within the same story.

Meaning: The ox doesn't know it's walking to its death - that's precisely the point. Sin often feels ordinary and even pleasant right up until the consequence lands.

Lesson: I want your eyes open, not closed, when you're walking toward a decision - the danger isn't that you'll consciously choose disaster, it's that you'll walk into it without realising what it actually is.

See Also: Jeremiah 11:19 ('I was like a lamb... brought to the slaughter'); Hosea 4:14 (a people that doth not understand shall fall); Isaiah 53:7 (contrast - the innocent lamb led to slaughter)

7:23 *(KJV) Till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life.*
(B:E Project) Until an arrow pierces his gut - like a bird flying straight into a trap without realising it's flying to its own death.

Context: Completes the animal imagery of verse 22, closing the narrative's central warning with vivid, violent imagery of the outcome he never saw coming.

Meaning: The point is a total, sudden, fatal consequence following what seemed like harmless pleasure only moments before - the cost is real even when it's delayed and invisible at the start.

Lesson: The cost of some choices doesn't show up straight away, but it comes. I don't want to scare you into obedience, I want you to actually see clearly what's at the far end of the path before you're already on it.

See Also: Proverbs 5:5 (her feet go down to death); James 1:15 (lust, when it is finished, bringeth forth death); Ecclesiastes 9:12 (as the birds that are caught in the snare)

7:24 *(KJV) Hearken unto me now therefore, O ye children, and attend to the words of my mouth.*
(B:E Project) So now, children, listen to me - pay close attention to what I'm telling you.

Context: The father steps back out of the narrative to address his listeners directly again, beginning the moral conclusion that runs through the rest of the chapter (verses 24-27).

Meaning: This marks the transition from story back to direct address - having shown the danger vividly, the father now urges his listeners to actually apply what they've just heard.

Lesson: I tell you real stories, then I ask you to actually listen and let them change something in you - not just enjoy the story and move on unaffected.

See Also: Proverbs 4:1 (hear, ye children, the instruction of a father); Luke 8:8 ('he that hath ears to hear, let him hear'); Deuteronomy 6:4 ('Hear, O Israel')

7:25 *(KJV) Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths.*
(B:E Project) Don't let your heart wander towards her ways - don't stray onto her paths.

Context: The father's direct application following the story, warning against even the earliest inward drift of the heart, before any outward action.

Meaning: Notice this targets the heart first, before any action takes place - the warning is against the earliest inward inclination, not only outward behaviour, since that's where the real danger begins.

Lesson: I care about where your heart is leaning long before you act on it - catch the drift early, while turning back is still easy, rather than waiting until you're already deep down the path.

See Also: Proverbs 4:23 (keep thy heart with all diligence); Matthew 5:28 (whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery already in his heart); James 1:14 (drawn away of his own lust)

7:26 *(KJV) For she hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men have been slain by her.*
(B:E Project) She's brought down many wounded victims - even strong men have been destroyed by her.

Context: Gives the reason for the warning - this isn't a hypothetical risk but a pattern with a real, documented history of ruined, capable lives.

Meaning: 'Strong men' shows that willpower or reputation alone doesn't guarantee immunity. This danger has taken down capable, formidable people, not just the obviously naive.

Lesson: Don't assume you're too strong, too smart or too together to fall - some of the most capable people have been undone this way. Staying humble about your own limits is real wisdom, not weakness.

See Also: Judges 16:1-21 (Samson, a strong man undone by exactly this pattern); Ecclesiastes 7:26 (I find more bitter than death the woman); 1 Corinthians 10:12 (let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall)

7:27 *(KJV) Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.*
(B:E Project) Her house is a road straight down to the grave - its rooms lead directly to death.

Context: The chapter's closing verse - a stark final image summarising the whole warning, stating plainly where that seemingly attractive path actually ends.

Meaning: 'Hell' here reflects Sheol, the realm of the dead, rather than a later, developed idea of eternal punishment. The point is finality: what looked like a bedroom is really the entrance to a tomb.

Lesson: I want you to see the ending, not just the beginning, of every road you're tempted to walk. What glitters at the doorway isn't what waits at the end of the hallway - choose the path that actually leads to life.

See Also: Proverbs 5:5 (her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell); Proverbs 2:18 (her house inclineth unto death); Matthew 7:13 (wide is the gate that leadeth to destruction)

CHAPTER 8

Chapter Summary: Proverbs 8

Proverbs Chapter 8 vividly presents Wisdom as a majestic female figure, actively appealing to all people. She declares her prominent presence in public spaces, making herself available to everyone, from the naive to the foolish, urging them to choose her paths. Wisdom emphasises her commitment to truth and righteousness, condemning all forms of evil. She describes her immense value, superior to any worldly riches, and highlights her role in enabling just governance for all leaders. Most profoundly, Wisdom reveals her eternal existence alongside God, present as a beloved companion during the entire process of creation—from the formation of the heavens and earth to the setting of boundaries for the seas. The chapter concludes with a powerful invitation to seek and embrace Wisdom, promising true life and God's favour to those who do, while warning that rejecting her leads to self-harm and ultimately, spiritual death.

8:1 *(KJV)* Doth not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice?
(B:E Project) Isn't wisdom calling out? Doesn't understanding raise her voice for all to hear?

Context: Opens chapter 8, deliberately contrasting with chapter 7's secretive, night-time seductress - here wisdom calls out openly, in daylight, in public.

Meaning: This sets up wisdom personified as a public speaker, freely available to anyone willing to listen. The contrast between hidden temptation and open wisdom is the structural key to the whole chapter.

Lesson: I don't hide what's genuinely good for you in secret corners - real wisdom shouts from the rooftops, free for anyone who'll stop and listen. What costs you nothing to hear can save you everything.

See Also: Proverbs 1:20-21 (wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets); Proverbs 9:3 (she crieth upon the highest places); John 7:37 (Jesus stood and cried, offering freely)

8:2 *(KJV)* She standeth in the top of high places, by the way in the places of the paths.
(B:E Project) She stands at the top of the hills, right where the roads and pathways cross.

Context: Describes wisdom's chosen locations - high, visible, and at busy crossroads - ensuring maximum reach to anyone travelling through daily life.

Meaning: Wisdom deliberately positions herself at decision points, at crossroads - a picture of wisdom being available exactly where people are making real choices about which way their life will go.

Lesson: I meet you at the crossroads of your life, not tucked away somewhere hard to find - the choice is real and it's yours, but I'm never far from where you're standing when you have to make it.

See Also: Jeremiah 6:16 (stand ye in the ways... ask for the old paths); Matthew 7:13-14 (the two gates and two paths); Proverbs 1:21 (crieth in the chief place of concourse)

8:3 *(KJV)* She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors.
(B:E Project) She cries out at the city gates, at the entrances, wherever people are coming in.

Context: Continues describing wisdom's public, accessible presence - city gates were the ancient centre of commerce, legal business, and public life.

Meaning: Gates were where legal and business decisions were made publicly. Wisdom inserts herself into the very heart of everyday civic and economic life, not just into separate religious spaces.

Lesson: I'm not interested in being confined to quiet, separate spaces - I want to be part of your ordinary decisions: your work, your money, your daily comings and goings.

See Also: Ruth 4:1 (Boaz conducting legal business at the gate); Proverbs 31:23 (her husband known in the gates); Amos 5:15 (establish judgment in the gate)

8:4 *(KJV)* Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of man.
(B:E Project) I'm calling out to all of you, to everyone - my voice is meant for every person.

Context: Wisdom speaks directly for the first time in the chapter, announcing that her audience is universal, not select or exclusive.

Meaning: The emphasis is universality - this isn't a message reserved for the elite or the already-wise, but for everyone equally, regardless of status or background.

Lesson: This invitation isn't reserved for the religious, the educated or the already-good - I call to everyone equally, because everyone equally needs and deserves the chance to live well.

See Also: John 3:16 ('whosoever believeth'); Revelation 22:17 ('whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely'); Acts 10:34 (God is no respecter of persons)

8:5 *(KJV)* O ye simple, understand wisdom: and, ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart.
(B:E Project) You who are naive, learn some sense; you who are foolish, get yourselves a mind that actually understands.

- Context:** Wisdom addresses her two target groups directly - the inexperienced ('simple') and the stubbornly foolish - both invited despite where they're starting from.

Meaning: Neither group is written off here - both are urged to grow, showing wisdom is available even to those furthest from it currently, provided they're willing to change.

Lesson: Wherever you're starting from - clueless or stubborn - I'm not writing you off. Growth is always available to you; the only real disqualification is refusing to want it.

See Also: Proverbs 9:4-6 (whoso is simple, let him turn in hither; forsake the foolish and live); James 1:5 (if any lack wisdom, let him ask of God); Proverbs 1:22 (how long will fools hate knowledge)
- 8:6

(KJV) Hear; for I will speak of excellent things; and the opening of my lips shall be right things.

(B:E Project) Listen - what I'm about to say is worth hearing, and everything I say will be right.

Context: Wisdom promises the quality and reliability of her message before delivering it, an assurance of trustworthy content still within her opening appeal.

Meaning: This is a direct claim to integrity - what follows can be trusted precisely because it comes from an honest, non-manipulative source, an implicit contrast with the flatterer of chapter 7.

Lesson: I never need to trick you into listening or dress up what I say with flattery - what's actually good for you doesn't need spin, it just needs to be heard honestly.

See Also: John 7:16 ('my doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me'); Titus 1:2 (God, that cannot lie); Psalm 19:7-8 (the testimony of the LORD is sure)
- 8:7

(KJV) For my mouth shall speak truth; and wickedness is an abomination to my lips.

(B:E Project) My mouth speaks only truth - lying is something I find utterly disgusting.

Context: Wisdom continues establishing her trustworthiness, explicitly contrasting truthfulness with deceit as the opposite of everything she stands for.

Meaning: Wickedness and lying are described with the strong word 'abomination' - truth-telling isn't incidental to wisdom, it's central and non-negotiable to her whole character.

Lesson: I built my whole life on telling the truth, even when it cost me - because love without honesty isn't really love, it's just comfort with an expiry date.

See Also: Proverbs 12:22 (lying lips are abomination to the LORD); John 14:6 ('I am the way, the truth, and the life'); Ephesians 4:25 (putting away lying, speak every man truth)
- 8:8

(KJV) All the words of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing froward or perverse in them.

- (B:E Project)** Everything I say is right and fair - there's nothing crooked or twisted in any of it.

Context: Continues wisdom's self-description, asserting total moral consistency across everything she says, not just occasional honesty.

Meaning: 'Froward' and 'perverse' both suggest deliberate twisting or distortion - the claim here is not just accuracy but moral straightness, with nothing hidden or manipulative underneath.

Lesson: You can hold what I say up to the light from any angle and it holds - I don't have one version of the truth for you and another hidden agenda underneath.

See Also: Psalm 19:9 (the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether); Proverbs 30:5 (every word of God is pure); Titus 1:9 (holding fast the faithful word)
- 8:9

(KJV) They are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge.

(B:E Project) To anyone who's willing to understand, my words are perfectly clear; to anyone seeking knowledge, they're obviously right.

Context: Wisdom notes that her message isn't deliberately obscure - clarity is available to whoever approaches with the right, genuinely open posture.

Meaning: The barrier to understanding isn't the complexity of wisdom itself but the reader's own openness - this places real responsibility on the listener for whether the message actually lands.

Lesson: I don't speak in riddles to keep you out - if something I say seems unclear, ask whether your heart is actually open to hearing it, because plain truth is usually right in front of us.

See Also: Matthew 13:11-13 (understanding given to those who genuinely seek it); Proverbs 2:3-5 (if thou criest after knowledge, then shalt thou understand); Deuteronomy 30:11 (this commandment is not hidden from thee)
- 8:10

(KJV) Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold.

(B:E Project) Choose my teaching over silver, and knowledge over the finest gold.

Context: Begins wisdom's extended argument, running through verse 21, for her superior worth compared to material wealth.

Meaning: This isn't saying money is worthless - it's a ranking of priorities: character and understanding outrank financial gain whenever the two are forced into competition.

Lesson: Money can buy you comfort, but it can't buy you good judgement, and it's judgement that decides whether the rest of your life goes well. Invest in becoming wise first - everything else follows more safely after that.

- See Also:** Proverbs 3:14-15 (the merchandise of wisdom is better than silver); Matthew 6:33 ('seek ye first the kingdom of God'); Proverbs 16:16 (how much better is it to get wisdom than gold)
- 8:11

(KJV) For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it.

(B:E Project) Wisdom is worth more than rubies - nothing else you could want even comes close.

Context: Continues the value-comparison, closely echoing Proverbs 3:15, reinforcing the claim with the most precious gemstone of the era.

Meaning: This is a superlative claim - not merely 'better than most things' but better than literally anything desirable, establishing wisdom as the top priority in life, above every rival.

Lesson: Whatever you think you most want right now, I'm telling you plainly: sound judgement and understanding will do more for your life than getting it ever could.

See Also: Proverbs 3:15 (she is more precious than rubies); Job 28:18 (the price of wisdom is above rubies); Matthew 13:45-46 (the pearl of great price)
- 8:12

(KJV) I wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions.

(B:E Project) I, wisdom, live together with good sense, and I'm the source of clever, resourceful thinking.

Context: Wisdom describes her own nature and closest companions - prudence, meaning practical good judgement, and inventive intelligence.

Meaning: Wisdom isn't abstract or impractical here - she's paired with prudence (careful, street-smart judgement) and creative problem-solving, showing wisdom as practical competence in real life, not just theory.

Lesson: Being wise isn't the same as being clever for its own sake - true wisdom always travels together with sound, practical judgement about real life.

See Also: Proverbs 1:4 (to give subtilty to the simple, discretion to the young); Proverbs 2:11 (discretion shall preserve thee); James 3:17 (the wisdom from above is easy to be intreated)
- 8:13

(KJV) The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.

(B:E Project) Taking God seriously means hating evil - I hate pride, arrogance, wrongdoing, and lying, twisted speech.

Context: A key definitional verse linking 'fear of the LORD' - the book's foundational theme from 1:7 - directly to a concrete list of what wisdom actively opposes.

- Meaning:** This defines 'fear of the LORD' practically as hatred of evil, then names specific evils, with pride and arrogance listed first, suggesting these are especially dangerous or foundational sins beneath the others.

Lesson: Real reverence isn't about fear of punishment, it's about caring enough to genuinely hate what damages people - starting with pride, because pride is usually the root that every other harm grows out of.

See Also: Proverbs 1:7 (the fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge); Proverbs 6:16-19 (things the LORD hates, pride listed first); James 4:6 (God resisteth the proud)
- 8:14

(KJV) Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom: I am understanding; I have strength.

(B:E Project) Good advice belongs to me, and sound judgement too - I am understanding itself, and I have real strength.

Context: Wisdom claims ownership of the essential resources needed for capable living: counsel, judgement, understanding, and strength.

Meaning: Notice 'strength' appearing alongside intellectual qualities - wisdom isn't merely theoretical here, it's presented as the actual source of practical capability, setting up the following verses about kings and rulers.

Lesson: True strength isn't just physical or political power - it's the ability to see clearly and act rightly. Build your life on that kind of strength, and it won't crumble under pressure.

See Also: Job 12:13 (with him is wisdom and strength); 1 Corinthians 1:24 (Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God); Proverbs 24:5 (a wise man is strong)
- 8:15

(KJV) By me kings reign, and princes decree justice.

(B:E Project) Kings rule because of me, and rulers make fair laws because of me.

Context: Begins wisdom's claim to underpin good governance, running through the next verse, moving from personal benefit to societal application of her value.

Meaning: Political authority itself is presented as dependent on wisdom to function justly - power without wisdom is implicitly shown here as illegitimate or, at best, badly run.

Lesson: Authority without wisdom becomes tyranny; I want anyone with power over others - a parent, a boss, a leader - to lean on real understanding, not just the raw fact of their position.

See Also: 1 Kings 3:9-12 (Solomon asks God for wisdom to govern); Romans 13:1-4 (rulers ordained for good); Daniel 2:21 (he giveth wisdom unto the wise)
- 8:16

(KJV) By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth.

(B:E Project) Because of me, princes govern, and so do nobles - every judge on earth relies on me.

Context: Continues and broadens the previous verse's claim from kings specifically to all forms of civic leadership and judicial authority.

Meaning: This universalises the claim across every level of leadership and justice, everywhere - wisdom is presented as the necessary foundation of any functioning, fair society, not just royal courts.

Lesson: If you're ever in a position to judge or decide for others - at work, at home, anywhere - ask for real understanding before you ask for the final word. Fair decisions come from wisdom, not just authority.

See Also: Exodus 18:21 (able men to judge among the people); Isaiah 11:2 (the spirit of wisdom and understanding shall rest upon him); Deuteronomy 1:13 (take you wise men, and understanding)

8:17 ***(KJV)** I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me.*
(B:E Project) I love those who love me, and whoever searches for me eagerly will find me.

Context: Wisdom promises reciprocity and reward for genuine pursuit, a personal, relational note within a largely abstract discourse on her value.

Meaning: 'Seek me early' suggests both urgency and priority, and possibly starting young - the promise is that sincere, prioritised effort to gain wisdom always succeeds, it isn't withheld from genuine seekers.

Lesson: I meet you exactly as far as you're willing to come towards me - not because I'm playing hard to get, but because love that isn't wanted can't do much good. Want this, and you'll find it.

See Also: Matthew 7:7 ('seek, and ye shall find'); Jeremiah 29:13 (ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search with all your heart); Proverbs 2:4-5 (seekest her as silver, then shalt thou find)

8:18 ***(KJV)** Riches and honour are with me; yea, durable riches and righteousness.*
(B:E Project) I bring wealth and reputation with me - lasting wealth, and doing what's right.

Context: Wisdom continues listing her benefits, reassuring that pursuing her doesn't mean forfeiting material or social success, but redefining what actually lasts.

Meaning: 'Durable riches' contrasts with wealth that fades or is lost - the promise isn't that wisdom guarantees riches, but that whatever genuine gain comes with wisdom actually endures, unlike material success on its own.

Lesson: I'm not against you having enough or being respected - I just want what you build to actually last, not crumble the moment circumstances change. Build on character, and the rest tends to hold up.

See Also: Matthew 6:19-20 (lay up treasures in heaven, where moth and rust doth not corrupt); Proverbs 22:4 (by humility and the fear of the LORD are riches, honour, and life); 1 Timothy 6:17-19 (lay hold on eternal life)

8:19 ***(KJV)** My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold; and my revenue than choice silver.*
(B:E Project) What I produce is worth more than gold, even the finest gold - what I bring in is worth more than the best silver.

Context: Continues the wealth comparison using commercial and agricultural language ('fruit', 'revenue'), reinforcing wisdom's superior yield over material riches.

Meaning: The deliberate commercial vocabulary - fruit meaning produce, revenue meaning income - speaks directly to a practically-minded audience: wisdom simply 'pays' better than literal gold.

Lesson: Measure your investments by what they actually return to your life - peace, good relationships, a clear conscience - and you'll find wisdom out-earns money every single time.

See Also: Proverbs 3:14 (the merchandise of it is better than fine gold); Psalm 19:10 (more to be desired are they than gold); Matthew 6:33 ('all these things shall be added unto you')

8:20 ***(KJV)** I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment:*
(B:E Project) I walk ahead on the road of doing right, right along the paths of fair judgement.

Context: Wisdom describes her own consistent direction and character, always heading down the path of righteousness and justice herself.

Meaning: This presents wisdom not just as a static source of benefits but as an active guide who walks the path herself first, modelling the way rather than only pointing toward it from a distance.

Lesson: I don't just tell you which way to go - I walk it myself first, so you're never following directions from someone who hasn't been down the road.

See Also: John 10:4 (he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him); Psalm 23:3 (leadeth me in the paths of righteousness); Proverbs 4:11 (I have taught thee in the way of wisdom)

8:21 ***(KJV)** That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures.*

(B:E Project) So that I can give those who love me a real inheritance, and fill their storehouses.

Context: Concludes the wealth and benefits section that began in verse 10, promising tangible reward for those who genuinely love and pursue wisdom.

Meaning: 'Inherit substance' suggests something passed down and lasting, not a one-off windfall - the reward of wisdom is framed here as stable and even generational, not a quick or temporary gain.

Lesson: What I want to give you isn't a quick win - it's something solid enough to build a whole life on, and even to pass on to others after you.

See Also: Proverbs 13:22 (a good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children); Matthew 25:34 (inherit the kingdom); Psalm 37:18 (their inheritance shall be for ever)

8:22 ***(KJV)** The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old.*
(B:E Project) The LORD had me with him at the very start of his work, before any of his ancient creation began.

Context: Opens the chapter's most theologically rich section, running through verse 31, in which wisdom describes her own existence before and during creation itself.

Meaning: This is a striking claim of wisdom's pre-existence alongside God before the created order began, suggesting wisdom isn't just a human skill but something fundamental and eternal, bound up with the very fabric of reality.

Lesson: The wisdom I offer you isn't a modern invention or a passing trend - it's woven into the very structure of how everything was made, which is exactly why living by it tends to actually work.

See Also: John 1:1-3 (in the beginning was the Word... all things made by him); Colossians 1:16-17 (by him were all things created); Job 28:23-27 (God understands the way to wisdom)

8:23 ***(KJV)** I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was.*
(B:E Project) I was appointed from eternity, right from the start, before the earth even existed.

Context: Continues wisdom's declaration of pre-existence from the previous verse, emphasising timelessness before the physical world came into being at all.

Meaning: This reinforces verse 22 - wisdom's origin isn't tied to created time. She precedes the earth itself, underlining her foundational, non-negotiable status in the order of things.

Lesson: What I'm offering isn't just useful advice for your circumstances today - it reflects something that was true before the world existed and will remain true after everything else has changed.

See Also: John 17:5 (the glory which I had with thee before the world was); Micah 5:2 (whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting); Psalm 90:2 (before the mountains were brought forth)

8:24 ***(KJV)** When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water.*
(B:E Project) I was born before there were any oceans, before any springs were flowing with water.

Context: Continues the poetic account of wisdom's origin, using the absence of familiar natural features to stress just how far back before creation she already existed.

Meaning: This is a poetic device: listing what did not yet exist to emphasise wisdom's priority in time. Water and the deep were seen as primordial elements, so even before those, wisdom already was.

Lesson: Before there was a single drop of water on this planet, the pattern for a good life was already in place. You're not inventing your own values from nothing - you're discovering something that was already true.

See Also: Genesis 1:2 (the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters); Job 38:8-11 (who shut up the sea with doors); Psalm 104:5-9 (God's ordering of the waters)

8:25 ***(KJV)** Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth:*
(B:E Project) I was born before the mountains were set in place, before the hills existed.

Context: Continues the same poetic sequence, working through creation's major features in order, wisdom preceding even the most permanent-seeming parts of the landscape.

Meaning: Mountains symbolised permanence and stability in ancient thought. Stating that wisdom predates even mountains stresses just how foundational and unshakeable she is compared to what seems most solid in the world.

Lesson: If mountains themselves came after wisdom, then wisdom is a more stable thing to build your life on than anything you can see or touch. Root yourself in something that outlasts even what looks permanent.

See Also: Psalm 90:2 (before the mountains were brought forth); Isaiah 54:10 (the mountains shall depart, but my kindness shall not depart); Job 38:4-6 (the foundations of the earth)

8:26 ***(KJV)** While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world.*
(B:E Project) Before he had even made the earth, or the open fields, or even the first grains of soil on the ground.

Context: Continues sweeping through the moments before creation, reaching all the way down to the most basic element - the soil itself - to show wisdom present before literally anything material existed.

Meaning: 'The highest part of the dust' likely refers to the very first solid ground. The point is exhaustive: nothing physical, however small, predates wisdom's presence alongside God.

Lesson: You are made from that same dust wisdom existed before - which means the values I'm offering you were never an afterthought bolted onto your life. They were there before the raw material of you existed.

See Also: Genesis 2:7 (God formed man of the dust of the ground); Job 38:4 ('where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth'); Psalm 102:25 (of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth)

8:27 *(KJV) When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth:*
(B:E Project) When he set the heavens in place, I was right there - when he drew the horizon circle over the face of the deep.

Context: Shifts from 'before creation' to 'during creation' - wisdom now present as an active witness and companion at the actual moments of God's creative work.

Meaning: 'Compass' here means a circle or horizon line, likely the visible boundary over the ocean's surface - a vivid image of God shaping the world with wisdom present as a companion throughout the whole process.

Lesson: I wasn't absent from the moment the world was being shaped, and I'm not absent from the moment your life is being shaped either - present at the biggest beginnings, and present in yours too.

See Also: Job 26:10 (he hath compassed the waters with bounds); Job 38:4-11 ('where wast thou...'); Genesis 1:6-8 (the creation of the firmament)

8:28 *(KJV) When he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep:*
(B:E Project) When he set the clouds firmly above, when he made the underground springs strong and steady.

Context: Continues the account of wisdom witnessing creation, moving through more specific features of the natural world - sky and subterranean waters.

Meaning: This reinforces the same theme through more examples: the ordered, functioning natural world came about with wisdom present, suggesting an underlying wise design rather than chaos or accident.

Lesson: Order didn't happen by accident, in the world or in a life - what looks solid and reliable, whether clouds that bring rain in season or a life that holds together, usually has wisdom quietly underneath it.

See Also: Job 38:34-37 (canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds); Psalm 104:13 (he watereth the hills from his chambers); Job 38:16 (entered thou into the springs of the sea)

8:29 *(KJV) When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth:*
(B:E Project) When he gave the sea its boundary, so the waters wouldn't cross the line he set - when he laid down the earth's foundations.

Context: Continues describing creation's ordering, with the sea's fixed boundary as a classic biblical image of God's control over chaos, wisdom present throughout.

Meaning: The sea 'obeying' a boundary reflects a broader biblical theme of God setting limits on chaotic forces. Wisdom is again the constant, quiet presence alongside that ordering, hinting that accepting boundaries reflects the same wise design.

Lesson: Limits aren't there to cage you - even the sea has a line it doesn't cross, and that line is what keeps the whole world liveable. Boundaries you accept in your own life work the same way.

See Also: Job 38:8-11 ('hitherto shalt thou come, but no further'); Psalm 104:9 (thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over); Jeremiah 5:22 (which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea)

8:30 *(KJV) Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him;*
(B:E Project) I was right there beside him, like a dearly-loved child growing up with him - I was his constant joy, always celebrating in his presence.

Context: The emotional high point of the creation account - wisdom describes not just presence but deep, joyful relationship with God during the whole process of creation.

Meaning: This is a tender, intimate image - wisdom isn't a cold, mechanical principle here but something God delighted in personally, and which delighted in him in turn, framing creation itself as relational and joyful rather than clinical.

Lesson: Delight, not duty, is at the very root of how everything was made - which is exactly the spirit I want you to bring to living wisely too: not grim obligation, but real joy in what's good.

See Also: John 1:14-18 (the only begotten Son, in the bosom of the Father); Zephaniah 3:17 (he will joy over thee with singing); Colossians 1:13 (the Son of his love)

8:31 *(KJV) Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men.*

(B:E Project) I delighted in the world he made for people to live in, and my joy was in humanity itself.

Context: Closes the creation account by turning wisdom's joy specifically toward people, the culmination of the whole passage as it moves from cosmic scale down to human relationship.

Meaning: After describing cosmic-scale creation, the final, climactic detail is wisdom's delight specifically in human beings - people are presented as the true focus and joy of the whole creative process, not an afterthought.

Lesson: You were never an accident or an afterthought - you were, and are, someone's delight. Let that truth sit underneath everything else you do: you matter, before you've achieved anything at all.

See Also: Psalm 8:3-5 ('what is man, that thou art mindful of him'); Genesis 1:31 (God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good); Luke 15:7 (joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth)

8:32 ***(KJV)** Now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children: for blessed are they that keep my ways.*
(B:E Project) So now, children, listen to me - those who follow my ways are truly blessed.

Context: Marks the turn from the cosmic creation account back to direct, practical appeal, beginning the chapter's closing invitation that runs through its final verses.

Meaning: After establishing her cosmic credibility, wisdom now applies it directly and personally - the huge, eternal claims of the previous section exist to support a very ordinary, practical appeal to actually listen and obey.

Lesson: Everything grand I've just told you about where wisdom comes from comes down to this simple, personal invitation: listen, and let it shape how you actually live today.

See Also: Proverbs 3:13 (happy is the man that findeth wisdom); Luke 11:28 (blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it); Matthew 7:24 (whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them)

8:33 ***(KJV)** Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not.*
(B:E Project) Listen to correction, become wise, and don't turn it away.

Context: A brief, direct command within wisdom's closing appeal, urging active reception of instruction rather than passive or defensive resistance.

Meaning: 'Refuse it not' implies that instruction and correction will naturally meet resistance - wisdom anticipates this reaction and explicitly warns against the instinct to reject it.

Lesson: The instinct to bristle at correction is natural, but it's also the very thing that keeps you from growing - let it in rather than pushing it away, even when it stings a little at first.

See Also: Proverbs 12:1 (he that hateth reproof is brutish); Hebrews 12:11 (no chastening for the present seemeth joyous, nevertheless afterward); Proverbs 15:32 (he that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul)

8:34 ***(KJV)** Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.*
(B:E Project) Blessed is the person who listens to me, showing up daily at my gates, waiting patiently at my doorposts.

Context: Continues the closing invitation, picturing a devoted, eager pursuer of wisdom who returns daily and waits patiently, rather than someone who visits only once.

Meaning: The imagery of daily watching and waiting suggests persistence and priority - real benefit comes not from a single visit but from consistent, patient, daily practice over time.

Lesson: Wisdom isn't something you pick up once and keep forever without effort - show up for it daily, the way you'd show up for anything you actually valued, and it will keep giving back to you.

See Also: Luke 18:1 (men ought always to pray, and not to faint); Psalm 27:4 (to dwell in the house of the LORD, to enquire in his temple); Lamentations 3:25 (the LORD is good unto them that wait for him)

8:35 ***(KJV)** For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD.*
(B:E Project) Whoever finds me finds real life, and gains God's favour too.

Context: States the chapter's central promise plainly - the reward for finding wisdom is nothing less than genuine life itself, along with divine favour.

Meaning: 'Findeth life' suggests wisdom isn't just one good thing among many but the very key to a genuinely flourishing existence, not mere survival - a striking, total claim about what's really at stake.

Lesson: This is the whole point - not a list of rules to follow out of fear, but an invitation into a genuinely fuller, freer way of living. Find this, and you find what you were actually looking for all along.

See Also: John 10:10 (I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly); Proverbs 3:13-18 (she is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her); John 17:3 (this is life eternal, that they might know thee)

8:36 ***(KJV)** But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death.*

(B:E Project) But whoever misses me harms only themselves - everyone who hates me is really choosing death.

Context: The chapter's closing verse - a final, sobering contrast that mirrors the promise of the previous verse with its exact opposite, stating plainly the cost of rejecting wisdom.

Meaning: 'Sinneth against me' carries the sense of missing a target, since the underlying word relates to missing a mark - the harm falls on the one who rejects wisdom, not on wisdom herself, who isn't diminished by being ignored.

Lesson: Choosing against what's genuinely good for you doesn't punish me - it only wounds you. I'm not keeping score to condemn you; I'm simply telling you honestly what actually happens when you turn away from life, so that you can choose differently.

See Also: Proverbs 1:31-32 (eat the fruit of their own way; the turning away of the simple shall slay them); Romans 6:23 (the wages of sin is death); Deuteronomy 30:19 ('choose life')

CHAPTER 9

Chapter Summary: Proverbs 9

Chapter 9 of Proverbs vividly contrasts two powerful figures: Lady Wisdom and Lady Folly. Lady Wisdom is depicted as building a sturdy house, preparing a rich feast, and sending out invitations from the city's highest points to the simple and those who need guidance. She promises life and extended days to those who accept her offer of spiritual nourishment and understanding. The chapter also includes important advice on how to interact with scoffers versus wise individuals, emphasising that reverence for God is the very foundation of true wisdom. In stark contrast, Lady Folly is portrayed as loud and ignorant, sitting at her door to tempt passersby with the allure of forbidden pleasures—"stolen waters" and "secret bread." However, the chapter reveals that her path, despite its deceptive appeal, leads only to death and destruction, a fate unknown to her naive guests.

9:1 **(KJV)** *Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars:*
(B:E Project) Wisdom is pictured as a woman who has built herself a grand house, carving out seven strong pillars to hold it up.

Context: Opens the closing scene of the long "father's discourses" that run through Proverbs 1-9, where Wisdom is personified as a noble woman preparing to host a banquet, set up in deliberate contrast with "Lady Folly" later in this same chapter.

Meaning: The house with seven pillars (seven being a number of completeness in Hebrew thought) pictures wisdom as something solid, stable, and fully built - not a flimsy idea but a well-founded way of living you can actually move into. It's an invitation: a life built on wisdom has proper foundations under it.

Lesson: I want you to know that the life I'm offering you isn't a shaky lean-to - it's a house built to last, with room made for you in it. Come and see that a life grounded in genuine wisdom can hold weight when the storms come.

See Also: Matthew 7:24-25 (the wise man builds his house on rock); Proverbs 24:3-4 (through wisdom a house is built).

9:2 **(KJV)** *She hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table.*

(B:E Project) She has slaughtered animals for meat, mixed her wine, and laid a table full of food.

Context: Continues the picture of Wisdom preparing a lavish banquet, part of the invitation scene running through verses 1-6.

Meaning: This is the ancient equivalent of throwing a proper feast, nothing half-hearted. The point is generosity and abundance: wisdom isn't a set of grim restrictions, it's something rich and satisfying, prepared with real care for the guest.

Lesson: I don't call you to a meagre, joyless existence - I spread a table and want you to feast on what's genuinely good for you. Real wisdom is generous, not withholding; come hungry and be filled.

See Also: Isaiah 55:1-2 (come, eat what is good, without money); Luke 14:16-17 (the parable of the great supper).

9:3 **(KJV)** *She hath sent forth her maidens: she crieth upon the highest places of the city,*
(B:E Project) She has sent out her servant girls, and she herself calls out from the highest points in the city.

Context: Wisdom's invitation isn't whispered privately - it's broadcast publicly, echoing the public preaching of Wisdom back at the start of the discourse in chapter 1.

Meaning: Wisdom doesn't hide inside an exclusive club for the already-clever; she shouts from the rooftops so everyone in town can hear. Good, practical life-wisdom is available and open - you don't need special credentials to receive it.

Lesson: I'm not selective about who gets to hear this - I call out to everyone, including the people society overlooks. If you've ever felt wisdom was "not for people like you," hear this: the invitation is shouted from the highest place precisely so nobody misses it.

See Also: Proverbs 1:20-21 (Wisdom crying in the streets); Matthew 22:9 (go into the highways and invite everyone).

9:4 **(KJV)** *Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him,*
(B:E Project) "Whoever is naive, come in here," she says to the person who lacks good judgement.

Context: The direct wording of Wisdom's public call, aimed specifically at the "simple" - the inexperienced or easily-led, a recurring target audience throughout Proverbs 1-9.

Meaning: "Simple" here doesn't mean stupid - it means unformed, easily swayed, still deciding who to listen to. The invitation is aimed exactly at people who know they haven't got it figured out yet, which is most of us at some point.

Lesson: Come as you are, not as you think you should be first. I'm not waiting for you to become impressive before I welcome you in - the invitation is for the person who's still finding their way.

See Also: Proverbs 1:22 (how long will simple ones love simplicity); Mark 2:17 (I came not to call the righteous but sinners).

9:5 *(KJV) Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled.*
(B:E Project) "Come and eat my food, and drink the wine I've prepared."

Context: The heart of Wisdom's spoken invitation, echoing verse 2's banquet imagery now put into her own direct speech.

Meaning: This is a call to actually participate, not just admire from a distance. Wisdom isn't a lecture to sit through; it's nourishment you take in and let become part of you - practical understanding you actually apply.

Lesson: Don't just admire good teaching from the sidelines - taste it, live it, let it become part of you. Wisdom that stays theoretical never feeds anyone.

See Also: John 6:35 (I am the bread of life); Proverbs 4:5-7 (get wisdom, get understanding).

9:6 *(KJV) Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding.*
(B:E Project) "Leave foolish ways behind and live; walk the path of understanding."

Context: Wisdom's invitation closes with a clear choice - a direct command to abandon foolishness for a better path, setting up the head-on contrast with Lady Folly later in the chapter.

Meaning: There's a cost to accepting wisdom: you have to actually let go of the foolish habits and company that were dragging you down. It isn't adding wisdom on top of an unchanged life - it's a genuine change of direction, and the reward on offer is life itself.

Lesson: I'm not asking you to add a few good habits to a life that's otherwise unchanged - I'm asking you to actually turn and walk a different way. That turning is hard, but it's the road that leads somewhere worth going.

See Also: Proverbs 4:14-15 (avoid the path of the wicked); Ephesians 4:22 (put off the old self).

9:7 *(KJV) He that reproveth a scorner getheth to himself shame: and he that rebuketh a wicked man getheth himself a blot.*

(B:E Project) Correct a mocker and you'll only get insulted for it; correct a wicked person and you'll get a stain on yourself for the trouble.

Context: A short, standalone-style wisdom saying inserted into the middle of the chapter, offering practical advice on when correction is worth attempting.

Meaning: Some people simply aren't open to feedback - try to correct a committed cynic or wrongdoer and they'll turn on you rather than listen. This isn't cynicism about people in general, it's realism about picking your moments and knowing who's actually receptive.

Lesson: I want you to be wise about where you spend your energy trying to help someone see clearly. Don't exhaust or wound yourself trying to convince someone who has already decided to mock you for it - save your breath for those ready to listen.

See Also: Matthew 7:6 (do not cast pearls before swine); Proverbs 13:1 (a scorner heareth not rebuke).

9:8 *(KJV) Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee.*
(B:E Project) Don't correct a mocker, or he'll hate you for it; correct a wise person instead, and he'll love you for it.

Context: Directly continues verse 7, sharpening the same observation into a clear "don't do this, do this" pair.

Meaning: The response to correction reveals character. A wise person treats feedback as a gift and grows from it; a mocker treats it as an attack and retaliates. This teaches you both who's worth correcting and, more importantly, how to examine your own reaction when you're the one being corrected.

Lesson: How you respond when someone points something out about you says everything about where you're at. I want you to become the kind of person who can hear a hard truth and love the one who told you it, rather than lashing out.

See Also: Proverbs 15:31-32 (he that heareth reproof getteth understanding); Psalm 141:5 (let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness).

9:9 *(KJV) Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just man, and he will increase in learning.*
(B:E Project) Teach a wise person and they'll grow even wiser; teach someone who does right and they'll learn even more.

Context: Continues the theme of verses 7-8 - who is worth teaching - now stated positively rather than as a warning.

Meaning: Wisdom compounds. A person already committed to growth doesn't plateau - every new piece of instruction builds on what's already there. It's an encouragement to keep learning throughout life rather than assuming you've "arrived."

- Lesson:** Growth never has to stop - the more open you are, the more there is for you to receive. Stay teachable your whole life, and you'll keep discovering there was always more good waiting for you.

See Also: Matthew 13:12 (to him that hath shall be given); Proverbs 1:5 (a wise man will hear and increase learning).
- 9:10

(KJV) The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.

(B:E Project) Taking God seriously, being in awe of him, is where real wisdom starts; knowing the Holy One is what understanding actually is.

Context: This is the chapter's, and arguably the whole book's, key thesis statement, restating almost word for word the same line from Proverbs 1:7 as the introductory discourses draw to a close.

Meaning: "Fear" here doesn't mean cowering in terror - it means a deep respect that reorders your priorities, recognising there's something bigger than yourself and your own cleverness. The claim is bold: information and cleverness aren't the same as wisdom; wisdom starts with humility before something greater than you.

Lesson: True wisdom starts with humility, not with knowing more facts than everyone else. When you stop pretending you're the ultimate authority on your own life, you finally become able to actually learn something real.

See Also: Proverbs 1:7 (the fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge); Job 28:28 (the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom); Psalm 111:10.
- 9:11

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

(B:E Project) "Through me your days will be multiplied, and years will be added to your life."

Context: Wisdom speaking in the first person again, promising a tangible, practical benefit of choosing her way over folly's - a longer, fuller life.

Meaning: This isn't a magic guarantee against death, but a general life-principle: choices made with wisdom (avoiding recklessness, violence, addiction, folly) genuinely tend to lead to a longer, healthier life than careless ones. Wisdom is practical self-preservation, not just abstract virtue.

Lesson: The choices you make really do shape how much life you get to actually live - wisdom isn't just about being good, it's about not needlessly shortening your own days. I want abundant life for you, not a life cut short by avoidable foolishness.

See Also: Proverbs 3:1-2 (length of days peace shall they add); John 10:10 (I am come that they might have life more abundantly).
- 9:12

(KJV) If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself: but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.

- (B:E Project)** If you're wise, the benefit is yours; if you mock and scoff, you alone carry the consequences.

Context: A closing summary statement to Wisdom's speech, stressing personal responsibility right before the chapter turns to describe Lady Folly.

Meaning: Nobody else can absorb the results of your choices on your behalf, not entirely. Wisdom pays off for you personally, and foolishness costs you personally. It's a call to stop blaming others or circumstances and own your part in shaping your own life.

Lesson: I can walk beside you, but I can't make your choices for you - the outcomes of how you live really do land on you. Take ownership of your path, because that ownership is also what makes real change possible.

See Also: Galatians 6:5 (every man shall bear his own burden); Ezekiel 18:20 (the soul that sinneth, it shall die).
- 9:13

(KJV) A foolish woman is clamorous: she is simple, and knoweth nothing.

(B:E Project) Folly is a loud, restless woman - naive, and she doesn't understand a thing.

Context: Opens the second half of the chapter, personifying Folly as a rival woman to Wisdom, deliberately mirroring and mocking the structure of verses 1-6.

Meaning: Folly is drawn as a parody of Wisdom - noisy where Wisdom is composed, ignorant where Wisdom is deep. The point is that foolishness is often loud and attention-grabbing precisely because it has no real substance behind it.

Lesson: Don't mistake volume for value. The loudest voice pulling for your attention isn't always the one that actually knows where it's leading you - learn to notice when noise is covering for emptiness.

See Also: Proverbs 7:11 (she is loud and stubborn); 2 Timothy 3:6-7 (ever learning, never able to come to the knowledge of the truth).
- 9:14

(KJV) For she sitteth at the door of her house, on a seat in the high places of the city,

(B:E Project) She sits at the door of her house, on a seat up in the high parts of the town.

Context: Describes Folly copying Wisdom's public, visible positioning from verse 3, showing how folly mimics wisdom's own methods to lure people in.

Meaning: Folly doesn't hide in back alleys - she sets up in plain, prominent view, just like Wisdom did. Temptation is often dressed up to look respectable and openly available, not obviously sinister; that's exactly what makes it dangerous.

Lesson: Not everything that looks confident and visible is good for you - learn to look past the packaging. I want you discerning enough to recognise when something dressed as opportunity is actually a trap.

See Also: 2 Corinthians 11:14 (Satan transformed into an angel of light); Proverbs 5:8 (remove thy way far from her house).

9:15 *(KJV) To call passengers who go right on their ways:*
(B:E Project) Calling out to people passing by who are minding their own business, going about their day.

Context: Continues the description of Folly, naming her target audience: ordinary people simply going about their lives, not out looking for trouble.

Meaning: The people Folly targets aren't searching for disaster - they're just walking along, living their lives, when temptation calls out to interrupt them. You don't have to be looking for trouble to be approached by it; vigilance matters even in your most ordinary moments.

Lesson: Temptation often doesn't wait for you to go looking for it - it interrupts an ordinary day. Stay awake and aware even in the routine moments, because that's often exactly when a distraction tries to pull you off course.

See Also: 1 Peter 5:8 (be sober, be vigilant); Proverbs 4:14-15 (enter not into the path of the wicked).

9:16 *(KJV) Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: and as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him,*
(B:E Project) "Whoever is naive, come in here," she says to the person who lacks judgement.

Context: Folly's words are an almost word-for-word copy of Wisdom's invitation in verse 4, exposing how closely foolishness can imitate wisdom's own language.

Meaning: The chilling detail is the repetition - Folly uses the exact same opening line as Wisdom. Two very different paths can sound almost identical at the doorway; only what's actually offered inside reveals the difference, which is why discernment matters more than surface appeal.

Lesson: Learn to listen past the opening line and ask what's actually being offered underneath it. I want you wise enough to tell the difference between two voices that can sound the same at first but lead somewhere completely different.

See Also: Matthew 7:15 (false prophets in sheep's clothing); Jeremiah 6:14 (crying peace, peace, when there is no peace).

9:17 *(KJV) Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.*
(B:E Project) "Stolen water tastes sweet, and food eaten in secret is enjoyable."

Context: Folly's actual pitch, contrasting sharply with Wisdom's honest bread and wine offered in verse 5 - here the appeal is explicitly forbidden, secretive pleasure.

Meaning: This is brutally honest about temptation's real appeal: it genuinely does feel exciting, precisely because it's stolen or hidden. Proverbs doesn't pretend wrongdoing feels bad in the moment - it feels good, which is exactly why it's dangerous and why willpower alone often isn't enough.

Lesson: I won't pretend the wrong path never feels good - sometimes it does, in the moment, and that's precisely its trap. What matters is what it costs afterwards, and I'd rather you have something real and lasting than something thrilling and stolen.

See Also: Hebrews 11:25 (the pleasures of sin for a season); Proverbs 20:17 (bread of deceit is sweet but ends full of gravel).

9:18 *(KJV) But he knoweth not that the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depths of hell.*
(B:E Project) But he has no idea that dead people are already there, that her earlier guests are down in the depths of the grave.

Context: The chapter's closing verse, revealing the true, hidden cost behind Folly's inviting doorway - the tragic punchline to the whole Wisdom-versus-Folly contrast.

Meaning: This is the sting in the tale: what looks like a lively, exciting house is actually a graveyard, and the guest has no idea until it's too late. The real danger of foolish choices is precisely that their cost is hidden at the point of decision - by the time it's obvious, real damage is already done.

Lesson: I don't want you finding out the hard way what a path really costs - that's why I keep pointing out where it leads before you walk through the door. Trust that the warning comes from love, not from wanting to spoil your fun; I can see further down the road than you can from where you're standing.

See Also: Proverbs 7:27 (her house is the way to hell); Matthew 7:13 (broad is the way that leadeth to destruction).

CHAPTER 10

Chapter Summary: Proverbs 10

Proverbs Chapter 10 introduces a large collection of Solomon's wise sayings, focusing sharply on the contrast between the righteous and the wicked, and the wise and the foolish. It highlights how our actions and words have direct consequences, affecting not only ourselves but also our families and our lasting reputation. The chapter teaches that hard work and integrity lead to security and blessings from the Lord, while laziness, dishonesty, and foolish talk bring trouble, shame, and eventual downfall. It emphasises that what truly matters is living a life that honours God, as this brings true joy, lasting stability, and divine favour, unlike the fleeting and sorrowful gains of wickedness.

10:1 *(KJV) The proverbs of Solomon. A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.*
(B:E Project) These are Solomon's proverbs. A wise child brings his father joy, but a foolish child weighs his mother down with grief.

Context: Opens the main collection of Solomon's standalone two-line proverbs (chapters 10-29), the first of hundreds of short, self-contained sayings built on antithetical parallelism, contrasting wise/righteous with foolish/wicked.

Meaning: This sets the tone for the whole new section: our choices ripple out and affect the people who love us, not just ourselves. A child's wisdom or foolishness is felt directly in the emotional life of their parents - joy on one hand, heartbreak on the other.

Lesson: The way you live doesn't just affect you - it lands on the people who love you most. I want you to remember that your growth and your struggles both matter to someone, and choosing wisdom is one way of loving your family well.

See Also: Proverbs 15:20 (a wise son maketh a glad father); Proverbs 17:25 (a foolish son is a grief to his father).

10:2 *(KJV) Treasures of wickedness profit nothing: but righteousness delivereth from death.*
(B:E Project) Wealth gained by wrongdoing does you no good in the end, but living rightly can save your life.

Context: A standalone proverb on wealth and integrity, one of many in the chapter comparing the security of righteousness against the emptiness of wrongfully-gained gain.

Meaning: Ill-gotten gains might look like success on the surface, but they carry no real lasting value - they can't buy you out of the deeper consequences of how you got them. Living with integrity, by contrast, has a protective, life-preserving quality that dishonest wealth simply doesn't.

Lesson: Don't measure your life by what you've accumulated, however you got it - measure it by whether you can live with how you got there. I'd rather you have less and sleep easy than have more and be haunted by how you got it.

See Also: Proverbs 11:4 (riches profit not in the day of wrath); Luke 12:15 (life consisteth not in the abundance of possessions).

10:3 *(KJV) The LORD will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish: but he casteth away the substance of the wicked.*
(B:E Project) God won't let a righteous person go hungry, but he pushes away what the wicked have gathered.

Context: Continues the wealth-and-security theme of verse 2, framing provision as ultimately connected to how a person lives rather than just how hard they work.

Meaning: This is a statement of trust: living rightly places you under a kind of watchful care that ensures your basic needs are met, while wrongfully-gained abundance ultimately doesn't hold. It's not a promise of luxury, but a promise that integrity isn't a losing strategy for survival.

Lesson: You don't have to claw and cheat your way to feeling secure - I'm not going to let you starve for choosing to do right. Trust that steady, honest living is actually the more reliable path, even when it looks slower.

See Also: Matthew 6:33 (seek first the kingdom, and these things shall be added); Psalm 37:25 (I have not seen the righteous forsaken).

10:4 *(KJV) He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich.*
(B:E Project) A lazy, careless worker ends up poor, but a hard-working, diligent person becomes wealthy.

Context: A standalone proverb introducing the theme of diligence versus laziness, one of the major recurring subjects throughout the collection in chapters 10-29.

Meaning: This is straightforward cause-and-effect: effort and carelessness produce genuinely different outcomes over time. It's not a guarantee for every individual case, but a general life-principle Proverbs repeats often - consistent effort compounds into results, slackness compounds into shortage.

Lesson: Small, steady effort matters more than it feels like it does in the moment - keep showing up, even when no one's watching. I see the work you put in even when the results are slow to come.

See Also: Proverbs 12:24 (the hand of the diligent shall bear rule); 2 Thessalonians 3:10 (if any would not work, neither should he eat).

10:5 *(KJV) He that gathereth in summer is a wise son: but he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame.*
(B:E Project) Whoever gathers the harvest in summer is acting wisely, but whoever sleeps through harvest time brings shame on himself.

Context: A standalone agricultural proverb reinforcing the diligence theme of verse 4, using the image of timing your effort to the season.

Meaning: Wisdom isn't just about working hard in general - it's about recognising the right moment and acting on it. Opportunities have a season; missing that window through laziness or inattention has real, embarrassing consequences that are hard to undo later.

Lesson: Pay attention to the moments that matter and act while the opportunity is actually there - don't let the right season pass you by through drifting or delay. I want you awake to your own life, not sleepwalking through the times that count.

See Also: Ecclesiastes 3:1 (to every thing there is a season); Proverbs 6:6-8 (consider the ant, gathering food in harvest).

10:6 *(KJV) Blessings are upon the head of the just: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.*

- (B:E Project)** Good things rest on the head of a righteous person, but the wicked person's own mouth is full of violence.

Context: A standalone proverb contrasting the visible outcomes of righteous and wicked living - blessing crowning one, violent speech betraying the other.

Meaning: The imagery is of blessing crowning someone like a garland, set against a mouth that can't help but reveal the aggression underneath. What comes out of your mouth eventually gives away what's actually inside you, for better or worse.

Lesson: Let your words be a genuine reflection of a heart that's settled and kind, not a cover for anger you haven't dealt with. I'd rather you let goodness show through what you say than let bitterness leak out sideways.

See Also: Proverbs 10:11 (the mouth of a righteous man is a well of life); Luke 6:45 (out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh).
- 10:7** ***(KJV)** The memory of the just is blessed: but the name of the wicked shall rot.*

(B:E Project) A righteous person's memory is a blessing to others, but a wicked person's name will rot away.

Context: A standalone proverb on legacy and reputation, considering how a person is remembered by others after they're gone.

Meaning: How you're remembered isn't random - it grows directly out of how you lived. A life of integrity leaves behind something people are genuinely glad to recall, while a corrupt life leaves a name that decays and is best forgotten.

Lesson: Think about the mark you're leaving, not just for today but for the people who'll remember you later. Live in a way that makes your name something worth someone smiling at, long after you're gone.

See Also: Ecclesiastes 7:1 (a good name is better than precious ointment); Psalm 112:6 (the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance).
- 10:8** ***(KJV)** The wise in heart will receive commandments: but a prating fool shall fall.*

(B:E Project) A wise-hearted person accepts guidance, but a chattering fool is heading for a fall.

Context: A standalone proverb on teachability, contrasting quiet receptiveness with reckless, talkative foolishness - a theme returned to often in this chapter, see verses 10, 14 and 19.

Meaning: Wisdom shows itself in a willingness to actually take instruction rather than talk over everyone. The fool, by contrast, is defined by too much talk and too little listening, and that pattern eventually leads to a downfall they could have avoided.

- Lesson:** Practise listening more than you speak, especially when someone's trying to help you avoid a mistake. Real strength isn't having the last word - it's being humble enough to actually receive it.

See Also: James 1:19 (swift to hear, slow to speak); Proverbs 12:15 (a fool's way is right in his own eyes, but he that hearkeneth is wise).
- 10:9** ***(KJV)** He that walketh uprightly walketh surely: but he that perverteth his ways shall be known.*

(B:E Project) Whoever lives with integrity walks securely, but whoever twists their path will eventually be found out.

Context: A standalone proverb on integrity and its natural stability, one of many pairing "walking uprightly" with security and crookedness with exposure.

Meaning: An honest life doesn't require you to keep track of lies or cover your tracks - there's a natural steadiness to it. Dishonesty, by contrast, is inherently unstable; sooner or later inconsistencies surface and the truth comes out.

Lesson: Living honestly is actually the easier road in the long run, even if it feels harder in the moment - you never have to remember what story you told. I want you free from the exhausting work of hiding things; truth lets you walk steady.

See Also: Proverbs 28:18 (whoso walketh uprightly shall be saved); Numbers 32:23 (be sure your sin will find you out).
- 10:10** ***(KJV)** He that winketh with the eye causeth sorrow: but a prating fool shall fall.*

(B:E Project) Whoever winks slyly causes trouble, and a chattering fool comes to ruin.

Context: A standalone proverb warning against sly, manipulative behaviour - the "wink" suggesting secret scheming or deceit - alongside the foolish talkativeness echoed from verse 8.

Meaning: The "wink" pictures someone signalling deceit behind others' backs - subtle manipulation rather than open honesty. Both hidden scheming and reckless talk are condemned here as two different routes to the same destination: hurting people and eventually being brought down by your own behaviour.

Lesson: Be the same person in private as you are in public - no secret signals, no hidden agendas. Openness costs you something now but saves you and others real pain later.

See Also: Proverbs 6:12-14 (a wicked person winketh with his eyes); Psalm 35:19 (let them not wink with the eye that hate me wrongfully).
- 10:11** ***(KJV)** The mouth of a righteous man is a well of life: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.*

(B:E Project) A righteous person's words are like a well full of life-giving water, but the wicked person's mouth hides violence.

Context: A standalone proverb on speech, echoing verse 6's second line and developing the recurring theme that what you say either nourishes or harms others.

Meaning: A "well of life" is a source people can keep coming back to and be refreshed by - the image suggests speech that genuinely sustains and helps others over time. In sharp contrast, violent speech poisons rather than nourishes whoever it touches.

Lesson: Ask yourself whether your words are a well people want to keep coming back to, or something they need to guard themselves against. I want your voice to be a source of life for the people around you.

See Also: John 4:14 (a well of water springing up into everlasting life); Proverbs 18:21 (death and life are in the power of the tongue).

10:12 *(KJV) Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins.*
(B:E Project) Hatred stirs up conflict, but love overlooks wrongs.

Context: A standalone proverb on relationships, one of the most frequently echoed lines in the whole Bible - the contrast between hatred that provokes and love that forgives.

Meaning: Hatred looks for reasons to fight and keeps old wounds alive; love does the opposite, choosing to let go of offences rather than dwell on them. This isn't about pretending wrong never happened, but about not letting grievances become the fuel for ongoing conflict.

Lesson: When someone wrongs you, you get to choose whether that becomes a reason to fight or a chance to forgive - I'm asking you to choose forgiveness, because it's the only thing that actually ends the cycle. Love doesn't ignore the wrong; it simply refuses to let it win.

See Also: 1 Peter 4:8 (charity shall cover the multitude of sins); James 5:20 (he which converteth a sinner shall hide a multitude of sins).

10:13 *(KJV) In the lips of him that hath understanding wisdom is found: but a rod is for the back of him that is void of understanding.*
(B:E Project) Wisdom is found in the words of someone with understanding, but a person who lacks sense earns himself a beating.

Context: A standalone proverb contrasting the fruit of understanding, wise speech, with the consequences of lacking it, reflecting the blunt, practical discipline culture of the ancient world.

Meaning: This verse reflects an older, blunt cultural context where physical correction was the expected response to persistent foolishness - the deeper principle is that actions and choices carry consequences suited to them. Wisdom produces something valuable, good words; its absence invites hard correction.

Lesson: I care more about the wisdom growing in you than about punishment for its own sake - painful consequences exist to wake us up, not to define us. Let correction, however it comes, be something that teaches rather than something that just hurts.

See Also: Proverbs 26:3 (a rod for the fool's back); Hebrews 12:11 (no chastening seems joyous, but grievous, yet it yields fruit).

10:14 *(KJV) Wise men lay up knowledge: but the mouth of the foolish is near destruction.*
(B:E Project) Wise people store up knowledge, but the mouth of a fool invites disaster.

Context: A standalone proverb continuing the wise-speech-versus-foolish-speech theme, this time framed around what's patiently gathered against what's carelessly blurted out.

Meaning: There's a contrast between patient accumulation and careless output. The wise person builds up understanding over time, deliberately; the fool, by contrast, speaks without that reserve of thought behind them, and it gets them into trouble.

Lesson: Take time to actually learn and think before you speak - a stocked mind makes for better words. I'd rather you build something slowly and speak wisely than blurt out whatever's on the surface.

See Also: Proverbs 18:7 (a fool's mouth is his destruction); Proverbs 15:2 (the tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright).

10:15 *(KJV) The rich man's wealth is his strong city: the destruction of the poor is their poverty.*
(B:E Project) A rich person's wealth is like a fortified city protecting them; a poor person's poverty is what wrecks them.

Context: A standalone, realistic observation on how money functions as protection in a fallen world, not an endorsement so much as an honest description of how wealth and poverty actually operate.

Meaning: This verse describes reality plainly: money genuinely buys security and options, while poverty leaves people exposed to danger and hardship that wealthier people can simply pay their way around. Proverbs elsewhere balances this by warning the rich not to trust wealth completely and by commanding generosity toward the poor.

Lesson: If you have resources, remember they're not just protection for you - they're a chance to be a shelter for someone who has none. I notice the poor more than the world does; don't let what you have make you blind to what someone else lacks.

See Also: Proverbs 18:11 (the rich man's wealth is his strong city, in his own conceit); Proverbs 14:31 (he that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker).

10:16 *(KJV) The labour of the righteous tendeth to life: the fruit of the wicked to sin.*
(B:E Project) What the righteous work for leads to life; what the wicked produce leads to sin.

Context: A standalone proverb on the direction of effort - where righteous labour and wicked labour ultimately end up.

Meaning: The same word for effort or fruit can describe very different trajectories depending on who's doing the work. Effort isn't neutral; it's always heading somewhere, and the direction is set by the character behind it.

Lesson: Ask not just how hard you're working but what your work is actually building towards. I want the effort you pour into your days to be growing something life-giving, not feeding a cycle that only leads back to harm.

See Also: Galatians 6:8 (he that soweth to the flesh shall reap corruption); Romans 6:22 (being made free from sin, ye have your fruit unto holiness).

10:17 *(KJV) He is in the way of life that keepeth instruction: but he that refuseth reproof erreth.*
(B:E Project) Whoever holds onto instruction is on the path of life, but whoever rejects correction goes astray.

Context: A standalone proverb on the value of receiving correction, continuing the chapter's repeated theme of teachability seen already in verses 8 and 13.

Meaning: Being open to instruction actively keeps you on a good path; refusing correction isn't neutral, it's the very thing that causes you to wander off course. The verse frames correction not as an obstacle but as the guardrail keeping you on the road.

Lesson: Don't treat correction as an insult - treat it as a guardrail keeping you from drifting somewhere you don't want to end up. I send people and moments into your life to help you course-correct because I want you to stay on the path that leads to life.

See Also: Proverbs 12:1 (whoso loveth instruction loveth knowledge); Hebrews 12:5-6 (despise not the chastening of the Lord).

10:18 *(KJV) He that hideth hatred with lying lips, and he that uttereth a slander, is a fool.*
(B:E Project) Whoever hides hatred behind lying words, and whoever spreads slander, is a fool.

Context: A standalone proverb on hypocrisy and gossip, naming two related sins: pretending not to hate someone, and actively spreading harmful talk about them.

Meaning: This verse targets two-facedness specifically - smiling to someone's face while secretly resenting or badmouthing them. Both fake friendliness covering real hatred and open slander are called out as foolish, because both damage trust and relationships in the end.

Lesson: Be honest about how you feel rather than faking warmth while quietly working against someone. If you have a grievance, bring it into the open with love, rather than letting it curdle into gossip behind their back.

See Also: Leviticus 19:17 (thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart); Ephesians 4:25 (put away lying, speak every man truth).

10:19 *(KJV) In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise.*
(B:E Project) Talk too much and sin is bound to slip in somewhere; whoever holds their tongue is wise.

Context: A standalone proverb warning specifically about the sheer volume of speech, distinct from earlier verses that focus on the content or tone of speech.

Meaning: This isn't about never speaking - it's a statistical observation that the more you talk, the more chances you give yourself to say something careless, unkind, or untrue. Restraint in speech is presented here as a form of practical wisdom, not shyness.

Lesson: You don't have to fill every silence or have an opinion on everything - some of the wisest moments are the ones where you simply don't speak. Give yourself permission to hold your tongue; it protects both you and the people listening.

See Also: James 1:19 (let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak); Proverbs 17:27-28 (he that hath knowledge spareth his words).

10:20 *(KJV) The tongue of the just is as choice silver: the heart of the wicked is little worth.*
(B:E Project) The words of a righteous person are like top-quality silver; the heart of a wicked person is worth almost nothing.

Context: A standalone proverb using a metalworking image - refined, precious silver versus cheap, worthless material - to contrast the value of righteous speech with the emptiness of a wicked heart.

Meaning: Good, honest speech has real, lasting value, like a precious metal that's been refined and purified. A wicked heart, by contrast, might produce plenty of talk, but underneath it there's nothing of real worth - the imagery invites you to ask what your own words are actually made of.

Lesson: Let your words carry real weight and value, refined by honesty rather than cheapened by carelessness or manipulation. I want what comes from your heart to be something genuinely precious, not something that only looks shiny on the surface.

See Also: Psalm 12:6 (the words of the LORD are pure words, as silver tried); Proverbs 25:11 (a word fitly spoken is like apples of gold).

10:21 *(KJV) The lips of the righteous feed many: but fools die for want of wisdom.*
(B:E Project) The words of the righteous nourish many people, but fools die for lack of wisdom.

Context: A standalone proverb continuing the "well of life" imagery of verse 11, now framing righteous speech as something that feeds a whole community, not just the individual speaker.

Meaning: Good words don't just help the speaker; they genuinely sustain other people, like food shared around. Meanwhile, refusing wisdom isn't a small, private failing - Proverbs treats it here as something that can genuinely cost you your life.

Lesson: What you say has the power to nourish people far beyond yourself, so use your words generously to build others up. And take the pursuit of wisdom seriously - it isn't optional decoration on a life, it's essential to it.

See Also: John 6:33 (the bread of God is he which giveth life unto the world); Hosea 4:6 (my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge).

10:22 *(KJV) The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it.*
(B:E Project) It's God's blessing that brings true wealth, and he doesn't add any sorrow along with it.

Context: A standalone proverb offering a contrast to nearby verses about hard-won or wrongfully-gained wealth - here the emphasis shifts to blessing as an unburdened gift.

Meaning: This verse distinguishes wealth that comes as blessing, clean and unburdened, from wealth gained through anxiety, exploitation, or deceit, which typically carries hidden costs and grief. True prosperity, this suggests, doesn't leave you more anxious or guilty than before you had it.

Lesson: Notice the difference between gain that leaves you lighter and gain that leaves you heavier with worry or guilt - one is a genuine blessing, the other rarely is. I want good things for you that you can actually enjoy without a shadow attached.

See Also: 1 Timothy 6:9-10 (they that will be rich fall into temptation); James 1:17 (every good gift is from above).

10:23 *(KJV) It is as sport to a fool to do mischief: but a man of understanding hath wisdom.*
(B:E Project) A fool finds doing wrong entertaining, like a game; a person of understanding finds wisdom instead.

Context: A standalone proverb contrasting what different kinds of people find enjoyable - mischief as amusement for the fool, wisdom as the genuine pursuit of the sensible person.

Meaning: What you find fun reveals your character. Someone who's lost their moral bearings can treat causing harm as entertainment, almost a game, while a person with real understanding takes pleasure in wisdom itself rather than in wrongdoing.

Lesson: Pay attention to what actually entertains you - it says something true about where your heart is. I want you to find genuine joy in doing good, not a thrill in cutting corners or hurting someone for a laugh.

See Also: Proverbs 14:9 (fools make a mock at sin); Romans 1:32 (having pleasure in them that do wrong).

10:24 *(KJV) The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him: but the desire of the righteous shall be granted.*
(B:E Project) What the wicked person dreads will happen to him; what the righteous person longs for will be given to them.

Context: A standalone proverb on the eventual fate of both groups - what each secretly fears or hopes for, and how it plays out.

Meaning: There's a kind of poetic justice at work here: the wicked person's own anxieties end up catching up with them, while the righteous person's genuine longings are eventually fulfilled. It suggests that a life built on wrongdoing is inherently unstable, always bracing for the thing it dreads.

Lesson: Living rightly frees you from the constant dread of being found out or of things falling apart around your own choices. I want your deepest longings, the good ones, to actually come true - not to be crowded out by fear.

See Also: Job 3:25 (the thing I greatly feared is come upon me); Psalm 37:4 (delight thyself in the LORD and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart).

10:25 *(KJV) As the whirlwind passeth, so is the wicked no more: but the righteous is an everlasting foundation.*
(B:E Project) When a storm blows through, the wicked person disappears with it, but the righteous person stands like a foundation that lasts forever.

Context: A standalone proverb using weather imagery - a violent but temporary whirlwind - to contrast the wicked's fleeting existence with the enduring stability of the righteous.

Meaning: Wickedness might look powerful and dramatic in the moment, like a fierce storm, but it passes and leaves nothing behind. Righteousness, by contrast, is compared to something structural and lasting - a foundation that holds up over time, long after the storm has gone.

Lesson: Don't be dazzled by things that look dramatic and powerful in the moment - ask instead what actually lasts. I want to build your life on something that stands firm long after the noise has passed.

See Also: Matthew 7:24-27 (the wise and foolish builders); Psalm 1:4-6 (the wicked are like chaff which the wind driveth away).

10:26 *(KJV) As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that send him.*
(B:E Project) Like vinegar sets your teeth on edge and smoke stings your eyes, that's what a lazy person is like to whoever sends him to do a job.

Context: A standalone proverb using two vivid sensory images of irritation to describe the frustration of relying on a lazy person to get something done.

Meaning: The images are deliberately unpleasant and physical - the point is visceral, not abstract. Depending on someone unreliable isn't just mildly annoying; Proverbs compares it to a genuinely irritating physical sensation, emphasising just how frustrating laziness is to everyone around it.

Lesson: Think about how it feels to be relied on, and be someone others can actually send to do something without dread. I'd rather your reliability be a relief to people than a source of constant irritation.

See Also: Proverbs 25:19 (confidence in an unfaithful man is like a broken tooth); Proverbs 6:6-9 (go to the ant, thou sluggard).

10:27 *(KJV) The fear of the LORD prolongeth days: but the years of the wicked shall be shortened.*
(B:E Project) Taking God seriously adds years to your life, but the years of the wicked are cut short.

Context: A standalone proverb returning to the "fear of the LORD" theme introduced in chapters 1 and 9, now connecting it explicitly to lifespan, echoing 9:11.

Meaning: This restates a recurring practical claim in Proverbs: a life oriented around genuine reverence and right living tends toward longevity, while a reckless or wicked life tends to shorten itself through its own consequences - violence, excess, poor choices catching up with a person.

Lesson: The way you live really can add or subtract years from your life - reverence and care for how you treat others isn't just spiritually good, it's practically protective. I want you around for a long, full life, not cut short by choices you could have avoided.

See Also: Proverbs 9:11 (by me thy days shall be multiplied); Exodus 20:12 (honour thy parents that thy days may be long).

10:28 *(KJV) The hope of the righteous shall be gladness: but the expectation of the wicked shall perish.*
(B:E Project) What the righteous hope for turns into joy; what the wicked expect comes to nothing.

Context: A standalone proverb on the eventual outcome of hope, closely paired thematically with verse 24's contrast of desires fulfilled versus fears realised.

Meaning: Hope grounded in righteous living has real substance and eventually pays off in genuine gladness. The wicked person's expectations, by contrast, however confident they might feel, ultimately collapse to nothing - their hope was built on something that couldn't hold.

Lesson: Root your hope in something that can actually bear its weight - a life of integrity gives you a hope that doesn't collapse when tested. I want you to be able to hope confidently, not anxiously, because what you're hoping in is real.

See Also: Romans 5:5 (hope maketh not ashamed); Job 8:13-14 (the hypocrite's hope shall perish).

10:29 *(KJV) The way of the LORD is strength to the upright: but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity.*
(B:E Project) Living God's way gives strength to those who do right, but it spells ruin for people who do wrong.

Context: A standalone proverb describing "the way of the LORD", the path of right living, as protective for the righteous and destructive for the wicked, using the road-and-path metaphor common throughout Proverbs.

Meaning: The same path produces opposite effects depending on who's walking it and how - it strengthens those aligned with it, while it exposes and ultimately ruins those working against it. It's a reminder that trying to fight against a good, well-ordered way of living tends to backfire.

Lesson: Align your life with what's good and true, and you'll find it actually holds you up rather than wearing you down. Working against your own conscience and against love eventually costs more than it gains - let the good way be your strength, not your struggle.

See Also: Psalm 27:1 (the LORD is my strength); Proverbs 21:15 (destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity).

10:30 *(KJV) The righteous shall never be removed: but the wicked shall not inhabit the earth.*
(B:E Project) The righteous will never be shaken loose, but the wicked won't get to stay in the land.

Context: A standalone proverb on permanence versus displacement, closing out a run of verses (25, 28-30) about the ultimate stability of righteous living compared with the impermanence of wickedness.

Meaning: There's a promise of rootedness here - a life built on integrity has a lasting, settled quality that can't easily be uprooted, while wrongdoing, however established it looks, ultimately doesn't get to stay. It echoes Psalm 1's image of a tree planted by water versus chaff blown away.

Lesson: Build your life on something that can't be shaken loose by circumstance - integrity gives you roots that hold. I want you settled and secure, not scattered by every wind that a dishonest life eventually meets.

See Also: Psalm 37:9 (evildoers shall be cut off, but those that wait upon the LORD shall inherit the earth); Matthew 5:5 (blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth).

10:31 *(KJV) The mouth of the just bringeth forth wisdom: but the froward tongue shall be cut out.*

(B:E Project) The words of a righteous person produce wisdom, but a twisted, deceitful tongue will be silenced.

Context: A standalone proverb returning again to the theme of speech, contrasting productive, wise words with a tongue bent towards perversity or dishonesty.

Meaning: Righteous speech is described as generative - it "brings forth," produces something useful. A "froward" or twisted tongue, one that deliberately distorts truth, faces the opposite fate: eventually being cut off, silenced, unable to keep doing the damage it was doing.

Lesson: Let your words be something that grows good into the world rather than twisting truth for your own advantage. I want your voice to keep producing life for as long as you have breath to speak.

See Also: Proverbs 4:24 (put away a froward mouth); James 3:6-10 (the tongue is a fire, an unruly evil).

10:32 ***(KJV)** The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable: but the mouth of the wicked speaketh frowardness.*

(B:E Project) A righteous person's words know what's fitting to say, but a wicked person's mouth speaks only twisted, perverse things.

Context: The closing verse of chapter 10, rounding off the chapter's heavy emphasis on speech (seen in verses 6, 8, 10-11, 13-14, 18-21 and 31) with a final contrast between fitting, well-judged words and corrupt ones.

Meaning: This closes the chapter by highlighting discernment in speech - knowing not just what's true but what's appropriate to say, when, and how. It's a fitting bookend to a chapter obsessed with the tongue: wisdom isn't just about having good things to say, but about the judgement to say the right thing at the right time.

Lesson: Ask not only "is this true" but "is this the right thing to say right now" - real wisdom includes timing and tact, not just honesty. I want your words to fit the moment with care, so they land as the gift they're meant to be.

See Also: Proverbs 15:23 (a word spoken in due season, how good is it); Ecclesiastes 3:7 (a time to keep silence, and a time to speak).

CHAPTER 11

Chapter Summary: Proverbs 11

Proverbs Chapter 11 vividly contrasts the choices and outcomes of those who live righteously with those who live wickedly. It emphasises that honesty, humility, and integrity lead to a good life, respect, and positive influence within the community, often resulting in prosperity and protection. Conversely, pride, deceit, cruelty, and selfishness are shown to bring about shame, ruin, and ultimately destruction, not only for individuals but also for their wider society. The chapter

consistently highlights that generosity is rewarded, while stinginess leads to poverty, and that true wisdom involves seeking good and offering sound counsel rather than gossiping or trusting in material wealth. Ultimately, it promises that both the good and the bad will face consequences for their actions, even during their lives on earth.

11:1 ***(KJV)** A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight.*
(B:E Project) Rigging the scales to cheat someone is offensive to God, but using accurate, honest weights makes him glad.

Context: A standalone proverb from the Solomon collection (chapters 10-29), using the marketplace image of merchants' stone weights to talk about honesty in everyday business.

Meaning: In the ancient market, traders used stone weights to measure goods, and a dishonest trader would keep two sets - one to buy cheap, one to sell dear. This verse says God cares about that kind of everyday, unglamorous honesty, not just big 'religious' issues. Integrity in small transactions is where character actually shows.

Lesson: I notice the small, unseen moments most - the discount you didn't earn, the change you didn't return. Love your neighbour by dealing fairly with them even when nobody's checking, because that's where trust is really built.

See Also: Leviticus 19:35-36 commands just weights and measures directly; Amos 8:5 condemns merchants who cheat with false balances.

11:2 ***(KJV)** When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom.*
(B:E Project) Pride leads to disgrace, but staying humble is where wisdom is found.

Context: A standalone proverb contrasting pride and humility, one of Proverbs' most repeated themes.

Meaning: Pride makes people overconfident and unwilling to learn, which sets them up to fall hard. Humility keeps you teachable and clear-sighted about your own limits, which is exactly what wisdom needs to grow.

Lesson: The humble are the ones who keep growing, because they can still see their own mistakes. Walk humbly and the world opens up to you instead of catching you out.

See Also: James 4:6 - God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble; Luke 14:11 - whoever exalts himself will be humbled.

11:3 ***(KJV)** The integrity of the upright shall guide them: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them.*
(B:E Project) Honest people are guided safely by their own integrity, but dishonest people are destroyed by their own crookedness.

Context: A standalone proverb describing integrity and corruption as internal forces that shape a person's path.

Meaning: Integrity works like an inner compass, quietly steering you clear of trouble. Dishonesty, by contrast, doesn't need an outside punisher - it eventually trips up the person who practises it.

Lesson: Live truthfully and you won't need to watch your back or keep track of your lies. Deceit always becomes its own trap in the end.

See Also: Proverbs 10:9 - the one who walks uprightly walks securely; Psalm 25:21 - integrity and uprightness preserve me.

11:4 *(KJV) Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death.*
(B:E Project) Money won't do you any good on the day disaster strikes, but living rightly can save your life.

Context: A standalone proverb on the limits of wealth when it matters most.

Meaning: Wealth can buy comfort and options, but it can't buy its way out of every crisis, and it certainly can't buy its way out of death. Character and integrity carry weight that money simply doesn't.

Lesson: Don't stake your sense of security on your bank balance. Build a life of honesty and love instead - that's what actually holds up when everything else fails.

See Also: Proverbs 10:2 - treasures of wickedness profit nothing; Luke 12:16-21, the parable of the rich fool whose wealth couldn't save his life.

11:5 *(KJV) The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way: but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness.*
(B:E Project) The godly integrity of blameless people keeps their path straight, but wicked people are brought down by their own wrongdoing.

Context: A standalone proverb on the self-directing power of righteousness versus the self-destructive power of wickedness.

Meaning: Your own choices chart the road ahead of you. Wrongdoing isn't just punished from the outside - it actively sabotages the person doing it.

Lesson: What you sow today shapes the road you'll walk tomorrow. Choose integrity, and let your own honest life do the guiding.

See Also: Proverbs 5:22 - the wicked is holden with the cords of his own sins; Galatians 6:7 - whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

11:6 *(KJV) The righteousness of the upright shall deliver them: but transgressors shall be taken in their own naughtiness.*
(B:E Project) Good people's integrity rescues them, but treacherous people get trapped by their own greedy desires.

Context: A standalone proverb closely paired with verse 3, adding the image of being caught in a snare of one's own making.

Meaning: This isn't quite the same point as verse 3 - here the wicked aren't just destroyed, they're specifically ensnared by their own cravings, like an animal caught in a trap it set for itself.

Lesson: Don't let your cravings run your life - they'll box you in eventually. Live with integrity and you stay free.

See Also: Proverbs 11:3, the closely related verse just above it; Psalm 7:15-16 - he made a pit and fell into it himself.

11:7 *(KJV) When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish: and the hope of unjust men perisheth.*
(B:E Project) When a wicked person dies, everything they were counting on dies with them; whatever hope unjust people had comes to nothing.

Context: A standalone proverb reflecting on death as the moment that exposes what a wrongly lived life was actually worth.

Meaning: Death strips away all the schemes, status, and hopes a wicked life was built on, leaving nothing behind. It's a sober reminder to build your hope on something that outlasts you, not on things that die when you do.

Lesson: Don't anchor your hope in things that vanish the moment you're gone. Build a legacy of love and honesty instead - that's what actually lasts.

See Also: Psalm 49:16-17 - man takes nothing of his glory when he dies; Luke 12:20, the rich fool who built his hope on barns he'd never use.

11:8 *(KJV) The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in his stead.*
(B:E Project) The righteous person gets pulled out of trouble, while the wicked person ends up in it instead.

Context: A standalone proverb about the pattern of trouble finding its way to those who court it.

Meaning: This isn't an ironclad guarantee, but a general pattern: a life of integrity tends to steer you clear of self-made disaster, while wrongdoing tends to walk straight into it.

Lesson: Live rightly not to dodge every hardship life throws at you, but because honesty naturally keeps you away from the traps that wrongdoing walks straight into.

See Also: Proverbs 21:18 - the wicked shall be a ransom for the righteous; Esther 7, where Haman is hanged on the gallows he built for someone else.

11:9 *(KJV) An hypocrite with his mouth destroyeth his neighbour: but through knowledge shall the just be delivered.*

- (B:E Project)** A two-faced person's words destroy their neighbour, but being informed and wise rescues good people.
- Context:** A standalone proverb on hypocrisy and its social damage, and the protective power of knowledge.
- Meaning:** Hypocrisy - saying one thing while meaning another - does real harm to people who trust it. Staying wise and discerning is what protects you from being taken in by it.
- Lesson:** Speak plainly and don't wear a mask with people. And stay sharp, so that other people's games and pretences can't trap you.
- See Also:** Proverbs 26:24-26 - hatred is covered by deceit but wickedness is eventually shown; Matthew 23:27-28 on hypocrisy.
- 11:10** ***(KJV)** When it goeth well with the righteous, the city rejoiceth: and when the wicked perish, there is shouting.*
(B:E Project) When good people prosper, the whole city celebrates; when the wicked fall, people cheer.
- Context:** A standalone proverb that widens the lens from the individual to the whole community's response to justice.
- Meaning:** Good character isn't a private matter - it benefits everyone around it, and a corrupt or harmful person's downfall genuinely relieves a whole community, not just one person.
- Lesson:** Your integrity ripples out further than you think and blesses the people around you. Live well not only for yourself but for everyone your life touches.
- See Also:** Proverbs 29:2 - when the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; Proverbs 28:12.
- 11:11** ***(KJV)** By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted: but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked.*
(B:E Project) A city rises because of good people's blessing on it, but is torn down by the words of the wicked.
- Context:** A standalone proverb continuing verse 10's civic theme, focused on the power of speech and character to shape a whole community.
- Meaning:** The words and character of ordinary citizens and leaders genuinely shape a city's fate - destructive talk, rumour, and incitement can wreck a community, while honest blessing builds it up.
- Lesson:** What you say and how you live builds up or tears down the people around you. Choose, deliberately, to be a builder rather than a wrecker.

- See Also:** Proverbs 11:9, on the same danger of destructive speech; James 3:5-6, the tongue as a small fire that can set a whole forest ablaze.
- 11:12** ***(KJV)** He that is void of wisdom despiseth his neighbour: but a man of understanding holdeth his peace.*
(B:E Project) Someone lacking sense looks down on their neighbour, but a sensible person keeps quiet.
- Context:** A standalone proverb on how wisdom and foolishness show up in how we treat and speak about others.
- Meaning:** Contempt for other people betrays a lack of wisdom, no matter how clever the person feels. True understanding shows itself in restraint, not in putting others down.
- Lesson:** Hold your tongue before you judge someone. Real wisdom is patient and doesn't need to belittle anyone to feel secure.
- See Also:** Proverbs 17:28 - even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace; James 1:19 - swift to hear, slow to speak.
- 11:13** ***(KJV)** A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.*
(B:E Project) A gossip spills secrets, but a trustworthy person keeps a confidence.
- Context:** A standalone proverb on gossip and trustworthiness, a recurring topic in Proverbs' teaching on speech.
- Meaning:** Gossip betrays trust and can genuinely harm the person whose secret is exposed. Being someone others can safely confide in is a real mark of good character.
- Lesson:** Be the friend people can trust with what matters to them. Guarding someone's secret, even when it's tempting to share it, is a quiet act of love.
- See Also:** Proverbs 20:19 - meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips; Proverbs 25:9-10 on keeping another's secret.
- 11:14** ***(KJV)** Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.*
(B:E Project) Without good guidance a nation falls apart, but with many wise advisers, there's safety.
- Context:** A standalone proverb on leadership and the value of seeking counsel before big decisions.
- Meaning:** Isolation in decision-making, especially at scale, is genuinely dangerous. Seeking out multiple wise perspectives protects against blind spots any one person would miss alone.

- Lesson: Don't go it alone when big decisions loom. Surround yourself with people who'll tell you the truth, not just what you want to hear.

See Also: Proverbs 15:22 - in the multitude of counsellors there is establishment; Proverbs 24:6.
- 11:15 (KJV) *He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it: and he that hateth suretyship is sure.*
(B:E Project) Whoever guarantees a stranger's debt will suffer for it, but whoever refuses to co-sign for someone they don't know is safe.

Context: A standalone proverb giving practical financial wisdom, one of several warnings in Proverbs against guaranteeing someone else's debt.

Meaning: This is blunt, practical advice: co-signing a loan or guaranteeing debt for someone you don't know well is financially reckless, however generous it might feel in the moment.

Lesson: Be generous, but be wise with money. Love doesn't mean signing away your own security for someone you barely know - real care can find better ways to help.

See Also: Proverbs 6:1-5 on the danger of being surety for another; Proverbs 22:26-27.
- 11:16 (KJV) *A gracious woman retaineth honour: and strong men retain riches.*
(B:E Project) A woman with grace and good character earns lasting honour, while ruthless, strong men merely hold on to wealth.

Context: A standalone proverb contrasting two different kinds of 'gain' - honour built on character versus wealth held by force.

Meaning: Honour that comes from grace and character is genuine and lasting, in a way that riches gripped through sheer strength or ruthlessness simply aren't - it's a comparison of what's actually worth pursuing.

Lesson: Chase character, not just power or possessions. Kindness earns you something that money and force can never buy - real, lasting respect.

See Also: Proverbs 31:30 - favour is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman that feareth the Lord shall be praised; 1 Peter 3:3-4.
- 11:17 (KJV) *The merciful man doeth good to his own soul: but he that is cruel troubleth his own flesh.*
(B:E Project) A kind person does good to himself, but a cruel person brings trouble on himself.

Context: A standalone proverb noting that kindness and cruelty both come back to affect the person who practises them.

- Meaning: Mercy and kindness aren't purely for the benefit of others - they nourish the giver's own life and wellbeing too, while cruelty poisons the cruel person from the inside.

Lesson: When you're kind, you're not just helping someone else - you're healing yourself too. Cruelty always comes back to hurt the person dealing it out.

See Also: Proverbs 11:25 - the liberal soul shall be made fat; Matthew 5:7 - blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.
- 11:18 (KJV) *The wicked worketh a deceitful work: but to him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward.*
(B:E Project) The wicked earn wages that don't last, but whoever plants righteousness gets a reward that's certain.

Context: A standalone proverb using a sowing-and-reaping image to contrast dishonest gain with genuine reward.

Meaning: Dishonest gain is unstable and often illusory - it slips away. Living rightly is like planting a crop that reliably yields a harvest you can count on.

Lesson: What you invest your life in matters. Sow kindness and honesty and you'll reap something that actually lasts, unlike quick, dishonest wins.

See Also: Galatians 6:7-9 on sowing and reaping; Hosea 10:12 - sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy.
- 11:19 (KJV) *As righteousness tendeth to life: so he that pursueth evil pursueth it to his own death.*
(B:E Project) Righteousness leads to life, but chasing after evil leads straight to death.

Context: A standalone proverb stating Proverbs' central theme plainly: moral choices lead to real, lasting outcomes.

Meaning: This lays out the whole book's big picture in one line - two roads, two destinations. It's not abstract theology; it's a claim that how you live actually determines where your life ends up.

Lesson: The path you walk daily is taking you somewhere specific. Choose the road that leads to real life, not the one that only looks exciting from where you're standing.

See Also: Matthew 7:13-14, the narrow and wide gates leading to life or destruction; Proverbs 12:28.
- 11:20 (KJV) *They that are of a froward heart are abomination to the LORD: but such as are upright in their way are his delight.*
(B:E Project) God is disgusted by twisted, dishonest hearts, but delighted by people who live with integrity.

Context: A standalone proverb echoing the 'abomination/delight' pattern used elsewhere (see 11:1), naming what pleases or displeases God at the level of the heart.

Meaning: It's not outward performance that matters most here, but the heart's actual orientation - whether it's crooked or straight.

Lesson: I care less about looking good and more about your heart being honest. Let your inner life genuinely match your outer life.

See Also: Proverbs 11:1, the same 'abomination/delight' pattern applied to honest trade; 1 Samuel 16:7 - man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.

11:21 *(KJV) Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished: but the seed of the righteous shall be delivered.*
(B:E Project) You can be sure of this: wicked people will not go unpunished, but the children of the righteous will be kept safe.

Context: A standalone proverb using the idiom 'hand join in hand' - roughly 'you can count on it' - to state the certainty of moral consequences across generations.

Meaning: Even if wrongdoers band together for strength, justice eventually catches up with them. Meanwhile righteousness has protective effects that reach beyond one person, into future generations.

Lesson: Don't think that teaming up with wrong makes it any safer. Live rightly instead, and you're planting safety for the people who come after you.

See Also: Proverbs 11:18, on the sure reward of righteousness; Exodus 20:5-6 on the generational reach of how we live.

11:22 *(KJV) As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion.*
(B:E Project) A beautiful woman with no sense is like a gold ring stuck in a pig's snout.

Context: A standalone proverb using a vivid, almost comic image to contrast outward beauty with inward character or discretion.

Meaning: Physical beauty (or, more broadly, any impressive appearance) without wisdom or discretion is wasted - even grotesque, like fine jewellery on an animal that has no use for it. The underlying point applies beyond looks: appearance without substance.

Lesson: Don't build your sense of worth on appearance alone, and don't be dazzled by someone else's just because it's the first thing you see. Character is what actually makes a person shine.

See Also: Proverbs 31:30 - favour is deceitful and beauty is vain; 1 Peter 3:3-4 on inner character over outward adornment.

11:23 *(KJV) The desire of the righteous is only good: but the expectation of the wicked is wrath.*

(B:E Project) What the righteous want turns out good, but what the wicked expect ends in disaster.

Context: A standalone proverb contrasting the outcomes that flow from righteous versus wicked desires.

Meaning: Righteous desires are aligned with genuinely good outcomes; wicked hopes are built on foundations that inevitably collapse, however confident the person feels.

Lesson: Examine what you're actually hoping for underneath the surface. Desires rooted in love and honesty tend to lead somewhere good; ones rooted in greed or harm rarely do.

See Also: Proverbs 10:24 - the fear of the wicked shall come upon him; Psalm 37:4 - delight thyself in the Lord and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.

11:24 *(KJV) There is that scaftereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.*
(B:E Project) One person gives freely and ends up richer for it; another holds back more than they should and ends up poorer.

Context: A standalone proverb stating the counterintuitive generosity paradox, one of Proverbs' central teachings on giving.

Meaning: It sounds backwards, but generosity tends to produce abundance - through goodwill, opportunity, and trust - while hoarding tends toward loss, through stinginess of habit and the trust it costs you.

Lesson: Don't clutch your resources so tight that you end up choking your own life. Give generously and watch how it has a way of coming back to you.

See Also: Proverbs 11:25, the verse immediately following, on the same theme; Luke 6:38 - give, and it shall be given unto you.

11:25 *(KJV) The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.*
(B:E Project) A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed themselves.

Context: A standalone proverb continuing verse 24's generosity theme, using the image of watering a field or garden.

Meaning: Giving to others has a way of circling back to enrich the giver - kindness, like watering a crop, tends to be reciprocal by its very nature.

Lesson: Pour yourself out for others and you'll find yourself filled up too. Generosity isn't a loss - it's an exchange that comes back around.

See Also: Proverbs 11:24, the verse just before it; 2 Corinthians 9:6-8 on sowing generously and reaping generously.

11:26 *(KJV) He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him: but blessing shall be upon the head of him that selleth it.*
(B:E Project) People curse the one who hoards grain during a shortage, but bless the one who sells it to those who need it.

Context: A standalone proverb using the ancient image of grain-hoarding to address economic ethics in times of scarcity.
Meaning: Withholding necessities to drive up prices - what we'd now call price-gouging - earns resentment and curses; making essentials available to people in need earns real goodwill.
Lesson: Don't profit off other people's desperation. Sharing what you have when someone is genuinely in need is love put into action.
See Also: Amos 8:4-6, condemning those who exploit the needy for profit; James 5:1-5.

11:27 *(KJV) He that diligently seeketh good procureth favour: but he that seeketh mischief, it shall come unto him.*
(B:E Project) Whoever chases after good things finds favour, but whoever looks for trouble will find it.

Context: A standalone proverb on the 'you find what you seek' pattern that runs through much of Proverbs.
Meaning: What you actively pursue in life shapes what comes back to you. Intention and effort genuinely matter in determining what you end up finding.
Lesson: Point your energy toward good and it will find you in return. Go looking for trouble, and don't be surprised when it finds you first.
See Also: Proverbs 21:21 - he that followeth after righteousness and mercy findeth life; Matthew 7:7-8 on seeking and finding.

11:28 *(KJV) He that trusteth in his riches shall fall; but the righteous shall flourish as a branch.*
(B:E Project) Whoever relies on their wealth will fall, but the righteous will flourish like a green, growing branch.

Context: A standalone proverb contrasting misplaced trust in money with the lasting growth that comes from righteousness.
Meaning: Wealth is an unstable foundation for real security - it can vanish overnight. Character and integrity, by contrast, provide a living, growing kind of vitality that riches can't match.
Lesson: Don't build your identity or your security on your bank balance. Root your life in something that keeps growing even when the money doesn't.
See Also: Proverbs 11:4, on the limits of riches; Psalm 1:3, the righteous like a tree planted by rivers of water.

11:29 *(KJV) He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind: and the fool shall be servant to the wise of heart.*
(B:E Project) Whoever brings trouble on their own household ends up with nothing but wind, and the fool ends up serving the wise.

Context: A standalone proverb about the stability of a household and where foolish mismanagement of it leads.
Meaning: Neglecting or mistreating your own family is self-destructive and ultimately leaves you with nothing solid to hold onto; foolishness eventually puts a person in a lower position than the wise.
Lesson: How you treat your own household matters more than you might think. Care for the people closest to you well, because chaos at home always comes back around.
See Also: Proverbs 15:27 - he that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house; Proverbs 17:2.

11:30 *(KJV) The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.*
(B:E Project) The righteous produce fruit that gives life, and whoever wins people over to what's good is wise.

Context: A standalone proverb near the chapter's close, describing righteousness as life-giving and the wisdom involved in positively influencing others.
Meaning: A righteous life doesn't just benefit the person living it - it nourishes others too, echoing the 'tree of life' image used elsewhere in Proverbs. And genuinely wise people know how to draw others toward a better way of living.
Lesson: Let your life be something that feeds and encourages the people around you. The wisest thing you can do isn't just live well yourself, but help someone else find a better way too.
See Also: Proverbs 3:18, wisdom as a tree of life; James 5:20 on the value of turning someone from error.

11:31 *(KJV) Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner.*
(B:E Project) If even the righteous get what's coming to them here on earth, how much more will the wicked and the sinner.

Context: The closing verse of chapter 11, making a 'how much more' argument about the certainty of justice and consequence.
Meaning: If good people experience real consequences (correction, hardship) for their lesser faults, then wrongdoers definitely won't escape accountability - it's a logical clincher on how seriously to take the certainty of justice.

Lesson: No one is exempt from consequences, not even people trying hard to do right - and that should make you humble rather than superior. It should also reassure you that real wrongdoing doesn't go unanswered forever.

See Also: 1 Peter 4:17-18, which draws on this same idea; Proverbs 11:21 on the certainty of consequence.

CHAPTER 12

Chapter Summary: Proverbs 12

Proverbs Chapter 12 offers a stark comparison between the wise and the foolish, the righteous and the wicked, highlighting the lasting consequences of their choices. It emphasises that a life built on integrity, hard work, truthfulness, and compassion will be blessed and enduring, while a life characterised by deceit, laziness, cruelty, and selfcenteredness will ultimately lead to downfall and instability. The chapter repeatedly shows that God favours the upright, granting them favour and security, and exposes the folly of those who reject guidance and embrace wickedness. Key themes include the value of seeking wisdom, the power of words, the importance of diligence, and the eventual triumph of truth over lies.

12:1 *(KJV) Whoso loveth instruction loveth knowledge: but he that hateth reproof is brutish.*
(B:E Project) Anyone who loves being taught loves knowledge, but anyone who hates being corrected is being thick-headed, like an animal that can't learn.

Context: A standalone proverb opening chapter 12 with a foundational statement about teachability.

Meaning: 'Brutish' pictures an unthinking animal - the point is that refusing correction keeps a person stuck at an almost sub-human level of growth, while welcoming it is the doorway to real wisdom.

Lesson: Don't let your pride shut the door on correction. The people willing to hear hard truths about themselves are the ones who actually keep growing.

See Also: Proverbs 9:8 - rebuke a wise man and he will love thee; Hebrews 12:11 on the value of discipline.

12:2 *(KJV) A good man obtaineth favour of the LORD: but a man of wicked devices will he condemn.*
(B:E Project) A good person gains God's approval, but God condemns someone who schemes wickedly.

Context: A standalone proverb on how character, not cleverness, determines a person's standing with God.

Meaning: This contrasts genuine goodness with calculated scheming - it's about the heart's real intent, not just what someone manages to pull off outwardly.

Lesson: Live with an honest heart, not a scheming one. Goodness that's real, not performed for an audience, is what I actually notice.

See Also: Proverbs 3:4 - find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man; Psalm 5:4-6.

12:3 *(KJV) A man shall not be established by wickedness: but the root of the righteous shall not be moved.*

(B:E Project) No one builds a stable life on wickedness, but the righteous are rooted and unshakeable.

Context: A standalone proverb using tree-root imagery to describe the stability - or lack of it - that character produces.

Meaning: Wrongdoing can't provide a lasting foundation, however solid it looks in the short term. A life rooted in integrity has real staying power, like a deep-rooted tree that can weather a storm.

Lesson: Build your life on something that can actually hold weight - honesty, love, faithfulness - not on shortcuts that will eventually crumble under you.

See Also: Matthew 7:24-27, the wise and foolish builders; Proverbs 10:25.

12:4 *(KJV) A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband: but she that maketh ashamed is as rottenness in his bones.*

(B:E Project) A capable, strong-charactered wife is her husband's crowning glory, but a disgraceful wife is like a disease eating him from within.

Context: A standalone proverb on marriage and character, anticipating the fuller portrait of the capable woman that closes the whole book in chapter 31.

Meaning: Character in a marriage partner has deep impact - it can either honour and strengthen the other person, or corrode the relationship from the inside out.

Lesson: If you're in a close relationship, build each other up rather than tearing each other down. The health of what's between you shapes both your lives more than either of you might realise.

See Also: Proverbs 31:10-31, the full portrait of the capable woman; Proverbs 14:1.

12:5 *(KJV) The thoughts of the righteous are right: but the counsels of the wicked are deceit.*
(B:E Project) Righteous people think straight, but wicked people plan and scheme deceit.

Context: A standalone proverb tracing outward action back to a person's inner thoughts and plans.

- Meaning:** What's happening in someone's mind before they ever act already reveals their character - righteousness and wickedness both start out as internal patterns of thought.

Lesson: Guard your thoughts, because that's where everything else starts. Think honestly, and your actions will naturally follow.

See Also: Proverbs 23:7 - as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he; Matthew 15:19 on evil thoughts proceeding from the heart.
- 12:6

(KJV) *The words of the wicked are to lie in wait for blood: but the mouth of the upright shall deliver them.*

(B:E Project) The words of wicked people are an ambush aimed at harming others, but the words of honest people rescue people.

Context: A standalone proverb picturing speech as either a weapon or a lifeline.

Meaning: Words can be predatory, used to trap or harm someone, or they can be protective and rescuing - speech is never neutral; it always does something.

Lesson: Use your words to rescue people, not to trap them. Before you speak, ask honestly which one you're about to do.

See Also: Proverbs 18:21 - death and life are in the power of the tongue; James 3:8-10.
- 12:7

(KJV) *The wicked are overthrown, and are not: but the house of the righteous shall stand.*

(B:E Project) The wicked are toppled and gone, but the household of the righteous keeps standing.

Context: A standalone proverb echoing verse 3's imagery of stability, this time using the picture of a house that endures.

Meaning: Wickedness has no lasting future, however impressive it looks for a while. A life or family built on righteousness has the kind of endurance that outlasts it.

Lesson: Build something in your life and family that will still be standing long after the shortcuts and shady deals of others have collapsed around them.

See Also: Proverbs 14:11 - the house of the wicked shall be overthrown; Matthew 7:24-27.
- 12:8

(KJV) *A man shall be commended according to his wisdom: but he that is of a perverse heart shall be despised.*

(B:E Project) A person is praised according to how wise they are, but a twisted heart earns contempt.

Context: A standalone proverb on how reputation tends to follow genuine character over time.

- Meaning:** Real, earned respect tracks with wisdom and good judgement, not with status or mere cleverness. Crookedness, no matter how sharp it looks at first, eventually earns disdain.

Lesson: Chase real wisdom, not just a good reputation. The two tend to follow each other naturally, given enough time.

See Also: Proverbs 3:35 - the wise shall inherit glory; Proverbs 13:15.
- 12:9

(KJV) *He that is despised, and hath a servant, is better than he that honoureth himself, and lacketh bread.*

(B:E Project) Better to be a nobody who has enough to get by than to show off as somebody while you've got nothing to eat.

Context: A standalone proverb favouring quiet substance over hollow appearance and status.

Meaning: Genuine sufficiency, even without prestige, beats a pretence of importance with nothing real behind it - a pointed warning against living beyond your means to impress people.

Lesson: Don't fake a status you don't actually have. It's far better to live modestly and honestly than to perform a wealth or importance that isn't real.

See Also: Proverbs 13:7 - one makes himself rich yet has nothing; Luke 14:8-11 on taking the lower seat.
- 12:10

(KJV) *A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.*

(B:E Project) A good person cares for the wellbeing of their animals, but even the kindness of wicked people has cruelty in it.

Context: A standalone proverb using care for animals as a test case for genuine righteousness.

Meaning: How you treat creatures who have no power over you and can't repay you reveals your actual character. Even wicked people's 'kindness' tends to carry a cruel edge, because their heart isn't rightly ordered.

Lesson: Notice how you treat those who can't fight back or pay you back - animals, the powerless, anyone with no leverage over you. That's where your real character shows.

See Also: Deuteronomy 25:4 on not muzzling the ox that treads the corn; Matthew 10:29 on God's care for sparrows.
- 12:11

(KJV) *He that tilleth his land shall be satisfied with bread: but he that followeth vain persons is void of understanding.*

- (B:E Project)** Whoever works their land will have plenty of food, but whoever chases empty pursuits has no sense.

Context: A standalone proverb contrasting solid, honest labour with chasing after worthless distractions.

Meaning: Practical, consistent labour produces real provision. Chasing fantasies, get-rich-quick schemes, or idle company instead reveals poor judgement, however appealing it looks in the moment.

Lesson: Put your energy into real, honest work rather than empty distractions. Substance beats shortcuts, every single time.

See Also: Proverbs 28:19 - he that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread; 2 Thessalonians 3:10.
- 12:12** ***(KJV)** The wicked desireth the net of evil men: but the root of the righteous yieldeth fruit.*
(B:E Project) The wicked crave what evil people have grabbed for themselves, but the righteous grow their own fruit from their own roots.

Context: A standalone proverb contrasting envy of others' ill-gotten gains with the self-sustaining productivity of a righteous life.

Meaning: Wickedness tends to covet and want to seize what others have wrongly gained, while righteousness is productive on its own terms - it doesn't need to steal anyone else's harvest.

Lesson: Don't covet what someone else grabbed through dishonest means. Grow your own good fruit through honest effort instead - it's slower, but it's actually yours.

See Also: Exodus 20:17, the command against coveting; Proverbs 14:30 - envy is the rottenness of the bones.
- 12:13** ***(KJV)** The wicked is snared by the transgression of his lips: but the just shall come out of trouble.*
(B:E Project) Wicked people are trapped by their own careless words, but the righteous escape trouble.

Context: A standalone proverb picturing careless or dishonest speech as a trap that catches its own user.

Meaning: Reckless or deceitful talk tends to backfire on the very person speaking it. Wisdom in how you speak, by contrast, offers you a way out of trouble rather than into it.

Lesson: Watch your words carefully, because they can become the very trap that catches you. Speak with care, and you'll find your own way through difficulty.

See Also: Proverbs 6:2 - thou art snared with the words of thy mouth; Proverbs 18:7.

- 12:14** ***(KJV)** A man shall be satisfied with good by the fruit of his mouth: and the recompence of a man's hands shall be rendered unto him.*
(B:E Project) A person is rewarded by the good words they speak, and their actions come back to reward them too.

Context: A standalone proverb stating that both speech and action circle back to bring their own consequences.

Meaning: Both what you say and what you do have a way of returning to affect you personally - good words and good work both pay off in the end.

Lesson: What you say and what you do both come back around to you eventually. Make both of them things you'd actually be glad to receive back.

See Also: Proverbs 18:20 - a man's belly shall be satisfied with the fruit of his mouth; Galatians 6:7.
- 12:15** ***(KJV)** The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise.*
(B:E Project) A fool thinks their own way is always right, but a wise person listens to advice.

Context: A standalone proverb on the difference between self-deception and teachability, a core Proverbs theme.

Meaning: Foolishness is marked by an inability, or refusal, to see one's own errors. Wisdom, by contrast, always leaves room for an outside perspective to correct it.

Lesson: Don't trust your own judgement so much that you stop listening to others. Real wisdom always leaves room to be corrected.

See Also: Proverbs 3:5-7 - lean not unto thine own understanding; Proverbs 26:12.
- 12:16** ***(KJV)** A fool's wrath is presently known: but a prudent man covereth shame.*
(B:E Project) A fool's anger shows up immediately, but a sensible person doesn't react to an insult.

Context: A standalone proverb on self-control, especially under provocation.

Meaning: A quick, visible temper marks foolishness, however justified it might feel in the moment. Restraint and composure under insult marks genuine wisdom.

Lesson: When someone insults you, you don't have to react instantly. Taking a breath before you respond is strength, not weakness.

See Also: Proverbs 14:29 - he that is slow to wrath is of great understanding; Proverbs 19:11.
- 12:17** ***(KJV)** He that speaketh truth sheweth forth righteousness: but a false witness deceit.*

- (B:E Project)** Someone who tells the truth shows they're righteous, but a false witness shows deceit.

Context: A standalone proverb on honesty in testimony and speech, echoing the commandment against false witness.

Meaning: Truthfulness reveals genuine character; testifying falsely, in court or in everyday conversation, reveals a deceitful heart underneath.

Lesson: Let your words always match the truth, especially when it costs you something to say them. Honesty is the visible proof of an honest heart.

See Also: Exodus 20:16, the commandment against false witness; Proverbs 14:5.
- 12:18** *(KJV) There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is health.*
(B:E Project) Some people's words cut like a sword, but the words of the wise bring healing.

Context: A standalone proverb on the power of speech to wound or to heal.

Meaning: Careless or cruel words cause real, lasting injury, while wise, considered speech has an actual healing, restorative effect on the person who hears it.

Lesson: Use your words to heal, not to wound. Before you speak, ask whether what you're about to say will build someone up or cut them down.

See Also: Proverbs 15:1 - a soft answer turneth away wrath; Proverbs 16:24.
- 12:19** *(KJV) The lip of truth shall be established for ever: but a lying tongue is but for a moment.*
(B:E Project) A truthful statement stands the test of time, but a lie only lasts a moment.

Context: A standalone proverb comparing the durability of truth with the fragility of lies.

Meaning: Truth holds up under scrutiny, no matter how long it's examined, while lies eventually collapse and get exposed, however convincing they seemed at first.

Lesson: Tell the truth even when it's harder in the moment, because only truth actually lasts. Lies are a short-term fix that always falls apart eventually.

See Also: Proverbs 19:9 - a false witness shall perish; John 8:32 - the truth shall make you free.
- 12:20** *(KJV) Deceit is in the heart of them that imagine evil: but to the counsellors of peace is joy.*

- (B:E Project)** Deceit fills the hearts of those plotting harm, but joy fills those who work for peace.

Context: A standalone proverb contrasting the inner state of schemers with that of peacemakers.

Meaning: Those who plan evil carry deceit inside themselves as a kind of internal weight; those who actively pursue peace and reconciliation experience real, genuine joy as a result.

Lesson: Be a peacemaker, not a schemer. The joy that comes from helping people reconcile is worth more than any advantage you'd ever gain by manipulating a situation.

See Also: Matthew 5:9 - blessed are the peacemakers; Proverbs 14:22.
- 12:21** *(KJV) There shall no evil happen to the just: but the wicked shall be filled with mischief.*
(B:E Project) No real harm comes to the righteous in the end, but the wicked end up full of trouble.

Context: A standalone proverb contrasting the ultimate outcomes of righteous and wicked lives.

Meaning: This is a general principle, not an absolute guarantee against all hardship - it describes how a righteous life tends toward genuine wellbeing, while wickedness accumulates its own trouble over time.

Lesson: Living rightly doesn't mean nothing bad ever happens to you, but it does mean you're not building a life that manufactures its own disaster.

See Also: Psalm 91:10 - there shall no evil befall thee; Proverbs 13:21.
- 12:22** *(KJV) Lying lips are abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly are his delight.*
(B:E Project) God is disgusted by lying lips, but delighted by people who are truthful.

Context: A standalone proverb echoing the 'abomination/delight' pattern used earlier for honesty in trade (11:1) and for the heart (11:20).

Meaning: Truthfulness isn't a minor virtue in this repeated pattern - it's placed right at the centre of what genuinely pleases or repels God.

Lesson: Truthfulness matters to me more than you might think. A life of honesty, even in small things, is something I genuinely delight in.

See Also: Proverbs 11:1, the same pattern applied to honest weights; Proverbs 6:16-19, listing a lying tongue among the things God hates.
- 12:23** *(KJV) A prudent man concealeth knowledge: but the heart of fools proclaimeth foolishness.*

- (B:E Project)** A sensible person doesn't show off what they know, but fools blurt out their foolishness.

Context: A standalone proverb on restraint in speech, particularly when it comes to knowledge and opinions.

Meaning: Wisdom includes discretion - knowing when not to speak. Foolishness, by contrast, broadcasts itself without any filter, whether or not anyone actually wants to hear it.

Lesson: You don't need to prove how much you know. Real wisdom is often quiet, and knowing when to hold back is a skill worth deliberately developing.

See Also: Proverbs 17:27-28 - even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise; Proverbs 29:11.
- 12:24** ***(KJV)** The hand of the diligent shall bear rule: but the slothful shall be under tribute.*
(B:E Project) Hard workers end up in positions of leadership, but lazy people end up serving others.

Context: A standalone proverb on the social consequences of diligence versus laziness.

Meaning: Consistent effort tends to be rewarded with responsibility and influence over time, while laziness tends to leave a person dependent on, and subject to, other people's control.

Lesson: Put real effort into your work and your life. Diligence isn't about impressing anyone - it's about becoming someone capable of carrying real responsibility.

See Also: Proverbs 10:4 - the hand of the diligent maketh rich; Proverbs 22:29.
- 12:25** ***(KJV)** Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad.*
(B:E Project) Worry weighs a person down, but a kind word lifts them back up.

Context: A standalone proverb on emotional wellbeing and the genuine power of encouragement.

Meaning: Anxiety has a real, weighty effect on a person's whole state - and a well-timed encouraging word can genuinely lighten someone's burden, however small it might seem to give.

Lesson: Never underestimate the power of a kind word. When someone is weighed down, your encouragement might be exactly what lifts them back up.

See Also: Proverbs 15:23 - a word spoken in due season, how good is it; 1 Thessalonians 5:11.
- 12:26** ***(KJV)** The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour: but the way of the wicked seduceth them.*

- (B:E Project)** The righteous person guides their friend wisely, but the path of the wicked leads people astray.

Context: A standalone proverb, notoriously ambiguous in the original Hebrew, generally understood as being about the influence a person has - for good or ill - on those around them.

Meaning: Who you associate with, and the direction you lead others in, genuinely matters: righteous influence guides people well, while wicked influence leads them off track.

Lesson: Think about the influence you have on the people around you. Are you helping guide them toward good, or, even without meaning to, leading them astray?

See Also: Proverbs 13:20 - he that walketh with wise men shall be wise; 1 Corinthians 15:33 - evil communications corrupt good manners.
- 12:27** ***(KJV)** The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting: but the substance of a diligent man is precious.*
(B:E Project) A lazy person won't even cook the game they've already caught, but a hard worker's possessions are valuable.

Context: A standalone proverb using the vivid image of a hunter too lazy to finish preparing what he's already caught.

Meaning: Laziness isn't only about failing to start something - it's failing to follow through and actually use an opportunity that's already in hand. Diligence, meanwhile, produces things of lasting, real value.

Lesson: Finish what you start. Don't let good opportunities rot away just because you couldn't be bothered to follow through.

See Also: Proverbs 26:15, the sluggard who won't even bring his hand back to his mouth; Proverbs 21:25.
- 12:28** ***(KJV)** In the way of righteousness is life: and in the pathway thereof there is no death.*
(B:E Project) The path of righteousness leads to life; walking that road, there's no death to fear.

Context: The closing verse of chapter 12, a life-and-death summary echoing 11:19's central claim about the two roads.

Meaning: It closes the chapter's teaching with the big-picture promise: righteous living leads towards a real, lasting kind of life.

Lesson: I am the way, and it leads to real life, not a dead end. Walk it and you'll find it's not restriction but freedom - not death but life lived to the full.

See Also: Proverbs 11:19, the same life-and-death contrast; John 10:10 - I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

CHAPTER 13

Chapter Summary: Proverbs 13

Proverbs Chapter 13 offers a collection of sharp contrasts between wisdom and foolishness, and between righteousness and wickedness, highlighting the different outcomes of each path. It emphasises the importance of listening to instruction, controlling one's speech, and engaging in diligent work. The chapter teaches that integrity brings honour and lasting wealth, while deceit, arrogance, and laziness lead to poverty and shame. It also touches on the power of hope, the necessity of parental discipline, and the profound influence of one's companions. Ultimately, it paints a clear picture: living by God's principles brings flourishing and satisfaction, while rejecting them leads to struggle and ruin.

13:1 *(KJV)* A wise son heareth his father's instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke.
(B:E Project) A wise child listens to their parent's teaching, but a mocker won't listen to correction.

Context: A standalone proverb opening chapter 13 with the parent-child instruction theme found throughout Proverbs, especially the opening discourses of chapters 1-9.
Meaning: Willingness to receive guidance from those who genuinely care about you, especially parents, is a mark of wisdom, while scoffing at correction is a mark of folly that only harms the person doing it.
Lesson: Let the people who love you speak into your life, even when it stings to hear. Refusing to listen only closes doors that could have helped you grow.
See Also: Proverbs 1:8 - hear the instruction of thy father; Ephesians 6:1-3.

13:2 *(KJV)* A man shall eat good by the fruit of his mouth: but the soul of the transgressors shall eat violence.
(B:E Project) A person enjoys good things because of what they say, but the treacherous crave violence.

Context: A standalone proverb on speech and its rewards, distinct from 12:14 in that it focuses on the treacherous person's actual appetite for harm.
Meaning: Good, honest speech brings good consequences with it, while a treacherous heart is drawn towards harm and violence almost as if it were its natural appetite.
Lesson: What fills your mouth reveals what fills your heart. Let your words come from a place that genuinely wants good for other people, not harm.
See Also: Proverbs 18:20 - a man's belly shall be satisfied with the fruit of his mouth; Proverbs 12:14.

13:3 *(KJV)* He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction.

(B:E Project) Whoever controls their mouth guards their own life, but whoever talks recklessly brings ruin on themselves.

Context: A standalone proverb, one of many across the book, on the value of self-control in speech.
Meaning: Restraint in what you say is genuinely protective, while careless, unfiltered talk tends to bring real trouble down on the speaker themselves.
Lesson: Think before you speak. A little self-control with your words can save you from a lot of unnecessary pain, both for yourself and for others.
See Also: James 1:26 - if any man seem to be religious and bridleth not his tongue; Proverbs 21:23.

13:4 *(KJV)* The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.
(B:E Project) The lazy person wants things but never gets them, while the hard worker gets everything they need.

Context: A standalone proverb on the gap between merely wanting something and actually working for it.
Meaning: Desire alone accomplishes nothing on its own; it's effort that turns a want into a reality.
Lesson: Wishing for a better life won't get you there. Put in the work, and you'll find your wants actually starting to become real.
See Also: Proverbs 21:25-26 - the desire of the slothful killeth him; 2 Thessalonians 3:10.

13:5 *(KJV)* A righteous man hateth lying: but a wicked man is loathsome, and cometh to shame.
(B:E Project) A righteous person hates lies, but a wicked person is disgusting and ends up disgraced.

Context: A standalone proverb identifying honesty, and even a genuine hatred of dishonesty, as central to righteous character.
Meaning: It's not just avoiding lying that marks true righteousness, but actually hating it. Wickedness, by contrast, eventually earns public shame, however well it was hidden for a while.
Lesson: Don't just avoid lying because you might get caught. Come to actually hate dishonesty, because that's what it means to have a genuinely honest heart.
See Also: Proverbs 6:16-17, a lying tongue among the things God hates; Psalm 119:163.

13:6 *(KJV)* Righteousness keepeth him that is upright in the way: but wickedness overthroweth the sinner.

- (B:E Project)** Righteousness protects a person who lives with integrity, but wickedness brings down the sinner.

Context: A standalone proverb echoing 11:3 and 11:5-6 on the protective versus destructive power of character.

Meaning: This reinforces a recurring theme in Proverbs: righteousness functions as real protection, while wickedness is inherently self-destructive.

Lesson: Integrity isn't just a moral checkbox - it's a genuine safeguard for your whole life. Live rightly, and you're building your own protection as you go.

See Also: Proverbs 11:3, the closely related opening theme of chapter 11; Proverbs 11:5-6.
- 13:7** *(KJV) There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches.*
(B:E Project) Some people pretend to be rich but have nothing; others pretend to be poor but are actually very wealthy.

Context: A standalone proverb observing the gap between appearance and reality when it comes to wealth.

Meaning: This warns against valuing the mere appearance of wealth over its actual substance, and points out that true wealth - whether material or of character - isn't always the kind that gets flaunted.

Lesson: Don't perform a wealth or status you don't actually have. Be genuinely content with what's real, even if it looks modest from the outside.

See Also: Proverbs 12:9, on the danger of pretence over substance; Revelation 3:17, the church that says 'I am rich' while actually being poor.
- 13:8** *(KJV) The ransom of a man's life are his riches: but the poor heareth not rebuke.*
(B:E Project) A rich person can use their wealth to buy their way out of trouble, but a poor person doesn't even get threatened in the same way.

Context: A standalone proverb, a realistic observation on how wealth and poverty each carry different risks and different kinds of safety.

Meaning: Wealth can shield you from certain dangers, like ransom or extortion, but it can also make you a target in the first place. Poverty, while genuinely hard, at least removes a person from that particular danger - this is a nuanced observation, not a simple endorsement of either state.

Lesson: Money can solve some problems, but don't assume it solves all of them, or that having none is only ever a curse. Contentment matters more than which side of that line you happen to be on.

See Also: Ecclesiastes 5:12 - the sleep of a labouring man is sweet; Proverbs 10:15.

- 13:9** *(KJV) The light of the righteous rejoiceth: but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out.*
(B:E Project) The righteous person's light shines brightly, but the wicked person's lamp gets snuffed out.

Context: A standalone proverb using light-and-darkness imagery for flourishing versus ruin.

Meaning: Righteousness is pictured here as ongoing brightness and vitality, while wickedness, no matter how it flares up, eventually gets extinguished for good.

Lesson: Let your life be a light that keeps burning. A life built on integrity has a glow that a shortcut, dishonest life can never sustain over time.

See Also: Matthew 5:14-16 - ye are the light of the world; Job 18:5-6.
- 13:10** *(KJV) Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom.*
(B:E Project) Pride is the source of arguments, but wisdom is found among those who take advice.

Context: A standalone proverb naming pride as the root cause of most conflict, contrasted with humility and teachability.

Meaning: Most conflict traces back to pride - the unwillingness to yield or admit you might be wrong. Humbly accepting counsel from others, by contrast, is exactly where real wisdom takes root.

Lesson: Next time you're in an argument, ask yourself honestly whether pride is really what's driving it. Humility defuses far more conflict than being right ever will.

See Also: Proverbs 28:25 - he that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife; James 4:1-2.
- 13:11** *(KJV) Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour shall increase.*
(B:E Project) Money gained through get-rich-quick schemes shrinks away, but money earned through hard work grows.

Context: A standalone proverb on the ethics and reliability of different ways of building wealth.

Meaning: Quick or dishonest gains tend not to last, however impressive they look at first, while steady, honest labour builds wealth that actually holds up over time.

Lesson: There are no real shortcuts to a good life. Put in honest work and trust that what you build slowly will actually last.

See Also: Proverbs 20:21 - an inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning, but the end thereof shall not be blessed; Proverbs 28:20.
- 13:12** *(KJV) Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life.*

- (B:E Project)** When hope is delayed, it makes the heart sick, but when a longing is finally fulfilled, it's like a tree bursting into life.
- Context:** A standalone proverb honestly naming the emotional experience of prolonged waiting alongside the deep joy of eventual fulfilment.
- Meaning:** This verse doesn't dismiss the real pain of waiting for something you long for - it names it directly - while also affirming the genuine, almost overwhelming joy when what's hoped for finally arrives.
- Lesson:** If you're waiting on something and it's wearing you down, that ache is real, and I see it. Don't lose heart - fulfilment, when it comes, brings life flooding back into you.
- See Also:** Proverbs 3:18, wisdom pictured as a tree of life; Romans 5:3-5 - hope does not disappoint.
- 13:13** ***(KJV)** Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed: but he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded.*
- (B:E Project)** Whoever ignores good instruction will pay for it, but whoever respects it will be rewarded.
- Context:** A standalone proverb on the consequences of how a person responds to wisdom and guidance.
- Meaning:** Dismissing sound teaching or guidance leads to real trouble down the line, while taking it seriously, with a healthy respect rather than fear, leads to genuine reward.
- Lesson:** Take wisdom seriously, even when it's inconvenient right now. Guidance that feels restrictive in the moment is often exactly what protects your future.
- See Also:** Proverbs 1:7 - fools despise wisdom and instruction; Proverbs 19:16.
- 13:14** ***(KJV)** The law of the wise is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.*
- (B:E Project)** The teaching of a wise person is like a fresh spring of water, helping you avoid deadly traps.
- Context:** A standalone proverb picturing wisdom as a life-giving, protective resource.
- Meaning:** Sound teaching functions like a clean, dependable water source - refreshing and sustaining - while also actively steering you away from dangerous pitfalls you might otherwise walk straight into.
- Lesson:** Seek out wise teaching and let it refresh you. It's not there to restrict your life, but to keep you clear of the traps that would actually destroy it.
- See Also:** John 4:14, living water that becomes a well springing up to everlasting life; Proverbs 14:27.

13:15 ***(KJV)** Good understanding giveth favour: but the way of transgressors is hard.*

- (B:E Project)** Good judgement wins people's favour, but the path of treacherous people is rough going.
- Context:** A standalone proverb contrasting the ease that comes from sound discernment with the harsh consequences of treachery.
- Meaning:** Sound judgement smooths a person's relationships and general path through life, while betrayal and treachery make everything needlessly difficult, sooner or later.
- Lesson:** Cultivate good judgement in how you treat people. It doesn't just protect you - it makes your relationships and your whole path through life easier to walk.
- See Also:** Proverbs 3:4 - find favour and good understanding; Proverbs 11:3.
- 13:16** ***(KJV)** Every prudent man dealeth with knowledge: but a fool layeth open his folly.*
- (B:E Project)** A sensible person acts thoughtfully, but a fool shows off their foolishness for everyone to see.
- Context:** A standalone proverb contrasting thoughtful action with impulsive behaviour.
- Meaning:** Wisdom acts with consideration and real knowledge behind it, while foolishness is impulsive and ends up exposing itself without any filter at all.
- Lesson:** Think before you act. A little consideration goes a long way, and impulsiveness usually just puts your worst instincts on public display.
- See Also:** Proverbs 14:8 - the wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way; Proverbs 29:11.
- 13:17** ***(KJV)** A wicked messenger falleth into mischief: but a faithful ambassador is health.*
- (B:E Project)** An unreliable messenger causes trouble, but a trustworthy representative brings healing.
- Context:** A standalone proverb on trustworthiness in representing someone else or carrying their message - relevant to any position of entrusted responsibility.
- Meaning:** Being reliable when someone entrusts you with their business or their message matters a great deal - unreliability causes real harm, while faithfulness brings genuinely good outcomes.
- Lesson:** When someone trusts you to carry their message or handle their business, be faithful with it. Reliability is a quiet but genuinely powerful form of love.
- See Also:** Proverbs 25:13 - a faithful messenger refresheth the soul of his masters; Luke 16:10 on faithfulness in little things.

13:18 ***(KJV)** Poverty and shame shall be to him that refuseth instruction: but he that regardeth reproof shall be honoured.*

- (B:E Project) Whoever ignores discipline ends up poor and disgraced, but whoever accepts correction is honoured.

Context: A standalone proverb echoing verse 1's theme, on the long-term outcome of how a person responds to correction.

Meaning: Rejecting guidance or discipline leads to real loss, both materially and socially, while humbly accepting correction leads towards genuine honour instead.

Lesson: Don't let pride cost you the correction that could actually lift you up. Humility in receiving feedback is the doorway to real honour, not the opposite of it.

See Also: Proverbs 15:32 - he that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul; Proverbs 12:1.
- 13:19 (KJV) *The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul: but it is abomination to fools to depart from evil.*

(B:E Project) Getting what you long for feels sweet, but fools can't stand the idea of turning away from evil.

Context: A standalone proverb contrasting the sweetness of a fulfilled good desire with a fool's stubborn attachment to wrongdoing.

Meaning: This verse highlights how deeply fools resist change, even though turning away from evil is exactly what would let them experience the genuine fulfilment they're actually after.

Lesson: If change feels hard, ask yourself honestly whether you're attached to something that's actually hurting you. Letting go of what's wrong is often the very thing that opens the door to real satisfaction.

See Also: Proverbs 26:11, the dog that returns to its vomit; Romans 7:15-19.
- 13:20 (KJV) *He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.*

(B:E Project) Spend time with wise people and you'll become wise, but hang around fools and you'll suffer for it.

Context: A standalone proverb giving very direct, practical wisdom about the influence of companionship.

Meaning: The people you regularly spend time with genuinely shape who you become, whether you intend it or not, so it matters who you choose to walk closely with.

Lesson: Pay attention to who you're letting shape you. Walk closely with people who bring out your best, not people who quietly pull you toward your worst.

See Also: 1 Corinthians 15:33 - evil communications corrupt good manners; Proverbs 12:26.

- 13:21 (KJV) *Evil pursueth sinners: but to the righteous good shall be repayed.*

(B:E Project) Trouble chases after sinners, but good things come to the righteous.

Context: A standalone proverb using a pursuing, hunting image to describe the general pattern of consequences that follow character.

Meaning: Wrongdoing has a way of catching up with the person who practises it, while good outcomes tend to follow a righteous life, even if not always immediately.

Lesson: You can't outrun the consequences of a harmful life forever. Live rightly instead, and let good be the thing that chases after you.

See Also: Proverbs 11:19, the two roads leading to life or death; Numbers 32:23 - be sure your sin will find you out.
- 13:22 (KJV) *A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children: and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just.*

(B:E Project) A good person leaves an inheritance for their grandchildren, but the wealth a sinner builds ends up in the hands of the righteous.

Context: A standalone proverb taking a long, generational view of wealth and where it ultimately ends up.

Meaning: Righteous provision extends forward across generations, while ill-gotten or poorly used wealth ultimately doesn't stay with the person who wrongly built it - it ends up benefiting someone else entirely.

Lesson: Think beyond your own lifetime. What you build with integrity ends up blessing people you might never even meet.

See Also: Job 27:16-17, on wealth gathered by the wicked ending up with the just; Ecclesiastes 2:26.
- 13:23 (KJV) *Much food is in the tillage of the poor: but there is that is destroyed for want of judgment.*

(B:E Project) A poor person's field can produce plenty of food, but injustice can strip it all away.

Context: A standalone proverb reflecting on how honest labour can genuinely produce abundance, while injustice or exploitation can undo it.

Meaning: It highlights that hard work by the poor can produce real, fair abundance, but injustice - exploitation, corrupt systems, poor judgement by those in power over them - can wipe that out unfairly.

Lesson: Notice the people who work hard and are still stripped of what's rightfully theirs. Stand for fairness, because injustice can undo what honest effort has genuinely built.

See Also: Amos 5:11, on those who trample the poor and take grain from them; Proverbs 22:22-23.

13:24 *(KJV) He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.*

(B:E Project) Whoever refuses to discipline their child doesn't really love them; a loving parent disciplines their child promptly and consistently.

Context: A standalone proverb, one of Proverbs' well-known statements on parental discipline, addressed within the general run of parenting wisdom.

Meaning: This makes the case that loving discipline, not permissiveness and never harshness or abuse, is part of genuinely caring for a child's wellbeing and future - given early and consistently, out of love rather than out of neglect or anger.

Lesson: If you love someone, especially a child in your care, love them enough to guide and correct them, not just indulge them. Real love invests in someone's growth, even when it's uncomfortable in the moment - though it should always come from love, never from anger or cruelty.

See Also: Hebrews 12:6-11 on discipline as a mark of genuine fatherly love; Proverbs 22:6.

13:25 *(KJV) The righteous eateth to the satisfying of his soul: but the belly of the wicked shall want.*

(B:E Project) The righteous eat until they're truly satisfied, but the wicked are always left wanting.

Context: The closing verse of chapter 13, using the image of eating to describe deep contentment versus restless craving as markers of character.

Meaning: This closes the chapter with a picture of the genuine, deep satisfaction available to those who live rightly, contrasted with the wicked's restless, unfulfilled appetite - it's really about inner contentment, not literal food.

Lesson: Real contentment isn't about having more - it's about the state of your own heart. Live rightly and you'll find a satisfaction that no amount of grasping ever gives to the person who's never at peace.

See Also: Philippians 4:11-12 on learning to be content in any state; Psalm 34:10.

CHAPTER 14

Chapter Summary: Proverbs 14

Proverbs Chapter 14 offers a series of sharp contrasts between the ways of wisdom and folly, and the paths of righteousness and wickedness. It illustrates how choices in daily life, from personal integrity and speech to diligence in work and treatment of others, lead to vastly different outcomes. The chapter emphasises that true wisdom builds up individuals and their households, while foolishness brings destruction. It highlights the importance of honesty, patience, and compassion, contrasting them with pride, deceit, and quick anger. Ultimately, the chapter

teaches that respecting God is the foundation of confidence, life, and hope, leading to honour and flourishing, while sin and wickedness result in shame and ruin.

14:1 *(KJV) Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands.*

(B:E Project) A wise woman builds her household up brick by brick; a foolish woman tears it down with her own two hands.

Context: A standalone proverb (Proverbs 10-29 is a collection of individual two-line sayings, not one connected speech) that pictures a household as something actively built or actively wrecked by daily choices.

Meaning: "House" here means the whole life of a family - its trust, order and warmth. Wisdom isn't a one-off decision; it's a daily habit of building. Folly is just as active - it doesn't take a disaster to wreck a home, just steady neglect, dishonesty or cruelty from the inside. The verse puts the power to build or destroy directly in your own hands.

Lesson: I built my life on quiet, patient acts of love, not grand gestures - and I'm telling you the same thing builds a home. Every small kindness you choose today is a brick; every cruelty is a hand pulling one out. Choose building.

See Also: Matthew 7:24-27 (the wise and foolish builders); Proverbs 31:10-31 (a fuller portrait of the capable woman); 1 Corinthians 3:10-15 (building on a good foundation).

14:2 *(KJV) He that walketh in his uprightness feareth the LORD: but he that is perverse in his ways despiseth him.*

(B:E Project) Someone who lives honestly shows real respect for God by how they live; someone whose life is crooked is showing contempt for him, whether they realise it or not.

Context: Standalone proverb linking everyday integrity to genuine reverence - a recurring idea across Proverbs that real belief always shows up in behaviour, not just words.

Meaning: "Fear of the LORD" doesn't mean being scared of God - it means taking him, and the moral order he stands for, seriously enough to let it shape your actions. This verse says you can't separate what you claim to believe from how you actually treat people; a crooked life quietly says "I don't take this seriously" no matter what you say out loud.

Lesson: I care less about the words you say to me than the honesty in how you treat people when no one's watching. Integrity in the small, unseen moments is the realest form of respect you can show me.

See Also: James 2:18 (faith shown by works); 1 John 2:4 (claiming to know God without keeping his ways); Micah 6:8.

14:3 *(KJV) In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride: but the lips of the wise shall preserve them.*

- (B:E Project)** A fool's proud talk becomes a stick that beats him; a wise person's careful words protect them instead.

Context: Standalone proverb about speech and pride - one of many in the book warning that how you talk has real consequences.

Meaning: Arrogant, boastful words tend to provoke exactly the trouble they were trying to avoid - the "rod" here is almost self-inflicted punishment. Humble, careful speech, by contrast, actually shields you from conflict and embarrassment. The point isn't to never speak confidently, but to notice when confidence has curdled into pride that will cost you.

Lesson: Watch what pride dressed up as confidence does to your words - it usually wounds you before it wounds anyone else. Speak with humility and your words become armour instead of a weapon turned on yourself.

See Also: Proverbs 18:21 (the tongue has the power of life and death); James 3:5-6 (the tongue as a small but destructive fire).
- 14:4** *(KJV) Where no oxen are, the crib is clean: but much increase is by the strength of the ox.*
(B:E Project) No oxen means an empty, spotless feeding trough - but also no ploughing done. It's the ox's hard, messy work that actually brings in the harvest.

Context: Standalone agricultural proverb comparing a clean, effort-free life to a productive one that requires accepting mess and cost.

Meaning: A tidy life with nothing invested in it produces nothing. Real growth - in work, relationships, anything worthwhile - requires accepting some inconvenience, expense and mess. This verse quietly mocks the idea that avoiding all hassle is actually a smart strategy; it's really just a strategy for staying empty.

Lesson: I never promised you an easy, mess-free life - growth in love and purpose always costs something. Don't be so afraid of the mess that you end up with an empty, tidy life and nothing to show for it.

See Also: 2 Corinthians 9:6 (sow sparingly, reap sparingly); Proverbs 12:11 (working the land brings bread).
- 14:5** *(KJV) A faithful witness will not lie: but a false witness will utter lies.*
(B:E Project) An honest witness won't lie; a dishonest witness tells lies as easily as breathing.

Context: Standalone proverb about truthful testimony, part of Proverbs' strong concern for honesty in courts and everyday dealings, echoing the ninth commandment.

Meaning: This isn't just about courtrooms - it's about what's underneath your words in any situation. What you actually are shows itself under pressure. Trustworthiness isn't a performance you switch on when convenient; if you're honest, it holds even when lying would be easier and safer.

- Lesson:** Let your yes be yes and your no be no. I'm asking for a consistency of truth that doesn't bend just because bending would be more convenient in the moment.

See Also: Exodus 20:16 (the ninth commandment); Matthew 5:37; Proverbs 14:25.
- 14:6** *(KJV) A scorner seeketh wisdom, and findeth it not: but knowledge is easy unto him that understandeth.*
(B:E Project) A cynical mocker searches for wisdom and never finds it, but for someone genuinely open to understanding, knowledge comes easily.

Context: Standalone proverb contrasting the "scorner" - a recurring Proverbs character type, the arrogant cynic - with the humble learner.

Meaning: Your attitude decides whether learning is even possible. A mocking, superior stance blocks understanding because it isn't actually willing to be taught anything; it's too busy proving itself right. Humility, by contrast, opens the door - understanding comes easily once you stop needing to already know everything.

Lesson: I revealed truth to the humble and the childlike, not to those who were sure they already had it figured out. Come to me ready to learn, not to win an argument, and things will open up for you.

See Also: Matthew 11:25 (hidden from the wise, revealed to babes); Proverbs 1:22; Proverbs 9:8.
- 14:7** *(KJV) Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge.*
(B:E Project) Walk away from a foolish person the moment you realise they've got nothing wise to say.

Context: Standalone practical proverb on choosing your companions wisely, part of Proverbs' recurring concern with who you spend your time around.

Meaning: You can't argue or extract wisdom out of someone who has none to give - trying just wastes your own time and energy. This is permission to protect your growth by being deliberate about company, without needing to feel guilty for stepping back.

Lesson: I often withdrew to be alone and chose carefully who I spent my time with. It isn't unloving to limit time with people who drag you down - it's wise stewardship of the one life you've been given.

See Also: Proverbs 13:20 (walk with the wise and become wise); 1 Corinthians 15:33 (bad company corrupts good character).
- 14:8** *(KJV) The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way: but the folly of fools is deceit.*
(B:E Project) A sensible person's wisdom is understanding their own path clearly; a fool's folly is deceiving themselves.

Context: Standalone proverb contrasting honest self-awareness with self-deception as the true dividing line between the wise and the foolish.

Meaning: Real wisdom includes turning that same clear-eyed honesty inward - knowing your own motives, direction and blind spots. Folly often isn't stupidity so much as self-deception: refusing to be honest with yourself about where your choices are actually taking you.

Lesson: I said to examine the plank in your own eye before pointing at the speck in someone else's. Honest self-awareness, even when it's uncomfortable, is where real change with me always begins.

See Also: Matthew 7:3-5 (the plank and the speck); Psalm 139:23-24 (search me and know my heart).

14:9 *(KJV) Fools make a mock at sin: but among the righteous there is favour.*
(B:E Project) Fools laugh off wrongdoing like it's nothing; but among decent, upright people there's real goodwill toward one another.

Context: Standalone proverb contrasting how fools treat moral failure flippantly with the mutual grace and respect found among the righteous.

Meaning: Treating harm or guilt as a joke slowly erodes your own character and other people's trust in you. Among people who take right and wrong seriously, something better grows instead - genuine goodwill and grace toward each other, because honesty about wrongdoing is what makes real trust possible.

Lesson: I never mocked sin, but I never crushed the person caught in it either. I named wrong for what it was while still offering welcome and grace to anyone honest enough to own it.

See Also: Galatians 6:1 (restore gently, watching yourself); Proverbs 10:23 (fools find sport in mischief).

14:10 *(KJV) The heart knoweth his own bitterness; and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy.*
(B:E Project) Only you truly know how bitter your own pain feels; and no outsider can ever fully share in your joy either.

Context: Standalone proverb reflecting on the deeply personal, unshareable nature of inner emotional life - grief and joy that no one else can fully access.

Meaning: This verse validates something real: your inner world, whether it's pain or happiness, is ultimately private and can't be completely handed over to anyone else, however close. It's not a bleak statement - it's honest permission to stop expecting others to fully understand, and a nudge toward humility about assuming you fully understand someone else's inner state either.

Lesson: I see what's hidden in your heart even when no one else can reach it. You're never as alone in your pain as it feels, because I know it completely, from the inside.

See Also: Psalm 139:1-4 (God knows my thoughts before I speak them); 1 Corinthians 2:11 (only a person's own spirit knows what's within); Revelation 2:17 (a new name known only to the one who receives it).

14:11 *(KJV) The house of the wicked shall be overthrown: but the tabernacle of the upright shall flourish.*
(B:E Project) The wicked person's household - however solid it looks - will collapse; the honest person's home, even if it's just a tent, will thrive.

Context: Standalone proverb on security and stability, echoing 14:1's house theme with the wicked/upright contrast common throughout chapters 10-29.

Meaning: There's a deliberate irony here: a permanent-looking "house" built on wickedness falls, while a mere temporary "tent" (tabernacle) built by an honest life flourishes. Long-term stability comes from character, not from how solid or impressive something looks on the outside.

Lesson: Build your life on rock, not sand. What looks flimsy but is built honestly will outlast what looks solid but is built on wrongdoing.

See Also: Matthew 7:24-27 (the wise and foolish builders); Psalm 37:35-37 (the wicked flourish briefly, then vanish).

14:12 *(KJV) There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.*
(B:E Project) There's a path that feels completely right to a person - but it ends in death.

Context: Standalone proverb, one of Proverbs' most famous warnings (repeated word-for-word at 16:25), cautioning against trusting your own instincts uncritically.

Meaning: This is a warning against blind confidence in your own gut feeling or self-justification. Something can feel obviously, comfortably right and still be heading somewhere destructive. It's a call for humility - to check your direction against wisdom outside yourself, not just how a choice feels in the moment.

Lesson: I said the road to destruction is wide and many find it, while the narrow way to life takes real discernment. Don't trust an easy, popular feeling alone - test where it's actually leading.

See Also: Proverbs 16:25 (the identical verse repeated); Matthew 7:13-14 (the narrow and broad ways).

14:13 *(KJV) Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth is heaviness.*
(B:E Project) Even while laughing, the heart can be sad underneath - and partying can end up leaving you feeling heavier than before.

- Context:** Standalone proverb reflecting on the gap between how someone looks on the outside and what they're actually feeling inside.

Meaning: People often mask real pain with humour or a good time, and pleasure-seeking that avoids dealing with deeper issues eventually leaves you feeling emptier, not better. This verse invites honesty about your actual emotional state rather than just performing happiness for others - or for yourself.

Lesson: I wept, even on my way toward the joy set before me. You don't have to fake happiness with me - bring me the sorrow hiding behind the smile.

See Also: Ecclesiastes 2:1-2 (laughter is madness, and pleasure accomplishes nothing); Ecclesiastes 7:3-4 (sorrow can do good work in a heart).
- 14:14** *(KJV) The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man shall be satisfied from himself.*
(B:E Project) Someone who drifts away in their heart gets a full dose of where their own choices lead; a good person is satisfied by the fruit of their own life.

Context: Standalone proverb about reaping what you sow, contrasting a wandering, unfaithful heart with a steady, good one.

Meaning: Whatever direction your heart travels, you eventually eat its fruit. Someone who keeps drifting away from what's good ends up fully supplied with the bitter results of that drift; someone who stays consistent in character finds a quiet, real satisfaction that comes from within, not from outside validation.

Lesson: I welcome the one who wanders home, but I also want you to know: the distant country never actually satisfies the way coming home does. Turn back before the emptiness runs any deeper.

See Also: Galatians 6:7-8 (whatever a person sows, they reap); Luke 15:11-20 (the parable of the prodigal son).
- 14:15** *(KJV) The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going.*
(B:E Project) A naive person will believe absolutely anything they're told; a sensible person thinks carefully about where their next step is taking them.

Context: Standalone proverb warning against gullibility, contrasting the "simple" (naive, easily led) with the "prudent" throughout Proverbs.

Meaning: This is practical advice against being easily manipulated - by people, adverts, ideologies, or convincing-sounding nonsense. It isn't telling you to be cynical or suspicious of everyone, just to actually think before you commit to believing or doing something.

Lesson: I told my followers to be as wise as serpents and as harmless as doves. Kindness and caution can live together - don't let a soft, open heart mean a switched-off mind.

- See Also:** Matthew 10:16 (wise as serpents, harmless as doves); 1 John 4:1 (test the spirits).

14:16 *(KJV) A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil: but the fool rageth, and is confident.*
(B:E Project) A wise person stays cautious and steers clear of wrongdoing; a fool charges ahead recklessly, full of misplaced confidence.

Context: Standalone proverb contrasting wise caution with foolish overconfidence when it comes to avoiding harm.

Meaning: Wisdom includes a healthy humility about your own capacity to be tempted or led astray - it takes real trouble seriously and moves carefully around it. Foolish overconfidence ("that could never happen to me") is exactly what walks people straight into trouble they never saw coming.

Lesson: I warned Peter he would deny me, even though he was completely sure he never would. A little humility about your own weak spots protects you far more than bold confidence ever will.

See Also: 1 Corinthians 10:12 (let anyone who thinks they stand firm be careful they don't fall); Proverbs 3:7 (don't be wise in your own eyes).
- 14:17** *(KJV) He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly: and a man of wicked devices is hated.*
(B:E Project) Someone quick to anger acts foolishly; someone who schemes maliciously ends up hated by others.

Context: Standalone proverb, part of Proverbs' extensive teaching on managing anger and its consequences for relationships.

Meaning: This names two different but related failures: hot-headed reactions that lead to regrettable decisions, and cold, deliberate scheming that earns real social rejection. Both cost you - one through impulsive damage, the other through corrosive reputation.

Lesson: Anger left to fester leads to worse things. Pause before you react - the person you're about to snap at is someone I love too.

See Also: James 1:19-20 (be slow to anger); Proverbs 14:29 (slow to wrath shows great understanding).
- 14:18** *(KJV) The simple inherit folly: but the prudent are crowned with knowledge.*
(B:E Project) Naive people end up saddled with foolishness as their inheritance; sensible people are crowned with knowledge.

Context: Standalone proverb continuing the simple/prudent contrast, picturing wisdom almost like an honour you get to wear.

Meaning: What you invest in is what you inherit. Coasting through life without ever learning leaves you with folly as your default "inheritance," while deliberately pursuing

- understanding earns you something like a crown - genuine honour that comes from effort, not luck.
Lesson: Seek and you will find, I said. The effort you put into understanding life and love pays you back with real honour, not just information.
See Also: Matthew 7:7-8 (ask, seek, knock); Proverbs 4:7-9 (wisdom is the principal thing - get it).
- 14:19

(KJV) *The evil bow before the good; and the wicked at the gates of the righteous.*
(B:E Project) Eventually, evil people end up bowing before good people; the wicked end up at the gates of the righteous, in the position of subjects or beggars.

Context: Standalone proverb offering reassurance that, over the long run, moral order asserts itself even when wrongdoing seems to be winning in the short term.
Meaning: Wickedness can look like it's succeeding right now, but this verse insists that isn't the final word - integrity ultimately outlasts and outranks it. It's an encouragement to keep choosing what's right even when it doesn't seem to be paying off yet.
Lesson: The last will be first. Don't measure your worth by who seems to be winning today - I see the whole story, and character wins in the end.
See Also: Psalm 37:1-2, 35-36 (don't fret over evildoers - they wither like grass); Matthew 20:16 (the last shall be first).
- 14:20

(KJV) *The poor is hated even of his own neighbour: but the rich hath many friends.*
(B:E Project) A poor person is disliked even by their own neighbour, while a rich person has plenty of friends.

Context: Standalone proverb - one of several blunt social observations in Proverbs about how money affects relationships, describing reality honestly rather than approving of it.
Meaning: This is realistic, almost uncomfortable social commentary, not a moral endorsement. People often gravitate toward money rather than the actual person. Placed right before verse 21, which condemns despising the poor, it's really meant to make you notice this bias in yourself and resist it, not accept it as fine.
Lesson: I ate with the poor and the outcast when respectable people wouldn't. Don't let money decide who's worth your friendship - overturning exactly that bias is part of why I came.
See Also: Proverbs 19:4, 7 (similar observation on wealth and friendship); James 2:1-6 (rebuke of favouring the rich); Luke 14:12-14.
- 14:21

(KJV) *He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth: but he that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he.*

- (B:E Project)** Looking down on your neighbour is genuinely wrong; showing kindness to the poor brings real happiness.
- 14:22

(KJV) *Do they not err that devise evil? but mercy and truth shall be to them that devise good.*
(B:E Project) Don't people who plot evil end up lost and mistaken? But those who deliberately plan good are met with loyal love and truth.

Context: Standalone proverb contrasting scheming for harm with intentionally planning good - part of Proverbs' recurring interest in what people plan and pursue, not just what they stumble into.
Meaning: Wrongdoing is described here as a kind of error - a wandering off course, not cleverness. Deliberately planning good, by contrast, brings loyal love and truth back toward the person who plans it. The verse rewards intention and forethought, not just accidental good behaviour.
Lesson: I want you to plan good on purpose, not stumble into it by accident. Deliberate, thought-through kindness is what real love looks like.
See Also: Proverbs 3:3 (let mercy and truth never leave you); Psalm 1:1-3 (the one who plans their steps by God's law flourishes).
- 14:23

(KJV) *In all labour there is profit: but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury.*
(B:E Project) All hard work brings some gain, but empty talk only leads to poverty.

Context: Standalone proverb on the value of real effort over empty words, part of Proverbs' extensive material on the work ethic.
Meaning: This is blunt realism: actual labour, even small and unglamorous, produces some benefit. All talk with no follow-through leaves you worse off than when you started. It's a warning against people (including yourself) who are big on plans and promises but never actually do the work.

Lesson: Not everyone who says "Lord, Lord" enters the kingdom, but the one who does the will of my Father. What you actually do matters far more than what you say you'll do.

See Also: Matthew 7:21 (not everyone who says Lord, Lord); Proverbs 14:4 (no oxen, no harvest).

14:24 *(KJV) The crown of the wise is their riches: but the foolishness of fools is folly.*
(B:E Project) Wisdom itself is the wealth of the wise, like a crown; but a fool's foolishness just stays foolishness, getting them nowhere.

Context: Standalone proverb reframing what actually counts as "riches" - wisdom itself as true wealth, contrasted with folly that never compounds into anything.

Meaning: For a wise person, wisdom functions as their real treasure - it's honoured and valuable in itself. For a fool, their folly simply multiplies without producing anything worthwhile. This is a comment on what makes a life genuinely rich, independent of money.

Lesson: Store up treasure that doesn't rust or get stolen. The wisdom and character you build with me are riches no market crash can touch.

See Also: Matthew 6:19-21 (store up treasure in heaven); Proverbs 3:13-15 (wisdom is more precious than rubies).

14:25 *(KJV) A true witness delivereth souls: but a deceitful witness speaketh lies.*
(B:E Project) An honest witness can save lives; a dishonest witness speaks lies that can destroy them.

Context: Standalone proverb on truthful testimony, echoing 14:5 but naming the real stakes - honesty can be a matter of life and death for someone else.

Meaning: Truth-telling isn't just a nice personal virtue here - it can literally rescue an innocent person from wrongful harm. Lying under pressure, by contrast, can unjustly destroy someone. This is a serious call to stay honest even when honesty costs you something.

Lesson: I am the truth, and the truth sets people free. When you tell the truth even under pressure, you're doing rescue work, whether you realise it in the moment or not.

See Also: John 8:32 (the truth will set you free); Exodus 23:1-2 (don't spread a false report); Proverbs 14:5.

14:26 *(KJV) In the fear of the LORD is strong confidence: and his children shall have a place of refuge.*
(B:E Project) Deep reverence for God gives you real, solid confidence, and it becomes a safe refuge for your children too.

Context: Standalone proverb linking "fear of the LORD" - reverent trust in a moral order bigger than yourself - to genuine stability, a recurring theme across the book.

Meaning: Grounding your life in something greater than your own circumstances produces a confidence that outlasts whatever's happening around you. And that stability isn't just personal - it becomes a kind of protective refuge that spills over to the people you love and are responsible for.

Lesson: Build your house on me and the storms won't destroy you. My peace isn't the absence of trouble - it's the confidence that holds you steady inside it.

See Also: Matthew 7:24-25 (the house built on rock withstands the storm); Psalm 46:1 (God is our refuge and strength).

14:27 *(KJV) The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.*
(B:E Project) Reverence for God is like a spring of fresh, flowing water that keeps you alive, and it helps you steer clear of deadly traps.

Context: Standalone proverb, closely paired in theme with 14:26, using life-giving water imagery for the protective power of reverent wisdom.

Meaning: A "fountain" flows continuously, so this pictures reverence not as a one-time decision but as an ongoing source of vitality. That same grounding actively helps you avoid destructive "traps" - toxic habits, harmful relationships, self-sabotaging choices - that can quietly end a life.

Lesson: I offer living water; whoever drinks it will never thirst again. Reverence for what's real and good keeps refreshing you, instead of running dry like the world's cheap substitutes.

See Also: John 4:14 (living water that never runs dry); Proverbs 13:14 (the teaching of the wise is a fountain of life).

14:28 *(KJV) In the multitude of people is the king's honour: but in the want of people is the destruction of the prince.*
(B:E Project) A king's greatness is shown by having many people under him; a ruler with few followers is heading for ruin.

Context: Standalone political-observation proverb - one of several in Proverbs commenting on kings and leadership, applicable more broadly to anyone in a position of authority.

Meaning: A leader's real strength comes from the loyalty and wellbeing of the people they serve, not personal grandeur alone. Leadership that alienates or loses the trust of people is quietly heading toward collapse. This applies just as much to a modern boss, parent, or public figure as to an ancient king.

Lesson: I came not to be served but to serve, and I gave my life for many. Real greatness isn't in commanding people - it's in being worth following.

- See Also:

Mark 10:42-45 (whoever wants to be great must be a servant); 1 Kings 12 (Rehoboam's harshness costs him his kingdom).
- 14:29

(KJV)

He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly.

(B:E Project)

Someone slow to anger shows real understanding; someone quick-tempered just puts their own foolishness on display.

Context:

Standalone proverb continuing the anger-management theme found repeatedly across Proverbs (compare 14:17).

Meaning:

Patience under provocation is treated here as a sign of deep maturity, not weakness - it takes real understanding to hold back. A quick temper, by contrast, "exalts" folly - it puts your worst reactions on public display for everyone to see.

Lesson:

Blessed are the peacemakers, I said. The patience it costs you to hold your tongue in anger is exactly the quiet strength I call blessed.

See Also:

Matthew 5:9 (blessed are the peacemakers); James 1:19 (be slow to speak, slow to anger); Proverbs 16:32.
- 14:30

(KJV)

A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones.

(B:E Project)

A calm, healthy heart gives life to the whole body, but envy rots you right down to the bones.

Context:

Standalone proverb - a strikingly early observation on the connection between inner emotional state and physical wellbeing.

Meaning:

This is a remarkably modern insight: contentment and inner peace genuinely support physical health, while chronic envy and comparison literally corrode you from the inside. It's a practical call to guard your emotional life, not just for your mood but for your whole body.

Lesson:

I said don't worry about your life - anxiety and envy eat you alive. Let go of comparison and receive the peace I give, which isn't like the world's kind of peace.

See Also:

John 14:27 (my peace I give to you); Proverbs 17:22 (a cheerful heart is good medicine).
- 14:31

(KJV)

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

(B:E Project)

Mistreating the poor is an insult to their Maker; honouring God means showing mercy to the poor.

Context:

Standalone proverb directly linking how you treat the poor to how you treat God himself - a major ethical thread running through Proverbs and the wider Bible.

- Meaning:

Because every person, including the poor, is made by the same Creator, mistreating them is treated here as a direct insult to God - not just a social failing. Genuine reverence for God is shown to be inseparable from practical compassion toward those who have less.
- Lesson:

Whatever you did to the least of these, you did to me. I take how you treat the vulnerable personally, because I am with them.
- See Also:

Matthew 25:40 (as you did to the least of these); Proverbs 19:17; James 1:27 (true religion cares for orphans and widows).
- 14:32

(KJV)

The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death.

(B:E Project)

The wicked person is brought down by their own wrongdoing; but the righteous person has hope even in death.

Context:

Standalone proverb reflecting on the ultimate destinies of the wicked and the righteous, touching on how a life's overall trajectory finally plays out.

Meaning:

Wickedness is shown here as self-destructive at its core - it's the wicked person's own wrongdoing that "drives them away." Righteousness, by contrast, produces a hope that holds even at life's hardest and most final moment - a rare glimpse in Proverbs of hope reaching beyond death itself.

Lesson:

I am the resurrection and the life. Death doesn't get the last word for those who trust and walk with me - and that hope can steady you long before you ever have to face it.

See Also:

John 11:25-26 (I am the resurrection and the life); Psalm 23:4 (though I walk through the valley); 1 Corinthians 15:55-57.
- 14:33

(KJV)

Wisdom resteth in the heart of him that hath understanding: but that which is in the midst of fools is made known.

(B:E Project)

Wisdom sits quietly at rest in the heart of someone with understanding, but whatever's inside a fool blurts itself out for everyone to see.

Context:

Standalone proverb contrasting the settled, quiet nature of real wisdom with a fool's inability to hold anything back.

Meaning:

True wisdom doesn't need to constantly announce itself - it "rests," secure and unhurried, because it isn't performing for anyone. Foolishness, by contrast, can't help exposing itself through impulsive talk and behaviour. It's a contrast between quiet confidence and compulsive attention-seeking.

Lesson:

I often told people to keep some things between just us, not to broadcast their good deeds for applause. Real depth doesn't need an audience to be real.

See Also:

Matthew 6:1-4 (don't let your left hand know what your right is doing); Proverbs 12:23 (a prudent person conceals knowledge).

14:34 *(KJV) Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.*
(B:E Project) Doing what's right raises a whole nation up; wrongdoing is a disgrace to any people.

Context: Standalone proverb, unusual for zooming out from individual ethics to the collective character of an entire society.

Meaning: This applies the book's whole wisdom-versus-folly, righteousness-versus-wickedness pattern to nations, not just individuals. Collective moral character - honesty, justice, compassion - genuinely determines a society's real health and reputation, not just its power, wealth or military strength.

Lesson: You are the light of the world, a city on a hill. Collective goodness isn't abstract - it's built one honest, compassionate life at a time, and it can change what a whole community becomes.

See Also: Matthew 5:14-16 (you are the light of the world); Deuteronomy 4:6-8 (a nation's wisdom seen by other nations).

14:35 *(KJV) The king's favour is toward a wise servant: but his wrath is against him that causeth shame.*
(B:E Project) A king favours a wise, capable servant, but his anger falls on one who brings shame and disgrace.

Context: Standalone proverb, another of Proverbs' court-context sayings, applicable well beyond royalty to any employer-employee or authority relationship.

Meaning: Competence and wisdom earn favour and trust from those in authority, while careless or shameful conduct brings real consequences. This is practical wisdom about reliability and reputation that applies just as much to a modern workplace as an ancient royal court.

Lesson: Well done, good and faithful servant. I notice the quiet, faithful diligence you bring to ordinary responsibilities - it matters more than you think.

See Also: Matthew 25:21 (well done, good and faithful servant); Proverbs 22:29 (a skilled worker will serve before kings).

CHAPTER 15

Chapter Summary: Proverbs 15

Proverbs Chapter 15 explores the huge impact of our words, showing how gentle responses can calm anger, while harsh ones only make things worse. It highlights that God sees everything we do, good or bad. The chapter frequently contrasts the actions, attitudes, and outcomes of wise and foolish people. It teaches that listening to advice and accepting correction leads to wisdom and a better life, while ignoring it brings trouble. We learn that a joyful heart makes life feel like a party, even in tough times, and that respecting God and being humble brings true honour. The

chapter also emphasises that seeking good counsel helps plans succeed, and that God favours the prayers and paths of those who live righteously.

15:1 *(KJV) A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.*
(B:E Project) A gentle reply calms anger down; harsh words stir it up.

Context: Opens chapter 15 with one of Proverbs' most famous standalone sayings on defusing conflict through the way you respond.

Meaning: How you respond to someone's anger genuinely shapes what happens next - it isn't just about who's right. Gentleness has real power to de-escalate a tense situation, while harshness reliably makes it worse. This is a practical tool for handling confrontation, not just a nice sentiment.

Lesson: Turn the other cheek, I said. That isn't weakness - it's the strength to choose gentleness precisely when anger tempts you to match it.

See Also: Matthew 5:39 (turn the other cheek); James 1:19-20 (be slow to anger); Proverbs 25:15 (a soft tongue breaks a bone).

15:2 *(KJV) The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness.*
(B:E Project) A wise person's words put knowledge to good use; a fool's mouth just spews out nonsense.

Context: Standalone proverb continuing the speech theme from 15:1, part of Proverbs' extensive teaching on how the tongue is used well or badly.

Meaning: Wisdom shows not just in knowing things but in how carefully and rightly you use what you know when you actually speak. It isn't about showing off knowledge - it's about applying it well, at the right time, for the right reason. Folly shows in careless, unfiltered talk that helps no one.

Lesson: Let your speech be seasoned with grace. Think before you speak, because words either build people up or just spill out and wound them.

See Also: Colossians 4:6 (let your speech be seasoned with salt); Proverbs 12:18 (careless words are like sword thrusts).

15:3 *(KJV) The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.*
(B:E Project) God sees everywhere - watching both the bad and the good that happens, everywhere, all the time.

Context: Standalone theological statement on God's all-seeing awareness, grounding the surrounding ethical sayings in the idea that nothing done is truly hidden.

Meaning: Nothing you do goes unnoticed by the ultimate moral order of the universe. This can be read two ways at once, both intended: as a comfort - you're never unseen or

- unaccompanied in suffering or injustice - and as a check against secret wrongdoing done "where no one's watching."
Lesson: Even the hairs on your head are numbered. I see everything, not to catch you out, but because I'm present with you in all of it, the good and the bad.
See Also: Matthew 10:29-30 (even the hairs of your head are numbered); Psalm 139:1-12 (you have searched me and known me); Hebrews 4:13.
- 15:4

(KJV) *A wholesome tongue is a tree of life: but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit.*
(B:E Project) Healthy, healing words are like a life-giving tree; twisted, harmful words crush the spirit.

Context: Standalone proverb continuing the chapter's tongue theme, using vivid contrasting imagery - a life-giving tree versus a broken spirit.
Meaning: Words carry real power to nourish or wound at a deep level. What you say can genuinely give someone life and hope, or it can crush something in them that takes a long time to heal. This is a direct call to use speech deliberately for good, not carelessly.
Lesson: I called myself the vine that gives life. Let your words be a branch of that same life, feeding people instead of crushing them.
See Also: John 15:5 (I am the vine, you are the branches); Proverbs 18:21; Proverbs 12:18.
- 15:5

(KJV) *A fool despiseth his father's instruction: but he that regardeth reproof is prudent.*
(B:E Project) A fool sneers at their father's guidance; a sensible person takes correction seriously.

Context: Standalone proverb on receiving discipline well, part of a recurring theme framed in father-son terms that echoes the direct addresses of chapters 1-9.
Meaning: How you respond to correction reveals a lot about your character. Rejecting guidance out of pride is foolish and self-defeating; being genuinely open to feedback, even when it stings, is a mark of real maturity and self-respect.
Lesson: I welcomed correction, even submitting to my Father's will in the garden. Being teachable isn't weakness - it's the doorway to real growth.
See Also: Proverbs 13:1 (a wise son heeds his father's instruction); Hebrews 12:5-11 (discipline that produces righteousness).
- 15:6

(KJV) *In the house of the righteous is much treasure: but in the revenues of the wicked is trouble.*
(B:E Project) A righteous person's home holds real treasure; a wicked person's income just brings trouble along with it.

- Context:** Standalone proverb contrasting the stability of honest living with the hidden cost of wealth gained through wrongdoing.
Meaning: Honest living tends to build lasting security - and "treasure" here may mean more than money: peace of mind, trust, a solid home. Wealth gained through wrongdoing, by contrast, carries built-in trouble; the gain isn't nearly as clean as it looks from the outside.
Lesson: What does it profit to gain the whole world and lose your soul? Wealth built on wrongdoing always ends up costing more than it earns.
See Also: Mark 8:36 (what profit to gain the world and lose your soul); Proverbs 10:22; Proverbs 16:8 (better a little with righteousness).
- 15:7

(KJV) *The lips of the wise disperse knowledge: but the heart of the foolish doeth not so.*
(B:E Project) Wise people's words spread knowledge around to others; a fool's heart just doesn't work that way.

Context: Standalone proverb on the generous, outward-flowing nature of wisdom compared to the closed, unproductive nature of folly.
Meaning: Real wisdom is generous by nature - it shares and scatters what it knows for the benefit of others. Foolishness, by contrast, is inward and unproductive; it doesn't contribute anything useful to anyone. This pictures wisdom as something meant to be given away, not hoarded.
Lesson: Freely you have received, freely give. What I've taught you was never meant to stay locked inside you - pass it on.
See Also: Matthew 10:8 (freely you have received, freely give); Proverbs 11:24-25 (the generous soul will prosper).
- 15:8

(KJV) *The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is his delight.*
(B:E Project) God is disgusted by religious performance from wicked people, but he delights in the honest prayers of upright people.

Context: Standalone proverb making a strong statement that outward religious ritual means nothing without inward integrity - a theme echoed strongly by the biblical prophets.
Meaning: This says plainly that God cares far more about sincerity and character than about religious ritual performed to look good. Going through religious motions while living wickedly is actually offensive to him, while honest, humble prayer flowing from a genuine life delights him. It's a warning against performance and an invitation to sincerity, whether or not you consider yourself religious.
Lesson: I told the religious leaders of my day that their outward show meant nothing without a clean heart. I'm not interested in performance - only in honesty with me.

- See Also:** Isaiah 1:11-17 (God rejects empty ritual); Matthew 15:8-9 (honouring me with lips, hearts far away); Amos 5:21-24.
- 15:9

(KJV) *The way of the wicked is an abomination unto the LORD: but he loveth him that followeth after righteousness.*

(B:E Project) God is disgusted by the wicked person's whole way of life, but he loves someone who actively pursues doing what's right.

Context: Standalone proverb closely paired with 15:8, extending the same idea from religious ritual to lifestyle in general.

Meaning: It's the ongoing direction of your life, not perfection, that this verse says God responds to. Actively chasing righteousness - even imperfectly, even while still getting things wrong - is what earns love and delight here, while a persistently wicked lifestyle is rejected.

Lesson: Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. It's the sincere pursuit, not flawless performance, that I honour in you.

See Also: Matthew 5:6 (blessed are those who hunger for righteousness); Psalm 1:6 (the LORD watches over the way of the righteous).
- 15:10

(KJV) *Correction is grievous unto him that forsaketh the way: and he that hateth reproof shall die.*

(B:E Project) Correction feels harsh to someone who's already abandoned the right path, and someone who hates being corrected will end up ruined.

Context: Standalone proverb, a stern warning continuing the correction theme from 15:5, stressing that the stakes of rejecting feedback are real, not just social discomfort.

Meaning: The further someone drifts from what's right, the more painful correction starts to feel - which is exactly why it's tempting to avoid it. But refusing correction altogether is genuinely dangerous, not merely awkward. This is an invitation to stay open to feedback before the stakes get any higher.

Lesson: I wept over Jerusalem because it wouldn't listen. I never stop calling you back, but the choice to hear or refuse is always yours, and it matters.

See Also: Luke 13:34 (how often I would have gathered you); Proverbs 29:1 (one often reproved who stiffens the neck).
- 15:11

(KJV) *Hell and destruction are before the LORD: how much more then the hearts of the children of men?*

(B:E Project) Even the realm of the dead and destruction lie open before God's sight - so how much more clearly does he see straight into human hearts?

- Context:** Standalone proverb using an "how much more" argument - a rhetorical style also common in Jesus' own teaching - to stress how completely God knows the human heart.

Meaning: If even the hidden, furthest reaches of existence (death itself) are visible to God, then nothing about your inner life is hidden from him either. This is a sobering reminder of just how transparent you are before God, but it's meant to encourage honest self-examination rather than fear or performance.

Lesson: I knew what was in a person without anyone needing to tell me. Come to me exactly as you are - there's nothing to hide, because I already see it, and I love you anyway.

See Also: John 2:24-25 (Jesus knew what was in a person); Hebrews 4:13 (nothing is hidden from God's sight); Psalm 139:8.
- 15:12

(KJV) *A scorner loveth not one that reproveth him: neither will he go unto the wise.*

(B:E Project) A cynical mocker doesn't like being corrected, and won't even go near wise people who might challenge them.

Context: Standalone proverb, part of the recurring "scorner" character type in Proverbs, showing how pride actively cuts a person off from growth.

Meaning: This is more than disliking one piece of criticism - it's a whole pattern of avoiding wisdom itself, because engaging with wise people risks being challenged or shown wrong. Pride doesn't just resist correction; it actively isolates a person from the very people who could help them grow.

Lesson: I stood ready to gather Jerusalem like a hen gathers her chicks, but they were not willing. I never force myself on anyone - the door only opens from your side.

See Also: Luke 13:34 (how often I would have gathered you); Proverbs 9:8 (rebuke a wise man and he will love you).
- 15:13

(KJV) *A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.*

(B:E Project) A happy heart shows on your face; a sorrowful heart crushes your spirit.

Context: Standalone proverb, an early observation on the connection between inner emotional state and outward wellbeing, paired thematically with 15:15.

Meaning: This recognises that your inner emotional condition visibly shapes your outward life and vitality - mental and emotional health isn't separate from the rest of how you're doing. It's an encouragement to pay real attention to your inner life rather than dismissing it as unimportant.

Lesson: I came to give you life, and life abundantly - and to bind up the brokenhearted. If your spirit is crushed, bring it to me rather than carrying it alone.

- See Also: Isaiah 61:1-3 (binding up the brokenhearted); Proverbs 17:22 (a cheerful heart is good medicine); John 10:10 (life abundantly).
- 15:14

(KJV) The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge: but the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness.

(B:E Project) A person with understanding actively hunts for knowledge; a fool just feeds on foolishness.

Context: Standalone proverb contrasting the active pursuit of learning with the passive consumption of nonsense.

Meaning: Wisdom is something you actively seek out; folly is something you passively let yourself consume without discernment. This is a genuinely useful challenge about what you "feed" your mind - striking a nerve today given how much people scroll through without ever choosing it deliberately.

Lesson: Seek and you will find. Be intentional about what you let into your mind - what you feed on shapes who you become.

See Also: Matthew 7:7 (ask, seek, knock); Philippians 4:8 (think on whatever is true, noble, pure).
- 15:15

(KJV) All the days of the afflicted are evil: but he that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast.

(B:E Project) Every day feels bad for someone who's afflicted, but someone with a joyful heart enjoys life like a never-ending feast.

Context: Standalone proverb continuing the emotional-wellbeing theme from 15:13, using vivid feast imagery for contentment.

Meaning: Outlook profoundly shapes lived experience - real hardship makes every day feel heavy, but a contented, joyful heart can turn even ordinary days into something like a celebration. This isn't denying that hardship is real; it's pointing to how much power your inner disposition has over how life actually feels.

Lesson: I told you not to worry about tomorrow, and that my joy could be in you, full. Contentment isn't about your circumstances changing - it's about where your heart is anchored.

See Also: John 15:11 (that my joy may be in you); Philippians 4:11-13 (I have learned to be content); Matthew 6:34.
- 15:16

(KJV) Better is little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith.

(B:E Project) It's better to have little, together with real reverence for God, than to have great wealth that comes with trouble.

Context: Standalone "better than" proverb - a common form in Proverbs comparing something modest but good against something impressive but costly.

- Meaning: Quality of life and peace of mind matter more than the raw size of your wealth. A small, secure, principled life beats a large, anxious, compromised one. This lands hard on modern anxieties about money, status and "making it," gently challenging the assumption that more is automatically better.

Lesson: You cannot serve both God and money. I'm not against wealth - I'm against the trouble and anxiety it brings when it becomes your foundation instead of your tool.

See Also: Matthew 6:24 (you cannot serve God and money); 1 Timothy 6:6-10 (godliness with contentment is great gain); Proverbs 16:8.
- 15:17

(KJV) Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.

(B:E Project) A simple vegetable dinner shared with love beats a lavish feast of fattened beef served with hatred.

Context: Standalone "better than" proverb, paired thematically with 15:16, applying the same principle to relationships and food rather than money.

Meaning: The emotional atmosphere around a meal or a relationship matters far more than its material scale. Love makes simplicity genuinely rich, while hostility ruins even luxury. This directly challenges status-driven ideas of what "the good life" actually looks like.

Lesson: Wherever two or three gather in love, I am there. It was never about the size of the table - it's about who's around it and how they treat each other.

See Also: Matthew 18:20 (where two or three gather in my name); Proverbs 17:1 (better a dry crust with peace than a feast with strife).
- 15:18

(KJV) A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife.

(B:E Project) A hot-tempered person stirs up conflict; someone slow to anger actually calms conflict down.

Context: Standalone proverb continuing the anger and conflict theme begun at 15:1, this time framed around the effect on those around you.

Meaning: How you handle your own temper directly shapes whether conflict escalates or resolves. Self-control here is presented as an active peacemaking skill, not just personal restraint - the calm person in the room genuinely has the power to defuse a situation others are inflaming.

Lesson: Blessed are the peacemakers. Your patience in a heated moment can be exactly what stops a fight before it starts.

See Also: Matthew 5:9 (blessed are the peacemakers); James 1:19-20; Proverbs 15:1 (a soft answer turns away wrath).
- 15:19

(KJV) The way of the slothful man is as an hedge of thorns: but the way of the righteous is made plain.

(B:E Project) A lazy person's path is blocked with thorny hedges at every turn; a righteous, diligent person's way is smooth and clear.

Context: Standalone proverb, part of Proverbs' extensive material contrasting laziness with diligence and honest effort.

Meaning: Laziness - avoiding effort, procrastinating, always finding excuses - actually makes life harder in the long run, as obstacles pile up. Doing things properly and diligently, by contrast, clears the road ahead. This directly challenges the idea that avoiding effort now makes life easier.

Lesson: I told the parable of the talents - the one who used what he had found life opening up before him. Put in the effort now, and the path ahead gets easier, not harder.

See Also: Matthew 25:14-30 (the parable of the talents); Proverbs 22:5 (thorns and snares in the way of the perverse).

15:20 ***(KJV)** A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish man despiseth his mother.*
(B:E Project) A wise child makes their father glad; a foolish person shows contempt for their own mother.

Context: Standalone proverb on parent-child relationships, echoing the honour-your-parents theme threaded throughout Proverbs, including the direct addresses of chapters 1-9.

Meaning: How you live your life, and the choices you make, ripple outward and affect your parents directly - this verse treats living wisely itself as a form of honouring them, and living foolishly as a form of contempt, regardless of what you actually say to them.

Lesson: I honoured my mother even from the cross, making sure she'd be cared for. However things stand with your family, honouring the people who raised you is close to my heart.

See Also: John 19:26-27 (Jesus provides for his mother from the cross); Exodus 20:12 (honour your father and mother); Proverbs 10:1.

15:21 ***(KJV)** Folly is joy to him that is destitute of wisdom: but a man of understanding walketh uprightly.*
(B:E Project) A foolish person actually enjoys their own foolishness; someone with understanding walks a straight, upright path instead.

Context: Standalone proverb contrasting what different kinds of people find genuinely pleasurable - foolishness itself is fun for the fool, while the wise find satisfaction in living rightly.

Meaning: What you take pleasure in reveals your character. Someone lacking wisdom doesn't just fall into foolish choices by accident - they actually enjoy them. Wisdom, by

contrast, reshapes your desires over time so that doing right becomes itself the satisfying, enjoyable path, not just a duty you grit your teeth through.

Lesson: I want to change what delights you, not just what you do. True transformation means you start to actually enjoy goodness, not just endure it out of obligation.

See Also: Psalm 37:4 (delight yourself in the LORD); Romans 12:2 (be transformed by the renewing of your mind).

15:22 ***(KJV)** Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established.*
(B:E Project) Plans fail without good advice, but with plenty of wise counsellors, plans actually succeed.

Context: Standalone proverb on the practical value of seeking outside counsel before making decisions, a recurring theme in Proverbs.

Meaning: No one has a monopoly on wisdom - seeking input from multiple trusted people genuinely improves decision-making and protects against blind spots you can't see in yourself. Asking for help is framed here as strength and good sense, not as a weakness or failure of independence.

Lesson: I sent my disciples out two by two. You were never meant to figure everything out alone - let the people who love you speak into your big decisions.

See Also: Proverbs 11:14 (in the multitude of counsellors there is safety); Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 (two are better than one).

15:23 ***(KJV)** A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it!*
(B:E Project) Giving the right answer brings real joy, and a word spoken at exactly the right moment is a wonderful thing.

Context: Standalone proverb celebrating well-timed speech, continuing the chapter's rich focus on the tongue.

Meaning: There's genuine satisfaction in saying the right thing at the right time - timing matters just as much as content. This encourages thoughtfulness not only about what to say but about when to say it, so your words actually land as a gift rather than noise or an interruption.

Lesson: I always knew when to speak and when to stay silent. Ask me for that same discernment, so your words land as gifts, not just noise.

See Also: Ecclesiastes 3:7 (a time to be silent, a time to speak); Proverbs 25:11 (a word fitly spoken is like apples of gold).

15:24 ***(KJV)** The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath.*

(B:E Project) The wise person's path leads upward toward life, deliberately steering them away from the depths below.

Context: Standalone proverb using an up-down spatial image for the trajectory of wisdom against the downward pull of folly.

Meaning: Wisdom is pictured here as an ascending path, deliberately moving away from destructive descent. This is a call to keep choosing the upward, life-giving direction in ordinary, daily decisions, rather than passively drifting downward through neglect or bad habits.

Lesson: I am the way, the truth and the life. Walking with me is choosing, day by day, the road that leads up and out, not down and in.

See Also: John 14:6 (I am the way, the truth and the life); Matthew 7:13-14 (the narrow and broad ways).

15:25 ***(KJV)** The LORD will destroy the house of the proud: but he will establish the border of the widow.*
(B:E Project) God tears down the proud person's house, but he protects and secures the widow's property.

Context: Standalone proverb on God's opposition to pride and his particular concern for the vulnerable - here, widows - a major thread across the whole Bible.

Meaning: God is shown actively resisting arrogance while defending those with the least social power or protection. This is a consistent biblical pattern: God siding with the vulnerable against the proud and powerful, not staying neutral between them.

Lesson: God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble, and I have a special place in my heart for those the world overlooks. If you're vulnerable, I'm on your side.

See Also: James 4:6 (God opposes the proud, gives grace to the humble); Psalm 68:5 (a father to the fatherless, defender of widows); Exodus 22:22.

15:26 ***(KJV)** The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the LORD: but the words of the pure are pleasant words.*
(B:E Project) Wicked thoughts disgust God, but the words of pure-hearted people are pleasant to him.

Context: Standalone proverb extending the "abomination" language from 15:8-9 down to inner thoughts, not just visible actions or spoken words.

Meaning: God's concern reaches even to the level of unspoken thoughts, not merely observable behaviour - character is judged from the inside out here. This is a nudge to guard your inner thought-life carefully, since it eventually shapes your speech and actions anyway, whether you intend it to or not.

Lesson: I said it's not what goes into a person that defiles them, but what comes out of the heart. Guard your thoughts, because that's where everything else begins.

See Also: Matthew 15:18-19 (what comes out of the heart defiles); Matthew 5:28 (looking with lust is already adultery in the heart).

15:27 ***(KJV)** He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live.*
(B:E Project) Someone greedy for profit brings trouble on their own household, but someone who refuses bribes will live well.

Context: Standalone proverb on greed and corruption - "gifts" here means bribes - continuing Proverbs' recurring concern for honest dealing in business and justice.

Meaning: Greed, especially when it involves cutting ethical corners or taking bribes for money, doesn't just harm outsiders - it damages your own home and the people closest to you. Integrity around money is shown here to actually protect your life and household, not limit it.

Lesson: You cannot serve both God and money. Greed always ends up costing the people closest to you - choose integrity even when it's the harder, less profitable road.

See Also: Matthew 6:24 (you cannot serve God and money); 1 Timothy 6:9-10 (the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil); Proverbs 11:29.

15:28 ***(KJV)** The heart of the righteous studieth to answer: but the mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things.*
(B:E Project) A righteous person thinks carefully before answering; a wicked person's mouth just gushes out evil.

Context: Standalone proverb, another entry in the chapter's speech theme, contrasting thoughtful restraint with reckless, harmful talk.

Meaning: Righteousness shows here in the discipline of thinking before speaking - weighing your words rather than blurting the first thing that comes to mind. This is a practical call to pause before responding, especially under pressure or provocation, rather than letting whatever's inside spill straight out.

Lesson: Let your words be few and true. I want you to weigh what you say, not because I expect perfection, but because thoughtful words protect the people around you.

See Also: James 1:19 (quick to listen, slow to speak); Proverbs 29:20 (a man hasty in his words - there is more hope for a fool).

15:29 ***(KJV)** The LORD is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous.*
(B:E Project) God stays distant from the wicked, but he listens closely to the prayers of the righteous.

Context: Standalone proverb reinforcing the theme from 15:8 - genuine closeness to God depends on the sincerity of a life, not on ritual performance.

Meaning: Closeness to God isn't a magic formula of correct words - it flows from an honest, righteous life. This isn't about God being petty or arbitrary; it's about the real relational distance that persistent, unaddressed wrongdoing creates between a person and God.

Lesson: I said if you cling to sin in your heart, it gets in the way of being heard - but the moment you turn back honestly, I run to meet you. The door's never actually locked; only your own hiding keeps you distant.

See Also: Psalm 66:18 (if I regard iniquity in my heart, the LORD will not hear); Luke 15:20 (the father runs to meet the returning son); James 5:16.

15:30 *(KJV) The light of the eyes rejoiceth the heart: and a good report maketh the bones fat.*
(B:E Project) A bright, cheerful look brings joy to the heart, and good news makes you feel healthy and strong right down to your bones.

Context: Standalone proverb, another observation on the physical and emotional power of small, positive things - encouraging sights and good news.

Meaning: Encouraging sights and good news genuinely nourish you, both physically and emotionally. This is a reminder of how much power small, positive moments - a friendly face, welcome news at the right time - have over your entire state of being, not just your mood.

Lesson: I had good news of great joy to bring people. Never underestimate the power of a kind word or good news shared at the right moment - it can heal more than you think.

See Also: Luke 2:10 (good news of great joy); Proverbs 25:25 (good news from a far country is like cold water); Proverbs 17:22.

15:31 *(KJV) The ear that heareth the reproof of life abideth among the wise.*
(B:E Project) Someone who listens to life-giving correction ends up living among the wise.

Context: Standalone proverb closing out the correction/reproof theme running through this chapter (15:5, 10, 12), naming its ultimate reward.

Meaning: Being genuinely willing to listen to correction - framed positively here as correction that leads to life, not just criticism - is what earns a person a lasting place among wise people. Openness to feedback is presented as the entry price for belonging to wisdom's community.

Lesson: Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear. I keep offering correction not to shame you but to invite you deeper into life - listening well is how you grow.

See Also: Matthew 11:15 (whoever has ears to hear, let them hear); Proverbs 9:8-9 (rebuke the wise, and they will love you).

15:32 *(KJV) He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul: but he that heareth reproof getheth understanding.*
(B:E Project) Refusing to be taught means despising your own life; listening to correction gains you real understanding.

Context: Standalone proverb closing out the chapter's correction theme, framing the stakes as self-respect versus self-harm.

Meaning: Rejecting teaching or correction isn't neutral here - it's treated as a form of self-harm, disrespecting your own potential and wellbeing. Humbly receiving correction, by contrast, is directly linked to gaining real understanding - it's an investment in yourself, not a defeat.

Lesson: I love you too much to let you stay where you are. Accepting correction from people who genuinely care about you is one of the most self-respecting things you can do.

See Also: Proverbs 8:36 (whoever sins against wisdom wrongs their own soul); Proverbs 12:1 (whoever loves discipline loves knowledge).

15:33 *(KJV) The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom; and before honour is humility.*
(B:E Project) Reverence for God is what teaches you wisdom, and humility always comes before honour.

Context: The closing verse of chapter 15, functioning as a summary that restates the book's foundational theme (fear of the LORD, first named at 1:7) and pairs it with humility, a value threaded throughout Proverbs.

Meaning: As a chapter-ender, this verse works almost like a mini-manifesto: reverence toward God is the starting curriculum of wisdom, and real honour is only ever reached by first walking through humility, not by chasing status directly. It's a fitting close to a chapter full of contrasts between pride and humble, teachable character.

Lesson: The first will be last, and the last first. If you want to end up honoured, don't chase it directly - humble yourself, serve others, and let honour come to you in its own time.

See Also: Proverbs 1:7 (the fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge); Matthew 23:12 (whoever exalts himself will be humbled); James 4:10.

CHAPTER 16

Chapter Summary: Proverbs 16

This chapter of Proverbs powerfully illustrates that while humans make plans and choices, God is ultimately in control of their lives, their words, and their destinies. It emphasises the critical importance of living with integrity, humility, and wisdom, contrasting these virtues with the destructive nature of pride, wickedness, and foolish speech. The chapter also touches upon the

responsibilities of leaders, the value of fair dealings, and highlights that true wisdom and understanding are far more precious than any material wealth. Ultimately, it teaches that aligning one's life with God's ways leads to peace and blessing, even amidst challenges.

16:1 *(KJV) The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the LORD.*

(B:E Project) You can plan out what you're going to say, but the actual words that come out of your mouth are shaped by something bigger than your own control.

Context: Opens a section (16:1-9) about human planning versus the LORD's ultimate control over outcomes - a standalone proverb on human limits.

Meaning: This verse is being honest about something we don't like to admit: we can rehearse a speech in our heads a hundred times, but how it actually lands - the tone, the timing, whether the right words come out - isn't fully in our hands. It's a check on the illusion of total self-control.

Lesson: I want you to stop white-knuckling every outcome. Prepare well, care about your words, but hold the result loosely - you are not the only force at work in your life, and that's meant to be a relief, not a threat.

See Also: Proverbs 16:9 (a man's heart deviseth his way, but the LORD directeth his steps) is the companion verse; James 4:13-15 warns against planning without acknowledging we don't control tomorrow.

16:2 (KJV) *All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the LORD weigheth the spirits.*

(B:E Project) Everyone thinks their own behaviour is justified - but the LORD examines the real motives underneath.

Context: Standalone proverb continuing the theme of self-assessment versus true judgement, in the section on human plans and the LORD's oversight (16:1-9).

Meaning: This is a warning against self-deception. It's easy to rationalise anything you do - everyone is the hero of their own story. This verse says there's a difference between how you see yourself and what's actually true about your motives.

Lesson: I ask you to get honest with yourself before you get defensive with others. Look past your own excuses and ask what you actually wanted when you acted - that kind of self-examination, done without self-hatred, is where real change starts.

See Also: Jeremiah 17:9-10 says the heart is deceitful and the LORD searches it; Proverbs 21:2 is a near-identical proverb.

16:3 (KJV) Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established.

(B:E Project) Hand your plans over to God, and they'll find solid ground.

Context: Standalone proverb in the 16:1-9 section on human planning and divine involvement.

Meaning: This is practical advice about anxiety over the future. Instead of gripping your plans so tightly that every uncertainty terrifies you, this verse invites a kind of release - do the work, but don't carry the entire weight of the outcome alone.

Lesson: Bring me your plans instead of carrying them white-knuckled and alone. That doesn't mean sit back and do nothing - it means work with a settled heart rather than constant anxious control, trusting that you're not the only one holding this together.

See Also: Psalm 37:5 says commit thy way unto the LORD; Matthew 6:34 tells us to take no thought for the morrow.

16:4 (KJV) *The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.*

(B:E Project) God made everything with a purpose - even wrongdoers eventually face a reckoning for their wrongdoing.

Context: Standalone proverb, one of the more theologically dense verses in this section, addressing divine purpose and justice.

Meaning: This is a difficult verse and worth sitting with rather than rushing past. It's not saying God causes people to be evil - it's saying that nothing, not even the worst behaviour, escapes an ultimate reckoning. Injustice doesn't get the final word.

Lesson: When you see wrong go unpunished for a while, don't lose heart or take revenge into your own hands. I tell you that patience is not the same as things being ignored - everything is accounted for eventually, so you're free to let go of the need to settle every score yourself.

See Also: Romans 9:22 wrestles with similar ideas about vessels fitted for destruction; Ecclesiastes 3:17 says God shall judge the righteous and the wicked.

16:5 (KJV) Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished.

(B:E Project) God detests arrogance - and no matter how many allies a proud person gathers, they won't get away with it.

Context: Standalone proverb on pride, a recurring major theme across Proverbs (see also 16:18).

Meaning: 'Hand join in hand' pictures people forming alliances or pacts - strength in numbers. The verse says that even with backup, arrogance doesn't get a free pass. It's a warning that confidence built on looking down on others is fragile, not powerful.

Lesson: I care far more about a humble heart than an impressive one. However many people back you up, if pride is running the show, you're building on sand - come to me instead with an open, teachable heart, and you'll find you don't need to prove yourself to anyone.

See Also: Proverbs 16:18 warns pride goeth before destruction; Isaiah 2:11 says the lofty looks of man shall be humbled.

16:6 *(KJV) By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil.*
(B:E Project) Wrongdoing is dealt with through loyal love and honesty, and taking God seriously is what turns people away from doing wrong.

Context: Standalone proverb linking moral character (mercy, truth) with reverence for God as the root of ethical living.

Meaning: This pairs two things people often separate: inner transformation (mercy and truth as character) and genuine respect for something greater than yourself (the fear of the LORD). Real change isn't just gritting your teeth to avoid punishment - it grows out of both compassion and honesty.

Lesson: I didn't come to hand you a rulebook to grit your teeth through. Let mercy and honesty become who you are, and taking life seriously - knowing you're accountable - will naturally steer you away from harm, from the inside out rather than by force.

See Also: Micah 6:8 says do justly, love mercy, walk humbly; Proverbs 3:3-4 urges let mercy and truth not forsake thee.

16:7 *(KJV) When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.*
(B:E Project) When someone's life is lived rightly, even the people who oppose them can end up at peace with them.

Context: Standalone proverb on the ripple effects of integrity, within the wider section on right living and its rewards.

Meaning: This isn't a guarantee that living well eliminates every enemy - but it observes something true: consistent integrity tends to disarm hostility over time. People notice when you're not acting in bad faith, even if they were against you at first.

Lesson: Don't retaliate against those who oppose you - live rightly and let your character do the talking. I've seen it happen again and again: genuine goodness has a way of quietly winning people over that force never could.

See Also: Romans 12:18 says live peaceably with all men, as much as lieth in you; Proverbs 25:21-22 tells us to feed our enemy.

16:8 *(KJV) Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without right.*
(B:E Project) A small income earned honestly beats a fortune made through wrongdoing.

Context: Standalone 'better than' proverb, a common form in Proverbs comparing two goods to make a value judgement, here on wealth versus integrity.

Meaning: This confronts the assumption that more money automatically means a better life. It says the method matters as much as the amount - a modest, honest living has a worth that a dishonest fortune can't match, however big the numbers look.

Lesson: Don't let the size of a pay cheque decide your choices. I'd rather you have less and sleep easy with a clean conscience than have more and carry the weight of how you got it - true wealth isn't only measured in numbers.

See Also: Proverbs 15:16-17 says better is little with the fear of the LORD; Psalm 37:16 echoes the same value judgement.

16:9 *(KJV) A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps.*
(B:E Project) A person can map out their own plans, but it's God who actually determines the direction their life takes.

Context: Standalone proverb closing the 16:1-9 section, echoing 16:1 and 16:3 on the tension between human planning and divine oversight.

Meaning: This is one of the clearest statements in Proverbs about the limits of self-determination. You can plan meticulously, but life has a way of redirecting you regardless. It's less about giving up on plans and more about staying flexible when they change.

Lesson: Plan your path, but hold it with open hands. When life takes you somewhere you didn't map out, I want you to trust that the detour isn't necessarily a failure - sometimes it's exactly where you needed to end up.

See Also: Proverbs 19:21 says the counsel of the LORD shall stand; James 4:13-15 reminds us to say 'if the Lord will'.

16:10 *(KJV) A divine sentence is in the lips of the king: his mouth transgresseth not in judgment.*
(B:E Project) A king's word carries the weight of a verdict - his ruling shouldn't twist justice.

Context: Opens a cluster of proverbs (16:10-15) about kingship and just rule, common in a book traditionally attributed to a king addressing governance.

Meaning: This describes an ideal of kingship - that a ruler's pronouncements should be trustworthy and just, almost like carrying divine authority precisely because of the responsibility that comes with power. It's less a guarantee and more a standard rulers are held to.

Lesson: If you have any authority over others - as a parent, a boss, a leader of any kind - I hold you to the same standard: use your voice for justice, not for what's convenient for you. Power that isn't accountable to fairness isn't real power, it's just force.

See Also: Proverbs 29:4 says the king by judgment establisheth the land; Romans 13:1-4 discusses rulers as accountable to good and evil.

16:11 *(KJV) A just weight and balance are the LORD's: all the weights of the bag are his work.*
(B:E Project) Honest scales and accurate measurements belong to God - fair dealing in business is his standard, not just a nice idea.

Context: Standalone proverb on honest commerce, a frequent theme in Proverbs given the real-world temptation to cheat customers with rigged weights.

Meaning: In the ancient marketplace, dishonest traders used mismatched weights to cheat customers. This verse insists fairness in ordinary business transactions isn't a minor issue - it's a matter God takes personally.

Lesson: Whatever you're trading, selling, or negotiating, deal honestly even when no one's checking. I notice the small, unglamorous choices - the fair price, the accurate invoice - as much as I notice the big ones.

See Also: Leviticus 19:35-36 commands just balances and just weights; Proverbs 11:1 calls a false balance an abomination to the LORD.

16:12 *(KJV) It is an abomination to kings to commit wickedness: for the throne is established by righteousness.*
(B:E Project) Rulers should hate wrongdoing, because it's justice - not force - that actually keeps power stable.

Context: Continues the cluster on kingship (16:10-15), stating the moral foundation good government rests on.

Meaning: This is a political observation as much as a moral one: unjust rule is unstable rule. A throne, or any position of authority, built on corruption is fragile, no matter how strong it looks in the moment.

Lesson: Whatever position you hold, know that integrity is what actually holds things together long-term, not control or fear. Build your influence on fairness and people will trust you far longer than force ever could earn you.

See Also: Proverbs 29:14 says the king who faithfully judges the poor has his throne established; Proverbs 20:28 says mercy and truth preserve the king.

16:13 *(KJV) Righteous lips are the delight of kings; and they love him that speaketh right.*
(B:E Project) Good rulers appreciate honest speech and are drawn to people who tell them the truth straight.

Context: Continues the kingship cluster (16:10-15), on the value of honest counsel to those in authority.

Meaning: This describes what a wise leader values - not flattery, but straight talk. It's a quiet challenge to both rulers (value honesty over comfortable lies) and to those who advise them (have the courage to speak truthfully).

Lesson: I want you to be someone who tells the truth kindly but plainly, even to people with power over you. And if you're the one with influence, surround yourself with people who'll tell you what you need to hear, not just what you want to hear.

See Also: Proverbs 27:6 says faithful are the wounds of a friend; Proverbs 29:5 warns against flattery that spreads a net.

16:14 *(KJV) The wrath of a king is as messengers of death: but a wise man will pacify it.*
(B:E Project) An angry ruler's fury can be as dangerous as a death sentence - but a wise person knows how to calm it.

Context: Continues the kingship cluster (16:10-15), acknowledging the real danger of unchecked power and the value of tact.

Meaning: This is practical, almost survival-level wisdom about handling volatile people in authority. It's not about being spineless - it's about having the skill to de-escalate a dangerous situation rather than making it worse.

Lesson: When you're facing someone whose anger could genuinely harm you, I don't ask you to provoke them for the sake of being right. Wisdom sometimes looks like a calm word that defuses a room, not a confrontation that wins an argument but loses everything else.

See Also: Proverbs 15:1 says a soft answer turneth away wrath; Proverbs 19:12 compares a king's wrath to a roaring lion.

16:15 *(KJV) In the light of the king's countenance is life; and his favour is as a cloud of the latter rain.*
(B:E Project) A ruler's approval brings life and opportunity - his favour is as welcome as rain at harvest time.

Context: Closes the kingship cluster (16:10-15), contrasting a ruler's favour with the danger described in the previous verse.

Meaning: 'The latter rain' refers to rain that came just before harvest in the ancient farming calendar - essential and eagerly awaited. This pictures the goodwill of someone in power as something that can genuinely change a person's fortunes for the better.

Lesson: If you have favour or influence to give - a good word, an opportunity, encouragement - don't hoard it. Be someone whose presence brings life to others rather than fear, because that's exactly the kind of influence worth having.

See Also: Proverbs 19:12 compares a king's favour to dew upon the grass; Psalm 30:5 says his favour is for life.

16:16 *(KJV) How much better is it to get wisdom than gold! and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver!*
(B:E Project) Gaining wisdom is worth so much more than gold - understanding is worth choosing over silver.

Context: Opens a short section (16:16-19) contrasting wisdom and humility with wealth and pride, echoing the famous praise of wisdom in chapters 3 and 8.

Meaning: This is a direct value statement: wisdom outranks wealth. Not because money is bad, but because understanding shapes every decision you'll ever make about that money and everything else - it's the deeper resource.

Lesson: I want you chasing wisdom the way most people chase money - with real hunger. Understanding how to live well will serve you longer and more faithfully than any amount you could ever save or earn.

See Also: Proverbs 3:13-15 says wisdom is more precious than rubies; Proverbs 8:10-11 says receive instruction, and not silver.

16:17 *(KJV) The highway of the upright is to depart from evil: he that keepeth his way preserveth his soul.*
(B:E Project) Honest people's path in life is to steer clear of wrongdoing - watching your own steps protects you.

Context: Standalone proverb within the wisdom-and-humility section (16:16-19), on self-discipline as self-protection.

Meaning: This pictures integrity as a well-maintained road you deliberately stay on, rather than something you stumble into. Staying alert to your own choices isn't paranoia - it's the very thing that keeps you safe from self-inflicted damage.

Lesson: Pay attention to the small daily choices that keep you on a good path - they matter more than the big dramatic moments. I'm not asking for perfection, just honest attentiveness to where your own feet are taking you.

See Also: Proverbs 4:26-27 says ponder the path of thy feet; Psalm 1:1 blesses the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly.

16:18 *(KJV) Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.*
(B:E Project) Arrogance comes right before a downfall - a superior attitude comes right before you trip.

Context: One of the most famous verses in Proverbs, standalone, within the wisdom-and-humility section (16:16-19).

Meaning: This is a simple but hard-hitting observation about human nature: overconfidence blinds you to real risk. It's not that pride is punished from outside so much as that it sets you up to fail from within, because you stop paying attention.

Lesson: Whenever you feel utterly certain and superior, that's exactly the moment to slow down and check yourself. I'd rather you stay humble and teachable your whole life than have one spectacular fall from thinking you were above it.

See Also: Proverbs 11:2 says when pride cometh, then cometh shame; 1 Corinthians 10:12 warns him that thinketh he standeth to take heed lest he fall.

16:19 *(KJV) Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.*
(B:E Project) It's better to be humble among people with nothing than to share in the loot of the arrogant.

Context: Closes the wisdom-and-humility section (16:16-19), another 'better than' comparison weighing humility against ill-gotten gain.

Meaning: This pairs two contrasting images: standing with humble, ordinary people versus profiting alongside the proud and powerful, even if that profit is real. It says the company you keep and the character you have matters more than the payoff.

Lesson: Choose your circle by character, not by what they can get you. I'd rather you stand humbly with people who have little than share in wealth gained through arrogance and exploitation - one costs you nothing, the other costs you your integrity.

See Also: James 2:5 says God hath chosen the poor of this world rich in faith; Proverbs 28:19-20 warns against making haste to be rich.

16:20 *(KJV) He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good: and whoso trusteth in the LORD, happy is he.*
(B:E Project) Deal with situations wisely and things go well for you - and trusting in God brings real happiness.

Context: Standalone proverb linking practical skill with spiritual trust, opening a section on wise, healing speech (16:20-24).

Meaning: This links two things that might seem separate: practical competence in handling life's matters, and inner trust in something bigger than yourself. Both contribute to a genuinely good life - skill without trust can become anxious control, and trust without skill can become passivity.

Lesson: Use your judgement well, work at things carefully - and don't let that turn into thinking you're on your own. Real happiness comes from doing your part wisely while resting in the knowledge that you're not carrying everything alone.

See Also: Proverbs 3:5-6 says trust in the LORD with all thine heart; Psalm 2:12 blesses all who put their trust in him.

16:21 *(KJV) The wise in heart shall be called prudent: and the sweetness of the lips increaseth learning.*
(B:E Project) People with genuine inner wisdom get a reputation for good judgement, and speaking pleasantly makes others more receptive to what you teach.

Context: Continues the section on wise speech (16:20-24), on the connection between character, reputation, and how words are received.

Meaning: This makes a practical point about communication: how you say something affects whether people actually take it in. Wisdom isn't just about being right - it's also about delivering truth in a way people can actually receive.

Lesson: If you want to help someone see something, don't just be correct - be kind about it. I've found that gentleness opens doors that being right on its own never could, so pay attention to your tone, not just your content.

- See Also:** Proverbs 25:11 says a word fitly spoken is like apples of gold; Colossians 4:6 says let your speech be always with grace.
- 16:22

(KJV) Understanding is a wellspring of life unto him that hath it: but the instruction of fools is folly.

(B:E Project) Understanding is a source of life for whoever has it, but fools only manage to teach more foolishness.

Context: Continues the section on wise speech and understanding (16:20-24), contrasting genuine insight with foolish teaching.

Meaning: A 'wellspring' is a source that keeps producing - understanding doesn't just help once, it keeps feeding good decisions over and over. Meanwhile, someone lacking that understanding only spreads more of the same confusion when they try to instruct others.

Lesson: Keep drawing from real understanding, not just repeating what sounds clever. And be careful whose voice you're letting shape you - if their wisdom runs dry, so will what they're able to give you.

See Also: Proverbs 13:14 calls the law of the wise a fountain of life; John 4:14 speaks of a well of water springing up into everlasting life.
- 16:23

(KJV) The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips.

(B:E Project) A wise person's inner character shapes what comes out of their mouth, making their speech more persuasive.

Context: Continues the section on wise speech (16:20-24), on the relationship between inner character and outward words.

Meaning: This says good speech isn't primarily a technique you learn - it flows from the kind of person you are on the inside. If your heart is genuinely wise, that naturally shapes and improves how you communicate.

Lesson: Don't just work on your words - work on your heart, and your words will follow. I care far more about who you're becoming inside than about how polished you sound on the outside.

See Also: Matthew 12:34-35 says out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh; Luke 6:45 echoes the same idea.
- 16:24

(KJV) Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.

(B:E Project) Kind words are like honey - sweet to take in, and good for your whole body.

Context: Closes the section on wise, healing speech (16:20-24), with a vivid image of the physical, healing power of kindness.

- Meaning:** This links emotional and even physical wellbeing to something as simple as kind words. It's a reminder that language isn't just information - it can genuinely nourish or heal a person, the way food does.

Lesson: Never underestimate a kind word - I mean that literally, it can heal something in a person that nothing else reaches. Speak gently to people; you might be the one dose of sweetness someone needed on a hard day.

See Also: Proverbs 12:25 says a good word maketh the heart glad; Proverbs 15:23 asks how good is a word spoken in due season.
- 16:25

(KJV) There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

(B:E Project) There's a path that looks completely right to a person, but it actually leads to ruin.

Context: Standalone proverb, an exact repetition of 14:12, warning about self-deception in moral judgement.

Meaning: This is a sobering warning that sincerity isn't the same as being right. You can be totally convinced you're doing the right thing and still be heading somewhere destructive - which is exactly why humility and outside counsel matter.

Lesson: Don't trust your own certainty completely - check your direction against wisdom outside yourself, not just your gut feeling. I'd rather you stay humble and ask questions than walk confidently toward something that will hurt you.

See Also: Proverbs 14:12 is an identical proverb; Judges 21:25 describes every man doing what was right in his own eyes.
- 16:26

(KJV) He that laboureth laboureth for himself; for his mouth craveth it of him.

(B:E Project) A person's hunger drives them to work - their own need pushes them to earn their keep.

Context: Standalone proverb on the natural motivation behind work, a practical observation about labour and appetite.

Meaning: This is a plain, almost blunt observation: basic need is a powerful and legitimate motivator for work. It's not romanticising labour, just noting honestly that hunger keeps people productive.

Lesson: There's no shame in working because you need to - that's simply being human. I don't expect you to pretend your needs don't matter; provide for yourself and those who depend on you, and take honest satisfaction in it.

See Also: 2 Thessalonians 3:10 says if any would not work, neither should he eat; Ecclesiastes 6:7 says all the labour of man is for his mouth.
- 16:27

(KJV) An ungodly man diggeth up evil: and in his lips there is as a burning fire.

- (B:E Project)** A worthless person actively digs up trouble, and their words burn like fire.
- Context:** Opens a cluster of proverbs (16:27-30) describing different kinds of troublemakers and their destructive speech.
- Meaning:** The image of 'digging up' evil suggests deliberate effort - this isn't someone who stumbles into wrongdoing by accident, but someone who actively searches it out. Their speech then spreads that damage like fire spreads.
- Lesson:** Watch for people - and moments in yourself - where you're actively hunting for something to criticise or stir up. I want you to be someone who searches for the good in a situation, not someone who digs until they find dirt.
- See Also:** James 3:5-6 calls the tongue a fire, a world of iniquity; Proverbs 26:21 compares a contentious man to coals feeding a fire.
- 16:28** *(KJV) A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends.*
(B:E Project) A twisted person stirs up conflict, and a gossip can tear apart even close friendships.
- Context:** Continues the cluster on troublemakers and destructive speech (16:27-30).
- Meaning:** This names two related but distinct dangers: the person who deliberately creates conflict, and the gossip whose whispered words - even without open hostility - can quietly destroy trust between people who were once close.
- Lesson:** Guard your tongue around other people's friendships - don't be the whisper that ends something good. I'd rather you build bridges between people than be the wedge that splits them apart, even when it feels like harmless talk.
- See Also:** Proverbs 6:16-19 lists sowing discord among brethren as something the LORD hates; Proverbs 26:20 says where there is no talebearer, strife ceases.
- 16:29** *(KJV) A violent man enticeth his neighbour, and leadeth him into the way that is not good.*
(B:E Project) A violent person lures their neighbour along and leads them down a bad path.
- Context:** Continues the cluster on troublemakers (16:27-30), warning about the influence of aggressive company.
- Meaning:** This is a warning about influence and peer pressure - violent or aggressive people don't just harm directly, they actively draw others into their patterns. Bad company doesn't just tolerate wrongdoing, it can actively recruit you into it.

- Lesson:** Be honest about who's shaping your choices. If someone keeps nudging you toward behaviour that damages you or others, that's not a friendship worth keeping - I want better company for you than that.
- See Also:** 1 Corinthians 15:33 says evil communications corrupt good manners; Proverbs 1:10-15 warns against consenting when sinners entice thee.
- 16:30** *(KJV) He shutheth his eyes to devise froward things: moving his lips he bringeth evil to pass.*
(B:E Project) Someone closing their eyes in concentration is plotting something twisted; a slight movement of the lips is them setting evil in motion.
- Context:** Closes the cluster on troublemakers and their deceptive body language (16:27-30).
- Meaning:** This describes the physical tells of premeditated scheming - deliberate, quiet, calculated body language rather than a sudden outburst. It's a warning to notice patterns, not just words, when reading someone's intentions.
- Lesson:** Genuine goodness doesn't need to plot in secret - if you find yourself scheming quietly against someone, that's a signal to stop and examine your own heart. I want your intentions to be open enough that you'd be comfortable saying them out loud.
- See Also:** Proverbs 6:12-14 describes a wicked person winking with his eyes to devise mischief; Psalm 36:4 says he deviseth mischief upon his bed.
- 16:31** *(KJV) The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness.*
(B:E Project) Grey hair is a mark of honour - if it belongs to someone who has lived rightly.
- Context:** Standalone proverb on ageing and character, closing thoughts on a life well lived before the chapter's final verses on self-control.
- Meaning:** This doesn't romanticise old age automatically - it makes honour conditional on righteousness. A long life lived with integrity earns real respect; age by itself is not the point, the character behind it is.
- Lesson:** I want you thinking about the kind of elder you're becoming, not just the years passing. Live in a way now that makes your later years something to be honoured for, not just endured.
- See Also:** Leviticus 19:32 says rise up before the hoary head; Proverbs 20:29 calls the grey head the beauty of old men.
- 16:32** *(KJV) He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.*

(B:E Project) Someone who controls their temper is stronger than a warrior - mastering your own emotions beats conquering a whole city.

Context: Standalone proverb, one of the most quoted in Proverbs, redefining true strength as self-control rather than external conquest.

Meaning: This deliberately redefines greatness. Ancient culture, like much of ours today, prized military conquest and dominance. This verse says the harder and more valuable victory is over yourself, not over other people.

Lesson: The real battle worth winning is the one inside you - your temper, your impulses, your reactions. Master that, and you've achieved something greater than any external victory could ever give you.

See Also: James 1:19-20 urges being slow to speak, slow to wrath; Proverbs 25:28 compares an unrestrained spirit to a city broken down.

16:33 *(KJV)* The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD.
(B:E Project) You can throw the dice, but what they land on is ultimately in God's hands.

Context: Closing verse of the chapter, returning to the theme opened in 16:1 and 16:9 - human action combined with divine sovereignty over outcomes.

Meaning: Casting lots was an ancient method of decision-making, similar to drawing straws or rolling dice. This verse bookends the chapter's theme: however random or chance-based something looks on the surface, it's held within a larger order.

Lesson: When life feels like it's coming down to chance, I want you to know it isn't as random or meaningless as it feels. There's a bigger picture holding even the uncertain moments, and you don't have to face them believing nothing is in control.

See Also: Proverbs 16:9 says the LORD directeth his steps; Acts 1:24-26 describes the disciples casting lots to choose Matthias.

CHAPTER 17

Chapter Summary: Proverbs 17

Proverbs Chapter 17 offers a collection of wise sayings that highlight the contrast between living wisely and foolishly. It emphasises the importance of peace over conflict, even with little resources, and warns against the dangers of gossip, pride, and dishonest actions. The chapter also explores the nature of true friendship and family relationships, the role of God in testing hearts, and the serious consequences of perverting justice or doing evil. It encourages thoughtful communication, joy, and integrity, showing how these lead to a better life, while foolishness brings sorrow and trouble.

17:1 *(KJV)* Better is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, than an house full of sacrifices with strife.
(B:E Project) A dry crust of bread eaten in peace beats a house full of feasting eaten amid constant arguing.

Context: Opens chapter 17 with a 'better than' proverb contrasting material abundance with peace, a recurring theme (echoes 15:16-17).

Meaning: 'Sacrifices' here implies a feast, since sacrificial meat was shared and eaten - so this pictures a lavish spread ruined by conflict, versus a meagre meal enjoyed in calm. It values peace over plenty.

Lesson: Don't chase a bigger table if it costs you peace at that table. I'd always choose you sitting down to something small in a home full of calm over a feast surrounded by tension and resentment.

See Also: Proverbs 15:16-17 makes the same comparison with treasure and trouble; Proverbs 21:9 prefers a corner of the housetop to a brawling household.

17:2 *(KJV)* A wise servant shall have rule over a son that causeth shame, and shall have part of the inheritance among the brethren.
(B:E Project) A capable servant can end up ranking above a family's disgraceful son, even sharing in the family inheritance.

Context: Standalone proverb on how genuine character and competence can override birth status or social rank.

Meaning: In a status-driven society, this verse is a striking reversal - it says character and competence, not just birth order or bloodline, determine real standing and reward. A wise 'outsider' can end up mattering more than a family member who wastes their position.

Lesson: I don't rank people by their birth, title, or where they started - I look at character. However humble your position looks right now, live wisely and faithfully, because that's what actually elevates a person in the end.

See Also: Genesis 15:2-4 shows Abraham considering a servant as heir; Matthew 25:21 says well done, thou good and faithful servant.

17:3 *(KJV)* The fining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold: but the LORD trieth the hearts.
(B:E Project) Silver gets tested by a crucible and gold by a furnace - but it's God who tests what's inside a person's heart.

Context: Standalone proverb using metalworking imagery, a common Proverbs metaphor for the refining and testing of character.

Meaning: Refining metal meant heating it until impurities rose to the surface and could be removed, leaving something purer. This verse says people go through a similar process - hardship or scrutiny reveals what's genuinely inside a person.

Lesson: When life puts pressure on you and tests what you're really made of, don't panic - that process, however uncomfortable, is what refines you into something more genuine. I'm more interested in what's true underneath than in a polished surface.

See Also: Proverbs 27:21 uses the same image about a man being tested by his praise; 1 Peter 1:7 calls the trial of faith more precious than gold.

17:4 *(KJV) A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips; and a liar giveth ear to a naughty tongue.*
(B:E Project) A wrongdoer listens eagerly to lies, and a liar pays close attention to malicious talk.

Context: Standalone proverb on how character shapes what kind of speech a person is drawn to listening to.

Meaning: This observes that people are naturally drawn to the kind of talk that matches their own character - dishonest people gravitate toward dishonest voices, because it confirms what they already want to believe or do.

Lesson: Notice what kind of talk you're drawn to and who you enjoy listening to - it says something real about you. I want you tuning your ear toward truth and goodness, even when gossip or lies would be more entertaining in the moment.

See Also: Psalm 1:1 blesses the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly; Proverbs 29:12 warns of a ruler who hearkens to lies.

17:5 *(KJV) Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker: and he that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished.*
(B:E Project) Whoever mocks a poor person is really insulting God who made them, and celebrating someone else's disaster won't go unpunished.

Context: Standalone proverb on the dignity of the poor and the wrongness of taking pleasure in others' misfortune, a strong Proverbs theme on social justice.

Meaning: This verse ties how you treat poor people directly to how you regard God, since every person's worth comes from being made by the same Creator, regardless of their circumstances. It also condemns a specific ugly impulse - schadenfreude, enjoying someone else's downfall.

Lesson: Never let anyone's poverty or misfortune become a joke to you - every person you look down on is someone I love just as much as you. Treat the struggling and the failing with the same respect you'd want if the situation were reversed.

See Also: Proverbs 14:31 says he that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker; Proverbs 24:17 warns not to rejoice when thine enemy falleth.

17:6 *(KJV) Children's children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers.*

(B:E Project) Grandchildren are the pride and joy of the elderly, and children take pride in their parents.

Context: Standalone proverb on family, describing the mutual honour between generations.

Meaning: This is a warm observation about generational bonds - it pictures family relationships as a two-way source of honour, older generations delighted by younger ones, and children finding their own sense of identity and pride in their parents.

Lesson: Invest in your family relationships across generations - they're not incidental to a good life, they're part of the point of it. Whatever stage you're at, there's honour to be found and given within your own family line.

See Also: Psalm 127:3-5 calls children an heritage of the LORD; Psalm 128:5-6 speaks of seeing thy children's children.

17:7 *(KJV) Excellent speech becometh not a fool: much less do lying lips a prince.*
(B:E Project) Eloquent talk doesn't suit a fool, and dishonest talk suits a ruler even less.

Context: Standalone proverb using a 'how much more' comparison, common in Proverbs, about the mismatch between speech and character.

Meaning: This makes a point about incongruity - certain kinds of speech simply don't fit certain people. Fine words from a fool ring hollow; but lies from someone in leadership are even more jarring and dangerous, because people rely on a leader's honesty.

Lesson: Whatever your position, let your words actually match your character - don't dress up foolishness in fine language, and never let leadership tempt you into dishonesty. I hold those with influence to the highest standard of truthfulness.

See Also: Proverbs 19:10 says delight is not seemly for a fool; Proverbs 16:13 says righteous lips are the delight of kings.

17:8 *(KJV) A gift is as a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it: whithersoever it turneth, it prospereth.*
(B:E Project) A bribe looks like a lucky charm to the person giving it - it seems to work wherever they use it.

Context: Standalone proverb, best read as a wry, almost cynical observation about the practical (if morally dubious) effectiveness of bribery, rather than an endorsement.

Meaning: This isn't approving of bribery - it's describing, with a touch of irony, how effective it can seem to the person offering it, like a lucky stone that opens doors. Proverbs elsewhere condemns bribes outright, so this reads as an honest but critical observation of how corruption actually functions.

Lesson: Just because something 'works' doesn't make it right - I want you evaluating your methods by their integrity, not just their results. Don't let effectiveness become your only measure of whether something is worth doing.

- See Also:

Proverbs 17:23 condemns taking a gift to pervert judgment; Exodus 23:8 warns that a gift blindeth the wise.
- 17:9

(KJV)

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

(B:E Project)

Someone who lets a wrong go without dwelling on it is pursuing love, but someone who keeps bringing it up drives close friends apart.

Context:

Standalone proverb on forgiveness and friendship, contrasting letting go of offences with rehashing them.

Meaning:

This distinguishes healthy forgiveness from grudge-holding. It's not about pretending nothing happened, but about choosing not to keep replaying someone's mistake, because doing so - even in later arguments - erodes the relationship.

Lesson:

When someone wrongs you and you've genuinely dealt with it, let it stay dealt with - don't dig it back up every time you're frustrated. Real love chooses to move forward together rather than keeping score.

See Also:

1 Peter 4:8 says charity shall cover the multitude of sins; Matthew 18:21-22 tells us to forgive until seventy times seven.

17:10

(KJV)

A reproof entereth more into a wise man than an hundred stripes into a fool.

(B:E Project)

A single word of correction sinks in deeper for a wise person than a hundred beatings would for a fool.

Context:

Standalone proverb comparing how differently people respond to correction, depending on their receptiveness.

Meaning:

This is about teachability, not punishment methods. A person open to feedback can be shaped profoundly by even gentle correction, while a closed-off person can go through severe consequences and still not learn.

Lesson:

I care much more about whether your heart is open to correction than about how harsh a lesson you needed. Stay teachable - it's the single quality that will save you from repeating the same painful mistakes.

See Also:

Proverbs 9:8-9 says rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee; Proverbs 27:22 says a fool's foolishness will not depart even if crushed.

17:11

(KJV)

An evil man seeketh only rebellion: therefore a cruel messenger shall be sent against him.

(B:E Project)

A wicked person is set on rebellion, so harsh consequences will eventually come for them.

Context:

Standalone proverb on the natural consequences awaiting those who are set on rebellion or wrongdoing.

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BIBLE:ESSENCE Project - PROVERBS

Meaning:

This is about cause and effect - someone chronically stirring up rebellion or defiance shouldn't be surprised when serious consequences eventually catch up with them. It's not random punishment, it's the predictable outcome of a chosen path.

Lesson:

If you feel constantly drawn to fight everything and everyone, ask what that's really costing you. I'd rather you channel that fire into something constructive than let rebellion for its own sake bring harsh consequences down on you.

See Also:

Proverbs 6:14-15 says calamity shall come suddenly on him that soweth discord; Galatians 6:7 says whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

17:12

(KJV)

Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man, rather than a fool in his folly.

(B:E Project)

You'd be safer running into a mother bear whose cubs were just taken than confronting a fool who's set on being foolish.

Context:

Standalone proverb using vivid animal imagery - a common Proverbs technique - to warn about the unpredictable danger of a determined fool.

Meaning:

A bear robbed of her cubs is one of the most dangerous encounters imaginable in the ancient world - fierce and unpredictable. This verse says a fool locked into their own foolishness can be even more dangerous, because reason won't reach them.

Lesson:

Be careful how much energy you spend trying to reason with someone determined to stay foolish - sometimes the wisest move is to protect yourself and step back, not to keep engaging. I don't ask you to argue with a wall.

See Also:

Proverbs 26:4 warns not to answer a fool according to his folly; 2 Samuel 17:8 uses the same bear image.

17:13

(KJV)

Whoso rewardeth evil for good, evil shall not depart from his house.

(B:E Project)

Whoever repays kindness with harm invites trouble to stick around their household permanently.

Context:

Standalone proverb warning against ingratitude and betrayal of kindness, with consequences described as lasting.

Meaning:

This is a strong warning about a specific betrayal - responding to someone's kindness with harm. It suggests this particular kind of wrong doesn't just pass; it has lingering, corrosive consequences for the person who does it.

Lesson:

However someone has wronged you, don't let it curdle into repaying their past kindness with harm - that kind of bitterness poisons your own home far more than theirs. Choose gratitude over grudges, even when it's hard.

See Also:

Romans 12:17 says recompense to no man evil for evil; 1 Samuel 24:17 shows Saul acknowledging David repaid him good for evil.

17:14

(KJV)

The beginning of strife is as when one lefteth out water: therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with.

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- (B:E Project)** Starting an argument is like breaching a dam - once the water's out, you can't stop it, so walk away before the conflict even begins.

Context: Standalone proverb using an irrigation/flood image to warn about how quickly conflict escalates beyond control.

Meaning: Small cracks in a dam can quickly become unstoppable floods. This verse uses that image to warn that conflict is far easier to prevent than to stop once it starts - the moment to choose peace is before the first word, not after things have escalated.

Lesson: The best time to avoid a fight is before it starts, not once it's already spiralling. I want you walking away from unnecessary conflict early - it takes far more courage to hold your tongue than to win the argument.

See Also: James 4:1 asks from whence come wars and fightings among you; Proverbs 20:3 says it is an honour to cease from strife.
- 17:15** *(KJV) He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the LORD.*

(B:E Project) Calling a guilty person innocent and calling an innocent person guilty are both things God detests equally.

Context: Standalone proverb on justice, condemning both forms of corrupted judgement in legal or moral matters.

Meaning: This sets a high standard for fairness - it's not enough to avoid one kind of injustice, both letting the guilty off and wrongly blaming the innocent are equally condemned. Justice has to be accurate in both directions.

Lesson: When you're judging a situation - at work, in a friendship, wherever - be honest in both directions. Don't excuse wrongdoing because you like someone, and don't blame someone unfairly because you don't; I ask for real fairness, not convenient fairness.

See Also: Proverbs 24:24 says people will curse him who calls the wicked righteous; Isaiah 5:20 warns those who call evil good, and good evil.
- 17:16** *(KJV) Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?*

(B:E Project) What's the point of a fool having the money to buy wisdom, when they have no real desire to actually learn it?

Context: Standalone proverb, phrased as a rhetorical question, on the uselessness of opportunity without genuine desire to change.

Meaning: This points out that access or resources alone don't create growth - without genuine willingness, even the best opportunity to learn goes to waste. Wisdom isn't something that can simply be purchased or handed over; it requires real appetite.

- Lesson:** I can put wisdom and opportunity in front of you constantly, but I can't want it for you - that part has to come from your own heart. Ask yourself honestly whether you actually want to grow, or just want to look like you're trying.

See Also: Proverbs 1:7 says fools despise wisdom and instruction; Matthew 13:15 speaks of hearts too dull to understand.
- 17:17** *(KJV) A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.*

(B:E Project) A real friend loves consistently, and family exists precisely for the hard times.

Context: Standalone proverb, one of Proverbs' most well-known statements on friendship, defining loyalty as constancy through difficulty.

Meaning: This defines real friendship not by good times shared but by consistency through hard times. A 'fair-weather' friend isn't really tested until things go wrong - this verse says true love shows up especially then.

Lesson: Be the friend who shows up when things get hard, not just when things are easy - that's when love actually proves itself real. I've loved you at your worst moments as much as your best, and I ask you to love others the same way.

See Also: John 15:13 says greater love hath no man than this; Ruth 1:16 shows Ruth's loyalty to Naomi.
- 17:18** *(KJV) A man void of understanding striketh hands, and becometh surety in the presence of his friend.*

(B:E Project) Someone lacking good sense shakes hands on a deal, agreeing to cover someone else's debt.

Context: Standalone proverb warning against acting as a financial guarantor (surety) for another's debt, a recurring practical warning in Proverbs.

Meaning: In ancient practice, 'striking hands' sealed an agreement, and becoming 'surety' meant legally guaranteeing someone else's debt - if they defaulted, you paid. This verse calls that a foolish move, made without properly weighing the risk.

Lesson: Think carefully before taking on someone else's financial risk, even for people you love - generosity is good, but reckless financial entanglement can hurt you both. Wisdom means caring for someone without losing your own footing.

See Also: Proverbs 6:1-5 warns against being surety for thy friend; Proverbs 11:15 says he that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it.
- 17:19** *(KJV) He loveth transgression that loveth strife: and he that exalteth his gate seeketh destruction.*

(B:E Project) Whoever loves conflict actually loves wrongdoing, and whoever builds themselves up too high is asking for a fall.

Context: Standalone proverb linking love of conflict with a love of wrongdoing, and pairing it with a warning against pride ('exalting one's gate,' a picture of an ostentatious, boastful home).

Meaning: This links two things that seem separate but aren't - enjoying conflict and enjoying wrongdoing tend to go together, because conflict is often really about ego and control. 'Exalting his gate' pictures someone building an impressive, showy entrance to their house - a metaphor for self-important pride inviting downfall.

Lesson: Check your own heart when you notice you enjoy an argument more than the truth being sorted out - that enjoyment is worth being honest with yourself about. And watch for pride dressing itself up as strength; it's usually setting up its own fall.

See Also: Proverbs 16:18 says pride goeth before destruction; James 4:1-2 traces wars and fightings back to our own lusts.

17:20 *(KJV) He that hath a froward heart findeth no good: and he that hath a perverse tongue falleth into mischief.*
(B:E Project) A twisted heart never finds real good, and a dishonest tongue leads straight into trouble.

Context: Standalone proverb linking inner corruption (heart) with outward consequence (tongue leading to trouble), a common Proverbs pairing.

Meaning: This connects internal character to external outcome - a distorted inner life and a dishonest way of speaking don't just harm others, they trap the person themselves in ongoing trouble. Corruption inside doesn't stay contained; it produces real damage in your own life.

Lesson: Tend to what's happening inside you, because it doesn't stay hidden - it shapes your words and eventually your circumstances. I want to help you deal with the roots, not just manage the symptoms.

See Also: Matthew 15:18-19 says out of the heart proceed evil thoughts; Proverbs 6:12-14 links a froward mouth to a froward heart.

17:21 *(KJV) He that begetheth a fool doeth it to his sorrow: and the father of a fool hath no joy.*
(B:E Project) Having a foolish child brings a parent grief, and there's no joy in raising a fool.

Context: Standalone proverb on the parental heartbreak of raising a child who rejects wisdom, echoing 17:25 later in the chapter.

Meaning: This is an honest, unflinching statement about parental pain - it doesn't sugar-coat how deeply a child's foolish or destructive choices can wound a parent, regardless of how much love and effort was invested.

Lesson: If you're a parent grieving your child's choices, I see that pain and it's real - it's named honestly here, not dismissed. Keep loving them without giving up hope, but don't pretend the sorrow isn't genuine.

See Also: Proverbs 17:25 repeats the theme of grief over a foolish son; Proverbs 10:1 says a wise son maketh a glad father.

17:22 *(KJV) A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones.*
(B:E Project) A cheerful heart is as good as medicine, but a crushed spirit saps the strength right out of your body.

Context: Standalone proverb, one of Proverbs' clearest statements linking emotional wellbeing to physical health.

Meaning: This is a strikingly modern-sounding insight - it recognises that emotional state has a direct physical effect on the body, something we'd now call the mind-body connection. Joy is genuinely restorative; despair is genuinely depleting.

Lesson: Don't dismiss your own low moments as unimportant, and don't dismiss someone else's either - a broken spirit really does drain a person, body and all. Chase real joy, and be gentle with people who are struggling; you might be their medicine.

See Also: Proverbs 15:13 says a merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance; Proverbs 18:14 says the spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity.

17:23 *(KJV) A wicked man taketh a gift out of the bosom to pervert the ways of judgment.*
(B:E Project) A corrupt person accepts a hidden bribe to twist justice in someone's favour.

Context: Standalone proverb condemning bribery in judicial or official matters, echoing the warning implicit in 17:8.

Meaning: 'Out of the bosom' suggests a bribe concealed and passed secretly - this is corruption done in the shadows, deliberately hidden because it's known to be wrong. It's a direct condemnation of using money to bend justice.

Lesson: Whatever authority or influence you're given, don't let money or favours quietly bend your judgement - integrity means being just even when no one would ever find out. I care about what you do in secret as much as what you do in public.

See Also: Exodus 23:8 warns that a gift blindeth the wise; Deuteronomy 16:19 says thou shalt not wrest judgment nor take a gift.

17:24 *(KJV) Wisdom is before him that hath understanding; but the eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth.*
(B:E Project) A person with understanding keeps their focus on wisdom right in front of them, while a fool's attention wanders to the ends of the earth.

Context: Standalone proverb contrasting focused attention with a fool's scattered, restless mind.

Meaning: This is about focus versus distraction. Wisdom is available right where you are, in your actual circumstances - but a foolish mind is always chasing something distant, exotic, or elsewhere, missing what's immediately useful and true.

Lesson: Stop looking far away for the answers you actually need close to home - wisdom is usually available right in front of you, in the situation you're already in. I want your attention grounded, not scattered chasing distractions.

See Also: Ecclesiastes 5:1 says keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God; Matthew 6:22 says if thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

17:25 *(KJV) A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him.*
(B:E Project) A foolish son brings grief to his father and bitter sorrow to the mother who bore him.

Context: Standalone proverb, closely paired with 17:21, on the pain a foolish child causes both parents.

Meaning: This deliberately mentions both parents, naming the specific grief of the father and the particular bitterness of the mother - a fuller, more complete picture of the shared parental heartbreak first introduced in verse 21.

Lesson: If you're a young person reading this, know that your choices ripple out to the people who love you most - not to control you with guilt, but because your life is genuinely bound up with theirs. Choose wisdom partly as a gift back to the people who gave you everything.

See Also: Proverbs 17:21 is the companion verse on parental grief; Proverbs 10:1 calls a foolish son the heaviness of his mother.

17:26 *(KJV) Also to punish the just is not good, nor to strike princes for equity.*
(B:E Project) It's wrong to punish someone who's innocent, and it's wrong to strike leaders for simply being fair.

Context: Standalone proverb on justice, closely related to 17:15's condemnation of corrupted judgement.

Meaning: This condemns two related injustices - punishing the innocent, and punishing leaders specifically for their fairness (implying they were targeted precisely because their integrity was inconvenient to someone corrupt). Both are named as simply wrong, 'not good.'

Lesson: Never let someone's honesty or fairness become the reason you turn against them - that's punishing the very quality that should be honoured. Stand up for people who are being penalised for doing the right thing.

See Also: Proverbs 17:15 condemns justifying the wicked and condemning the just; 1 Peter 3:14 says if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye.

17:27 *(KJV) He that hath knowledge spareth his words: and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit.*
(B:E Project) A knowledgeable person doesn't waste words, and someone with real understanding stays calm and even-tempered.

Context: Standalone proverb opening the chapter's closing thoughts (17:27-28) on restraint and the value of measured speech.

Meaning: This links genuine knowledge with restraint, not showiness - someone who truly understands something doesn't need to prove it by talking constantly. It also links wisdom to emotional steadiness, 'an excellent spirit' implying calm and composure.

Lesson: You don't need to fill every silence or win every conversation to prove what you know. I'd rather see you calm and measured than constantly performing your intelligence - real wisdom is quiet confidence, not noise.

See Also: James 1:19 urges being swift to hear, slow to speak; Ecclesiastes 5:2 says let thy words be few.

17:28 *(KJV) Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutheth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding.*
(B:E Project) Even a fool who keeps quiet can be mistaken for wise - someone who holds their tongue is thought to have understanding.

Context: Closing verse of the chapter, capping the theme of measured speech from 17:27 with a wry, almost humorous final observation.

Meaning: This closes the chapter on a slightly wry note - it points out that silence alone can create an impression of wisdom, even in someone who has none. It's a gentle warning not to mistake quietness for actual understanding, while still commending restraint as valuable.

Lesson: Silence is a genuinely powerful tool - use it wisely, not just to seem clever, but because restraint really does serve you and others well. I'd rather you develop real understanding underneath the silence, not just the appearance of it.

See Also: Proverbs 10:19 says in the multitude of words there wanteth not sin; Job 13:5 wishes some would hold their peace and be counted wise.

CHAPTER 18

Chapter Summary: Proverbs 18

Proverbs Chapter 18 offers a collection of sharp observations and moral instructions focused on the power of words, the consequences of foolishness, the value of wisdom, and the dynamics of human relationships. It highlights how speaking carelessly can lead to ruin, while thoughtful communication and the pursuit of knowledge lead to good outcomes. The chapter also touches on the nature of justice, the strength found in God, the dangers of pride, and the profound impact

of friendships and family ties. Ultimately, it emphasises that our choices, particularly in how we speak and relate to others, significantly shape our destiny.

18:1 *(KJV) Through desire a man, having separated himself, seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom.*
(B:E Project) A person who isolates themselves and only follows their own wants ends up clashing with good sense and wisdom itself.

Context: This opens chapter 18, part of the collection of standalone two-line sayings running from chapter 10 onward. It's a general observation about the danger of self-isolation and selfish pursuits.

Meaning: Cutting yourself off from other people cuts you off from correction, different viewpoints and honest feedback - the raw materials wisdom is built from. Someone chasing only their own agenda, alone, tends to end up arguing with good sense rather than growing in it. It's a warning that isolation, chosen rather than forced on you, breeds distorted thinking.

Lesson: I didn't design you to figure life out alone. Growth happens in community - stay close to people who can challenge and correct you in love, because isolation quietly convinces you that your own opinion is the only one that matters.

See Also: Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 (two are better than one); Hebrews 10:24-25 (not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together).

18:2 *(KJV) A fool hath no delight in understanding, but that his heart may discover itself.*
(B:E Project) A fool isn't interested in genuinely understanding anything - they just want to broadcast whatever's already in their own head.

Context: A standalone proverb about the 'fool' archetype that Proverbs returns to repeatedly, contrasted later in the chapter with the wise person who actively seeks knowledge (18:15).

Meaning: This describes someone who treats conversation as performance, not exchange - they talk to be heard, not to learn. It's a recognisable, everyday type: the person in a discussion who's just waiting for their turn to speak.

Lesson: Listen more than you speak. Real wisdom starts with genuine curiosity about what someone else knows, not with the urge to prove what you already think.

See Also: James 1:19 (swift to hear, slow to speak); Proverbs 18:13 (answering before listening).

18:3 *(KJV) When the wicked cometh, then cometh also contempt, and with ignominy reproach.*
(B:E Project) Wherever wrongdoing shows up, contempt and disgrace tend to follow close behind it.

Context: A standalone proverb reflecting the common Proverbs theme that actions carry built-in social consequences.

Meaning: Bad behaviour doesn't just harm others directly - it erodes people's respect for you over time, and shame tends to trail wrongdoing the way a shadow trails a body.

Lesson: Your character shapes how the world treats you. Live with integrity now, so you're not spending your future trying to outrun the consequences of who you were.

See Also: Galatians 6:7 (whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap); Proverbs 11:2 (when pride cometh, then cometh shame).

18:4 *(KJV) The words of a man's mouth are as deep waters, and the wellspring of wisdom as a flowing brook.*
(B:E Project) What a person says can run as deep as the ocean - and true wisdom flows out of someone like a fresh, bubbling stream.

Context: A standalone proverb continuing chapter 18's recurring focus on the nature and power of speech.

Meaning: Words can carry real depth and hidden meaning, sometimes hard to fully fathom - but wise words, unlike stagnant water, keep moving and keep refreshing the people around them.

Lesson: Speak words that give life, that flow out and refresh others rather than sitting stagnant. What you say can either nourish someone or leave them thirstier than before.

See Also: John 4:14 (a well of water springing up into everlasting life); Proverbs 10:11 (the mouth of a righteous man is a well of life).

18:5 *(KJV) It is not good to accept the person of the wicked, to overthrow the righteous in judgment.*
(B:E Project) It's wrong to favour a guilty person in court and use that bias to bring down someone innocent.

Context: A standalone proverb on justice and impartiality, part of Proverbs' recurring concern with fair courts and honest judges.

Meaning: This warns against corrupting justice through favouritism, bribery or status - letting who someone is (rich, powerful, connected) determine the outcome instead of what actually happened.

Lesson: Treat everyone with equal fairness, whatever their status. Don't let power, friendship or fear twist what you know to be right into something bent.

See Also: Leviticus 19:15 (thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty); James 2:1 (have not the faith... with respect of persons).

18:6 *(KJV) A fool's lips enter into contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes.*

(B:E Project) A fool's mouth drags them straight into arguments, and their own words practically beg for a beating.

Context: A standalone proverb continuing the chapter's focus on how foolish speech creates trouble for the speaker.

Meaning: Reckless, provocative talk doesn't stay contained - it invites conflict and real consequences, often ones the speaker never intended.

Lesson: Guard your tongue. Words that stir up conflict have a way of boomeranging back on you, so choose peace over the momentary satisfaction of a sharp comment.

See Also: Proverbs 15:1 (a soft answer turneth away wrath); James 3:5-6 (the tongue is a fire).

18:7 *(KJV) A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul.*
(B:E Project) A fool's own mouth is what wrecks him - his words become the very trap that catches him out.

Context: A standalone proverb closely paired with 18:6, continuing the theme of self-destructive speech.

Meaning: This is about self-sabotage through talk: what a fool says isn't just embarrassing, it actively ruins them, closing doors and creating enemies they didn't need to make.

Lesson: Think before you speak - words released can't be fully taken back, and they can trap you in consequences you didn't see coming.

See Also: Matthew 12:37 (by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned); Proverbs 13:3 (he that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life).

18:8 *(KJV) The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.*
(B:E Project) Gossip lands like a wound that sinks deep inside a person, settling right into the core of who they are.

Context: A standalone proverb on gossip, almost identical to Proverbs 26:22 later in the book - a theme the writer clearly thought worth repeating.

Meaning: Gossip isn't harmless entertainment. Words about someone else, once heard, sink deep and can cause lasting internal damage - both to the person talked about and to the character of the person doing the talking.

Lesson: Don't gossip. Words about others cut deeper and stay longer than you think - speak in ways that build people up, not in ways that leave wounds behind.

See Also: Proverbs 26:22 (near-identical repetition of this proverb); James 3:8 (the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil).

18:9 *(KJV) He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster.*

(B:E Project) Someone who's lazy at their work is basically kin to someone who actively destroys things.

Context: A standalone proverb on laziness, a theme Proverbs returns to constantly across many chapters.

Meaning: Laziness isn't neutral or harmless - neglecting your responsibilities actively wastes resources, time and potential, putting the lazy person in the same family as someone who deliberately wrecks things.

Lesson: Honour the work and responsibilities given to you. Neglect is its own quiet form of harm, so bring real care and effort to whatever is in front of you.

See Also: Proverbs 6:6-11 (go to the ant, thou sluggard); Matthew 25:26 (thou wicked and slothful servant).

18:10 *(KJV) The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.*
(B:E Project) God is like a strong fortress tower - anyone doing what's right can run to him and be safe.

Context: A standalone proverb offering an image of refuge, deliberately set up to contrast with the false security described in the very next verse.

Meaning: This says real security comes from trusting something solid and unshakeable, not from things that can be taken away. The 'name of the LORD' represents God's character - reliable, protective, unlike anything that can crumble under pressure.

Lesson: Come to me when you're afraid. I'm not a reward you earn by being perfect - I'm a shelter you can run to exactly as you are, whenever life gets frightening.

See Also: Psalm 18:2 (the LORD is my rock, and my fortress); Proverbs 18:11 (the contrasting false refuge of wealth).

18:11 *(KJV) The rich man's wealth is his strong city, and as an high wall in his own conceit.*
(B:E Project) A rich person imagines their money is a fortress, a high wall keeping them safe - but that security only exists in their own head.

Context: A standalone proverb placed immediately after 18:10 for deliberate contrast: true refuge in God versus the illusion of refuge in wealth.

Meaning: Money can feel like it makes you untouchable, but that's a trick of perception, not reality - wealth can vanish, and it can't actually protect you from everything life throws at you.

Lesson: Don't build your sense of safety on money - it's an illusion that can collapse overnight. Build it instead on things that can't be stolen, spent or lost.

See Also: Matthew 6:19-21 (lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven); Luke 12:16-21 (the parable of the rich fool).

18:12 *(KJV) Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honour is humility.*
(B:E Project) Pride comes right before a fall, but humility comes right before honour.

Context: A standalone proverb, almost identical to Proverbs 16:18, part of the book's frequent pride-versus-humility antithesis.

Meaning: Arrogance sets a person up for collapse, often because it blinds them to real risks and other people's input - while humility, quietly, is what actually sets someone up to be genuinely respected.

Lesson: The humble are the ones who end up lifted up. Let go of the need to look impressive, and you'll find that real honour follows you rather than something you have to chase.

See Also: Proverbs 16:18 (pride goeth before destruction); Matthew 23:12 (whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased).

18:13 *(KJV) He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.*
(B:E Project) Answering before you've actually heard the whole story is both stupid and embarrassing.

Context: A standalone proverb on listening and speech, closely related to the fool who talks without listening in 18:2.

Meaning: Jumping to conclusions or interrupting before you have the full picture damages your credibility and can badly hurt relationships - it shows you cared more about responding than understanding.

Lesson: Listen fully before you respond. Taking the time to truly hear someone out, rather than rushing to reply, is a genuine act of respect and love.

See Also: James 1:19 (let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak); Proverbs 18:2 (a fool has no delight in understanding).

18:14 *(KJV) The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?*
(B:E Project) A person's inner strength can carry them through sickness or hardship - but if that inner spirit itself is broken, who can bear that?

Context: A standalone proverb reflecting on inner resilience versus emotional or mental collapse, one of the more introspective sayings in the chapter.

Meaning: This distinguishes physical or circumstantial suffering, which a strong will can endure, from a crushed inner spirit - depression, despair, hopelessness - which is far harder to carry, sometimes almost unbearable, alone.

Lesson: I care about your inner wounds just as much as your outward troubles, maybe more. When your spirit feels crushed, come to me - you were never meant to carry that alone.

See Also: Psalm 34:18 (the LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart); Proverbs 17:22 (a merry heart doeth good like a medicine).

18:15 *(KJV) The heart of the prudent getheth knowledge; and the ear of the wise seeketh knowledge.*
(B:E Project) A sensible person's mind gathers knowledge, and a wise person's ears are always listening out for more of it.

Context: A standalone proverb contrasting directly with the closed-minded fool of 18:2 - here the prudent and wise actively pursue understanding.

Meaning: Wisdom is depicted as an active pursuit, not something you passively receive - it's a lifelong habit of paying attention and seeking out new understanding.

Lesson: Stay curious and humble enough to keep learning your whole life. Wisdom isn't a destination you arrive at once - it's a daily practice of listening.

See Also: Proverbs 1:5 (a wise man will hear, and will increase learning); Proverbs 18:2 (the fool's lack of interest in understanding).

18:16 *(KJV) A man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men.*
(B:E Project) A well-placed gift can open doors for someone, even getting them access to powerful people.

Context: A standalone, observational proverb describing how social and political influence often actually works.

Meaning: This is descriptive rather than purely approving - it notices how generosity, favours or valuable skills can open doors and create access, for good or for manipulation, depending on the giver's motive.

Lesson: Use whatever you've been given - your skills, your generosity - to build genuine connection with people, not to manipulate your way into their favour.

See Also: Proverbs 17:8 (a gift is as a precious stone); Genesis 32:20 (Jacob's gift sent ahead to appease Esau).

18:17 *(KJV) He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him.*
(B:E Project) Whoever tells their side of the story first sounds completely convincing - until the other person shows up and the full story gets checked out.

Context: A standalone proverb on fairness in disputes, useful wisdom for judges but equally for anyone forming opinions from one-sided accounts.

Meaning: This warns against forming a final judgment after hearing from only one side - the first account always sounds reasonable in isolation, and the truth only fully emerges once it's tested.

Lesson: Don't judge based on the first version you hear. Seeking out the full picture before deciding is both fairness and love in action.

See Also: Proverbs 18:13 (answering before hearing); John 7:24 (judge righteous judgment).

18:18 *(KJV) The lot causeth contentions to cease, and parteth between the mighty.*
(B:E Project) Drawing lots - like flipping a coin - can settle an argument and even separate two powerful rivals who refuse to back down.

Context: A standalone proverb reflecting the ancient practice of casting lots to make decisions, tied to the chapter's broader interest in resolving conflict.

Meaning: Sometimes a neutral, impartial method of deciding ends a dispute far better than continued arguing, especially between two equally stubborn or powerful sides who won't yield to each other.

Lesson: Be willing to let go of needing to 'win' every dispute. Sometimes accepting a fair, neutral outcome is more loving than fighting on just to prove a point.

See Also: Proverbs 16:33 (the lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD); Acts 1:26 (lots cast to choose Matthias).

18:19 *(KJV) A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle.*
(B:E Project) A close friend or family member you've offended is harder to win back than a fortified city - the wall between you can feel as solid as castle bars.

Context: A standalone proverb on relational damage, showing how seriously Proverbs treats hurt within close bonds.

Meaning: This acknowledges how deeply broken trust between people who are close can run - often harder to repair than a rift with a stranger, because more history and expectation is at stake.

Lesson: Be careful with the people closest to you. And if a rift has already formed, be the one who goes first to make peace, before it hardens into something even harder to break through.

See Also: Matthew 5:23-24 (leave thy gift... first be reconciled to thy brother); Proverbs 17:9 (he that covereth a transgression seeketh love).

18:20 *(KJV) A man's belly shall be satisfied with the fruit of his mouth; and with the increase of his lips shall he be filled.*
(B:E Project) A person ends up 'fed' by their own words - what comes out of your mouth is what comes back to fill you, for better or worse.

Context: A standalone proverb continuing the chapter's speech theme, leading directly into the more famous verse that follows it.

Meaning: This uses eating as a metaphor for consequence - the words you speak return to you, becoming part of your own life's outcome, whether that's satisfaction or regret.

Lesson: What you speak into the world becomes part of your own life too. Speak blessing, encouragement and truth, and you'll find yourself nourished by it in return.

See Also: Proverbs 12:14 (a man shall be satisfied with good by the fruit of his mouth); Proverbs 18:21 (death and life in the power of the tongue).

18:21 *(KJV) Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.*
(B:E Project) Words have the power of life and death in them - and whoever loves using that power will live with the results of it.

Context: A standalone proverb that acts as a summary statement for the chapter's whole running theme on the tongue's power (see 18:4, 6, 7, 8, 13, 20).

Meaning: One of Proverbs' most quoted verses - speech genuinely has the power to build people up or tear them down, and whoever gets in the habit of using words carelessly or cruelly will end up living out the fallout of that habit.

Lesson: I know how words can heal or wound just as deeply as any action. Choose to speak life over people rather than death - a kind word can save someone's day, and a cruel one can break it.

See Also: James 3:6-10 (the tongue... is full of deadly poison); Proverbs 15:4 (a wholesome tongue is a tree of life).

18:22 *(KJV) Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD.*
(B:E Project) Whoever finds a wife has found something good, and has found favour from God.

Context: A standalone proverb praising marriage, part of Proverbs' broader appreciation for a good spouse (see also 19:14 and the closing poem of chapter 31).

Meaning: Marriage or a committed life partnership is presented here as a genuine blessing worth actively valuing and being grateful for, not something to take for granted once you have it.

Lesson: Cherish the people who commit their life to you. A loving partnership is a gift - treat it with the gratitude and care that a gift deserves.

See Also: Proverbs 19:14 (a prudent wife is from the LORD); Genesis 2:18 (it is not good that the man should be alone).

18:23 *(KJV) The poor useth intreaties; but the rich answereth roughly.*

(B:E Project) A poor person has to beg and plead, while a rich person can afford to answer harshly and get away with it.

Context: A standalone, socially observant proverb on how wealth and poverty shape the tone people are able to use with each other.

Meaning: This highlights a real power imbalance and how it affects dignity - the poor must speak carefully and humbly to be heard, while wealth can afford bluntness without consequence, an implicit critique of how riches can breed arrogance.

Lesson: Notice how you speak to people with less power than you. Treat the vulnerable with the same gentleness and patience you'd want shown to yourself.

See Also: Proverbs 14:31 (he that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker); James 2:1-6 (warning against favouring the rich).

18:24 *(KJV) A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.*

(B:E Project) If you want friends, you have to be a friend yourself - and some friends end up closer to you than your own family.

Context: The closing verse of chapter 18, a standalone proverb on friendship that fittingly wraps up the chapter's recurring focus on relationships.

Meaning: Friendship requires effort and reciprocity - it doesn't just happen to you, you have to actively show up as a friend. And genuine friendship, this verse says, can run even deeper than blood ties.

Lesson: I call you friend, not just a follower. Be the kind of friend who stays close and shows up consistently - that's what real love looks like in practice.

See Also: John 15:13-15 (greater love hath no man than this... I have called you friends); Ruth 1:16 (Ruth's loyalty to Naomi).

CHAPTER 19

Chapter Summary: Proverbs 19

Proverbs Chapter 19 offers a collection of wisdom statements that sharply contrast the paths of wisdom and foolishness. It highlights the importance of integrity, showing that an honest poor person is better than a dishonest rich one. The chapter warns against the dangers of laziness, rushing into decisions, and the self-inflicted misery caused by foolish choices, which often leads to blaming God. It also addresses the fickle nature of friendships based on wealth, the importance of justice, the need for self-control, and the benefits of seeking wisdom and good counsel. Family relationships are also a focus, with warnings about foolish children and quarrelsome spouses, alongside the blessing of a prudent wife. Ultimately, the chapter encourages a life lived with reverence for the Lord, emphasising that His plans will always prevail and that showing kindness to the poor is a service to God Himself.

19:1 *(KJV) Better is the poor that walketh in his integrity, than he that is perverse in his lips, and is a fool.*

(B:E Project) It's better to be poor and honest than to be a lying fool with a twisted tongue.

Context: Opens chapter 19, a standalone 'better than' proverb - a common Proverbs structure that weighs two options against each other, here contrasting integrity with dishonesty regardless of wealth.

Meaning: This sets the tone for the whole chapter: character matters more than material circumstance, and poverty with honesty beats wealth built on lies.

Lesson: Your integrity is worth more than any bank balance. Hold onto honesty even when hardship tempts you to cut corners - it's the one thing poverty can't take from you.

See Also: Proverbs 28:6 (better is the poor that walketh in his uprightness); Proverbs 19:22 (a poor man is better than a liar).

19:2 *(KJV) Also, that the soul be without knowledge, it is not good; and he that hasteth with his feet sinneth.*

(B:E Project) It's not good to be eager without understanding - and rushing ahead without thinking leads you straight into trouble.

Context: A standalone proverb warning against impulsiveness combined with ignorance, a common pairing of concerns in Proverbs.

Meaning: Enthusiasm on its own isn't enough - without knowledge to guide it, eagerness becomes recklessness, and moving fast without thinking leads to avoidable mistakes.

Lesson: Slow down and understand before you act. Good intentions without wisdom can still cause real harm, so pair your enthusiasm with patience.

See Also: Proverbs 21:5 (the thoughts of the diligent tend only to plenteousness; but of every one that is hasty only to want); Romans 10:2 (a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge).

19:3 *(KJV) The foolishness of man perverteth his way: and his heart fretheth against the LORD.*

(B:E Project) A person's own foolish choices wreck their life - and then they get angry at God about it.

Context: A standalone proverb addressing self-inflicted trouble and the very human tendency to misplace blame, echoing the chapter's summary theme.

Meaning: This calls out a familiar pattern - people make choices that damage their own lives, then look for someone else, even God, to blame for the resulting mess.

Lesson: Take responsibility for your own choices before you point fingers elsewhere. Real growth starts with honest ownership of what's actually yours.

See Also: James 1:13-14 (every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust); Genesis 3:12 (Adam blaming Eve, and indirectly God).

19:4 *(KJV) Wealth maketh many friends; but the poor is separated from his neighbour.*
(B:E Project) Money attracts a crowd of friends, but poverty leaves a person isolated, even from their own neighbours.

Context: A standalone social observation on the fickle, transactional nature of much friendship - a theme picked up again in verses 6 and 7 of this same chapter.

Meaning: This exposes how shallow a lot of friendship really is, built on what someone can offer rather than who they genuinely are.

Lesson: Don't measure your worth by how many people gather around your money or success. Seek out friends who'd stay with you even if you had nothing to give them.

See Also: Proverbs 19:6-7 (the same theme continued); Proverbs 14:20 (the poor is hated even of his own neighbour).

19:5 *(KJV) A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall not escape.*
(B:E Project) Someone who lies under oath won't go unpunished, and a liar won't get away with it.

Context: A standalone proverb on justice and truthfulness, almost word-for-word repeated later in the chapter at 19:9 - a deliberate emphasis.

Meaning: This states plainly that truth-telling has real, built-in consequences woven into how life and justice work - lying may seem to succeed for a while, but it tends to catch up eventually.

Lesson: Tell the truth, even when it costs you something. Lies might work in the short term, but they always unravel eventually.

See Also: Proverbs 19:9 (near-identical repetition); Exodus 20:16 (thou shalt not bear false witness).

19:6 *(KJV) Many will intreat the favour of the prince: and every man is a friend to him that giveth gifts.*
(B:E Project) Lots of people will try to win favour with someone powerful, and everyone wants to be friends with a generous giver.

Context: A standalone proverb continuing the chapter's theme of wealth and power attracting self-interested friendship, connected to 19:4.

Meaning: This exposes the self-interested motives behind a lot of social behaviour around power and generosity - people flock towards influence and gifts, not always towards genuine connection.

Lesson: Give without expecting flattery in return, and be wary of those who only show up when you're useful to them - true friendship isn't transactional.

See Also: Proverbs 19:4 (wealth attracts many friends); Luke 14:12-14 (invite those who cannot repay you).

19:7 *(KJV) All the brethren of the poor do hate him: how much more do his friends go far from him? he pursueth them with words, yet they are wanting to him.*

(B:E Project) Even a poor person's own family can turn away from them - so of course their friends do too. They chase after people with pleading words, but no one's there for them.

Context: A standalone proverb that deepens the theme from verses 4 and 6, showing how poverty can isolate a person even within their own family.

Meaning: This paints a bleak but honest picture of how deeply poverty can isolate someone from support, even from people who should stand by them - a call for the reader to notice and resist this instinct in themselves.

Lesson: I stayed close to the poor and the outcast when everyone else walked away. Be someone who doesn't abandon people just because they have nothing left to offer you.

See Also: Proverbs 14:20 (the poor is hated even of his own neighbour); Luke 16:20-21 (Lazarus at the rich man's gate).

19:8 *(KJV) He that getheth wisdom loveth his own soul: he that keepeth understanding shall find good.*

(B:E Project) Gaining wisdom is a way of loving yourself well, and holding onto understanding leads you to good things.

Context: A standalone proverb offering a positive counterpart to verse 2's warning, framing wisdom-seeking as beneficial rather than optional.

Meaning: This reframes the pursuit of wisdom as an act of genuine self-care, not a dry duty or abstract virtue - it's something you do because it's good for you.

Lesson: Taking care of your mind and growing in understanding is a way of loving yourself the way I love you. Don't neglect that part of your life.

See Also: Proverbs 8:35-36 (whoso findeth me findeth life); Proverbs 3:13-18 (the blessings of finding wisdom).

19:9 *(KJV) A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall perish.*
(B:E Project) A lying witness won't go unpunished, and a liar will ultimately be ruined by it.

Context: A standalone proverb, a deliberate near-repeat of 19:5 with an intensified ending, moving from 'shall not escape' to 'shall perish'.

Meaning: Repetition in Proverbs is used for emphasis - this doubling of the same warning within a few verses underlines just how seriously lying is treated as a moral failure.

Lesson: I am the truth. When you commit to honesty even under pressure, you're walking in step with what's real and lasting, rather than something that eventually collapses.

See Also: Proverbs 19:5 (the earlier near-identical warning); John 8:44 (the devil... is a liar, and the father of it).

19:10 *(KJV) Delight is not seemly for a fool; much less for a servant to have rule over princes.*
(B:E Project) It doesn't sit right for a fool to live in luxury - and it's even more out of place for a servant to end up ruling over princes.

Context: A standalone 'not fitting' proverb, observing what feels out of place in the natural order of things.

Meaning: This points to a general wisdom that position and reward should fit character and readiness, not just circumstance or luck - a principle that today reads more about competence and preparation for responsibility than about birth-status.

Lesson: I lift up the humble, but I care that whoever leads does so with wisdom and humility, not just ambition or a lucky break. Growth into responsibility matters.

See Also: Ecclesiastes 10:6-7 (folly is set in great dignity); Proverbs 30:21-22 (things the earth cannot bear).

19:11 *(KJV) The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression.*
(B:E Project) A sensible person holds back their anger, and it's actually a mark of honour to let an offence go.

Context: A standalone proverb on self-control and forgiveness, a key thread running through Proverbs' teaching on managing anger.

Meaning: This frames patience and forgiveness as strength rather than weakness - choosing not to react is portrayed as glorious, not passive.

Lesson: Forgiving someone who's wronged you isn't weakness, it's one of the strongest, most freeing things you can do. Let it go, and you'll find yourself lighter for it.

See Also: Proverbs 16:32 (he that is slow to anger is better than the mighty); Matthew 18:21-22 (forgive... seventy times seven).

19:12 *(KJV) The king's wrath is as the roaring of a lion; but his favour is as dew upon the grass.*
(B:E Project) An angry ruler is as terrifying as a roaring lion, but a ruler's approval is as refreshing as morning dew on the grass.

Context: A standalone proverb, part of a small cluster of sayings about kings and authority found across chapters 19-20 (see also 19:6, 20:2).

Meaning: This illustrates the volatility of power - the same person in authority can be destructive when angry and life-giving when pleased, so the contrast is a warning to be wise around power, not just fear or flatter it.

Lesson: Use whatever authority or influence you have to refresh people, not to intimidate them. Be dew, not a lion's roar.

See Also: Proverbs 20:2 (the fear of a king is as the roaring of a lion); Proverbs 16:14-15 (the king's wrath and favour).

19:13 *(KJV) A foolish son is the calamity of his father: and the contentions of a wife are a continual dropping.*
(B:E Project) A foolish child is a disaster for their father, and a constantly quarrelling spouse is like an endless, wearing drip of water.

Context: A standalone family-life proverb, part of a small cluster on household relationships running through verses 13, 14 and 18 of this chapter.

Meaning: This is an honest, sometimes uncomfortable acknowledgment that troubled family relationships are a genuine, wearing source of pain - not a minor inconvenience but something that grinds a person down over time.

Lesson: Be mindful of the daily toll your words and choices have on the people who live closest to you. Small repeated harshness wears people down more than one big blow ever could.

See Also: Proverbs 27:15 (a continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike); Proverbs 17:25 (a foolish son is a grief to his father).

19:14 *(KJV) House and riches are the inheritance of fathers: and a prudent wife is from the LORD.*
(B:E Project) A house and money can be inherited from your parents, but a wise, sensible life partner is a gift straight from God.

Context: A standalone proverb contrasting material inheritance with a deeper kind of blessing, echoing the earlier praise of a good spouse in 18:22.

Meaning: This distinguishes what humans can hand down - property, wealth - from something that feels far more providential and rare: a genuinely wise and good life partner.

Lesson: Be grateful for the people in your life who help you become wiser and better. That kind of gift is rarer and more precious than any inheritance money could buy.

See Also: Proverbs 18:22 (whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing); Proverbs 31:10 (a virtuous woman... her price is far above rubies).

19:15 *(KJV) Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep; and an idle soul shall suffer hunger.*
(B:E Project) Laziness drags a person into a deep, heavy sleep, and an idle life ends in hunger.

Context: A standalone proverb on the consequences of laziness, a theme recurring throughout the book of Proverbs.
Meaning: This states plainly that laziness has real physical consequences - poverty and hunger aren't abstract threats but the direct, natural result of persistent idleness.
Lesson: Don't let comfort lull you into inaction. There's dignity and provision in effort - wake up and engage fully with your life.
See Also: Proverbs 6:9-11 (how long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard?); 2 Thessalonians 3:10 (if any would not work, neither should he eat).

19:16 *(KJV) He that keepeth the commandment keepeth his own soul; but he that despiseth his ways shall die.*
(B:E Project) Whoever follows good guidance protects their own life, but whoever is careless about how they live is heading for ruin.

Context: A standalone proverb on the life-preserving power of heeding wise instruction, a general statement rather than tied to one specific command.
Meaning: This says that following sound principles isn't restrictive but protective - taking wisdom's guidance seriously safeguards your future, while carelessness invites disaster.
Lesson: The guidance I give isn't there to control you, it's there to protect you. Take it seriously - it exists for your good, not to limit your freedom.
See Also: Proverbs 13:13 (whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed); Deuteronomy 30:19-20 (choose life).

19:17 *(KJV) He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.*
(B:E Project) Being kind to the poor is like lending money to God himself - and he will pay you back for it.

Context: A standalone proverb, one of Proverbs' clearest statements on generosity to the poor, connecting to the chapter's closing focus on kindness towards those in need.
Meaning: This reframes charity as an investment rather than a loss - kindness to someone in need is treated as something with real, lasting backing behind it, not wasted generosity.
Lesson: Whatever you do for the least of these, you do for me. Give generously to those in need - it never goes unnoticed, and it never goes unrewarded.
See Also: Matthew 25:40 (inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren); Proverbs 14:31 (he that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor).

19:18 *(KJV) Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.*
(B:E Project) Discipline your child while there's still time to shape them - don't let their crying stop you from correcting them.

Context: A standalone proverb, part of Proverbs' broader teaching on parental discipline (see also 13:24, 22:15, 23:13-14).
Meaning: This advocates timely, caring correction of children rather than permissiveness - it's about formative guidance while there's still opportunity to shape character, best understood alongside the book's wider emphasis on love-driven, not harsh, discipline.
Lesson: Loving someone sometimes means having the courage to correct them, even when it's hard to hear their upset. Real love isn't afraid of the discomfort that honest guidance can bring.
See Also: Proverbs 13:24 (he that spareth his rod hateth his son); Hebrews 12:6-11 (whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth).

19:19 *(KJV) A man of great wrath shall suffer punishment: for if thou deliver him, yet thou must do it again.*
(B:E Project) A person with a fierce temper will keep paying the price for it - even if you bail them out once, you'll only have to do it again.

Context: A standalone proverb on the destructive, repeating cycle caused by uncontrolled anger.
Meaning: This warns that rescuing someone from the consequences of their own anger, without them actually changing, just perpetuates the cycle - it's an early, practical observation about what we'd now call enabling behaviour.
Lesson: I want you free from anger's cycle, not just rescued from its latest mess. Real help means encouraging real change, not just cleaning up after the same mistake again and again.
See Also: Proverbs 22:24-25 (make no friendship with an angry man); Proverbs 29:22 (an angry man stirreth up strife).

19:20 *(KJV) Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end.*
(B:E Project) Listen to advice and accept correction now, so that later in life you'll be wise.

Context: A standalone proverb offering general exhortation to seek wisdom, echoing the instructional 'my son, listen' tone found more fully in chapters 1-9.
Meaning: This treats wisdom-seeking as an investment for your future self - what you're willing to accept and learn now shapes who you'll become later.

- Lesson:** Stay teachable throughout your whole life. The wisdom you accept today is what carries you well into tomorrow.

See Also: Proverbs 1:5 (a wise man will hear, and will increase learning); Proverbs 9:9 (teach a just man, and he will increase in learning).
- 19:21** *(KJV) There are many devices in a man’s heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.*
(B:E Project) People make all kinds of plans in their hearts, but it's what God has purposed that will actually stand.

Context: A standalone, well-known proverb on the tension between human planning and a larger purpose beyond our control - a note of humility amid the chapter's otherwise practical advice.

Meaning: For a reader today, this can be understood as an invitation to hold your plans with an open hand - do your best, but accept that outcomes aren't entirely in your control, which is freeing rather than fatalistic.

Lesson: Plan wisely, but don't grip your plans so tightly that you can't trust a bigger story is unfolding. Peace comes from holding your future with open hands, not clenched fists.

See Also: Proverbs 16:9 (a man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps); James 4:13-15 (if the Lord will, we shall live).
- 19:22** *(KJV) The desire of a man is his kindness: and a poor man is better than a liar.*
(B:E Project) What people really want from you is your kindness - and it's better to be a poor honest person than a liar.

Context: A standalone proverb that circles back to the chapter's opening theme in 19:1 - integrity is worth more than status or wealth.

Meaning: This says kindness is what actually makes someone valuable and desirable to be around, more than wealth ever could, and honesty matters more than material success.

Lesson: Be known for your kindness rather than your possessions. That's what actually draws people to you, and it honours who I made you to be.

See Also: Proverbs 19:1 (better is the poor that walketh in his integrity); Micah 6:8 (do justly, and love mercy).
- 19:23** *(KJV) The fear of the LORD tendeth to life: and he that hath it shall abide satisfied; he shall not be visited with evil.*
(B:E Project) A deep respect for God leads to a fuller life - whoever has it lives content and untouched by real harm.

- Context:** A standalone summary-style statement on 'the fear of the LORD,' one of the major recurring themes across Proverbs (see also 1:7, 9:10).

Meaning: For a modern reader, 'fear of the Lord' can be understood as a grounded reverence and awe that orients your whole life rightly, producing genuine contentment rather than anxious striving after more.

Lesson: When your life is anchored in something greater than yourself, you find a peace that circumstances can't easily shake. That's the contentment I want for you.

See Also: Proverbs 1:7 (the fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge); Psalm 34:9-10 (they that seek the LORD shall not want).
- 19:24** *(KJV) A slothful man hideth his hand in his bosom, and will not so much as bring it to his mouth again.*
(B:E Project) A lazy person is so lazy that they'll dip their hand into the dish but can't even be bothered to lift it back up to their mouth.

Context: A standalone proverb using comic hyperbole on extreme laziness, almost identical to Proverbs 26:15 later in the book.

Meaning: This uses exaggeration and humour to make a serious point about how paralysing laziness can become - not just avoiding work, but avoiding even the most basic self-care.

Lesson: Don't let comfort or fear talk you out of even the smallest necessary effort. Small, consistent actions are how a life actually gets built.

See Also: Proverbs 26:15 (near-identical repetition); Proverbs 26:13-16 (the wider sluggard cluster).
- 19:25** *(KJV) Smite a scorner, and the simple will beware: and reprove one that hath understanding, and he will understand knowledge.*
(B:E Project) Punish a mocker, and even a naive onlooker learns to be careful; correct someone who already has understanding, and they'll grow even wiser from it.

Context: A standalone proverb on how different types of people respond differently to correction and consequences.

Meaning: This teaches discernment in how to correct people - some people only learn from visible consequences, others learn from direct, reasoned feedback, and wisdom means knowing which approach actually helps.

Lesson: Meet people where they are. Some need firm consequences to wake up, others just need honest, respectful correction - know the difference, and offer each person what actually helps them grow.
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- See Also:

Proverbs 9:8-9 (reprove a wise man, and he will love thee); Proverbs 21:11 (when the scorner is punished, the simple is made wise).
- 19:26

(KJV)

He that wasteth his father, and chaseth away his mother, is a son that causeth shame, and bringeth reproach.

(B:E Project)

A child who takes advantage of their father and drives away their mother brings shame and disgrace on themselves.

Context:

A standalone proverb on family duty, part of the chapter's honour-your-parents thread continuing into 19:26 and 20:20.

Meaning:

This highlights how mistreating parents, financially or emotionally, was treated as a serious moral failure in Proverbs, not a minor family squabble to shrug off.

Lesson:

Honour those who raised you, even imperfectly. Caring for your parents as they age is one of the clearest ways to live out love in everyday action.

See Also:

Exodus 20:12 (honour thy father and thy mother); Proverbs 20:20 (whoso curseth his father or his mother).
- 19:27

(KJV)

Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge.

(B:E Project)

My child, stop listening to advice that will only lead you away from real knowledge.

Context:

A standalone proverb using a direct 'my son' address, echoing the instructional tone more common in chapters 1-9, here warning against harmful teaching or influence.

Meaning:

This encourages discernment about whose voices and advice you let shape your thinking - not all instruction is good instruction, and some teaching actively leads you astray.

Lesson:

Be careful whose voice you let form you. Surround yourself with people and teaching that lead you towards truth and love, not away from it.

See Also:

Proverbs 1:8-10 (my son, hear the instruction of thy father); 1 Corinthians 15:33 (evil communications corrupt good manners).
- 19:28

(KJV)

An ungodly witness scorneth judgment: and the mouth of the wicked devoureth iniquity.

(B:E Project)

A corrupt witness has no respect for justice, and wicked people feed on wrongdoing like it's food.

Context:

A standalone proverb on corrupt testimony, echoing the chapter's earlier warnings about false witnesses in 19:5 and 19:9.

- Meaning:

This depicts how deeply wrongdoing can become ingrained in someone - not just committed occasionally under pressure, but actively craved and 'devoured,' like a habit that's taken hold.
- Lesson:

Don't let dishonesty become something you're comfortable with. Guard your integrity in small things like testimony and truth-telling, because it shapes what you become over time.
- See Also:

Proverbs 19:5 (a false witness shall not be unpunished); Psalm 52:3-4 (thou lovest evil more than good).
- 19:29

(KJV)

Judgments are prepared for scorners, and stripes for the back of fools.

(B:E Project)

Punishment is already lined up for mockers, and beatings for fools.

Context:

The closing verse of chapter 19, a standalone summary-type statement on the consequences that follow arrogance and foolishness.

Meaning:

This closes the chapter with a reminder that scorn and folly carry built-in costs - not random or arbitrary, but a natural consequence of the path chosen.

Lesson:

I'd rather you turn from mockery and foolishness before the consequences catch up with you. It's never too late to choose humility instead.

See Also:

Proverbs 3:34 (surely he scorneth the scorners); Galatians 6:7 (whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap).
- CHAPTER 20
- Chapter Summary: Proverbs 20
- Proverbs Chapter 20 delivers a collection of distinct wise sayings, offering guidance on various aspects of life. It warns against the deceptive nature of alcohol and the dangers of provoking authority, while also emphasising the honour found in avoiding conflict and the consequences of laziness. The chapter highlights the value of honest communication, integrity in business dealings, and the blessings that follow a righteous life. It speaks to the mystery of human intentions, the certainty of divine oversight, and the importance of seeking wise counsel. Furthermore, it cautions against gossip, disrespect for parents, illgotten gains, and seeking personal revenge. The chapter concludes by affirming God's role in guiding human steps, the sanctity of vows, the qualities of effective leadership, and the unique strengths of different life stages.
- 20:1

(KJV)

Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.

(B:E Project)

Wine mocks you and strong drink makes you reckless - anyone who's fooled by it isn't being wise.

Context:

Opens chapter 20, a standalone proverb warning about alcohol, a caution Proverbs returns to elsewhere (see 23:29-35, 31:4-5).
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- Meaning:** This warns of alcohol's power to distort judgement and lead people into foolish, sometimes dangerous, behaviour - being 'deceived' by it means letting it override your good sense.

Lesson: Be alert and clear-headed in how you live. Don't hand control of your mind over to anything that clouds your judgement, even something that feels harmless in the moment.

See Also: Proverbs 23:29-35 (an extended warning on the dangers of wine); Ephesians 5:18 (be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess).
- 20:2** *(KJV) The fear of a king is as the roaring of a lion: whoso provoketh him to anger sinneth against his own soul.*
(B:E Project) An angry ruler is as terrifying as a roaring lion - provoke that anger, and you're only hurting yourself.

Context: A standalone proverb echoing 19:12, part of a small cluster of sayings across chapters 19-20 about power and authority.

Meaning: This is practical warning about the real risks of needlessly antagonising those in power - the harm of provoking anger tends to land squarely on the provoker.

Lesson: Choose your battles wisely. Needless provocation rarely serves you - save your courage for what truly matters.

See Also: Proverbs 19:12 (the king's wrath is as the roaring of a lion); Proverbs 16:14 (the wrath of a king is as messengers of death).
- 20:3** *(KJV) It is an honour for a man to cease from strife: but every fool will be meddling.*
(B:E Project) It's honourable to walk away from a fight, but any fool will jump right into one.

Context: A standalone proverb on conflict-avoidance as wisdom, echoing similar themes in 17:14 and 18:6.

Meaning: This reframes stepping back from conflict as strength and dignity rather than weakness or avoidance - choosing not to engage is presented as an achievement, not a failure.

Lesson: Blessed are the peacemakers. There's real honour in choosing not to engage every quarrel that comes your way, even when part of you wants to.

See Also: Matthew 5:9 (blessed are the peacemakers); Proverbs 17:14 (leave off contention, before it be meddled with).
- 20:4** *(KJV) The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing.*

- (B:E Project)** The lazy person won't plough because it's too cold, so at harvest time they end up begging with nothing to show for it.

Context: A standalone proverb on laziness, using a vivid agricultural image typical of Proverbs' rural setting.

Meaning: This shows how avoiding short-term discomfort for the sake of ease leads to long-term lack - a classic 'pay now or pay more later' lesson using a farmer who won't brave the cold.

Lesson: Don't let small discomforts talk you out of doing what needs doing now. The effort you avoid today often becomes the lack you face tomorrow.

See Also: Proverbs 6:6-8 (the ant... provideth her meat in the summer); Proverbs 10:5 (he that gathereth in summer is a wise son).
- 20:5** *(KJV) Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out.*
(B:E Project) What's really going on inside someone's heart runs deep, like a well - but a person with real insight knows how to draw it out.

Context: A standalone proverb reflecting on human insight and the skill of understanding what other people are really thinking or feeling.

Meaning: This values the skill of perceptive listening and thoughtful questioning - understanding others takes patience and skill, not assumption or a surface glance.

Lesson: Take the time to really see people, to draw out what's underneath the surface. Most people are carrying more than they show, and that kind of attention is a form of love.

See Also: Proverbs 18:4 (the words of a man's mouth are as deep waters); 1 Corinthians 2:11 (what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man).
- 20:6** *(KJV) Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?*
(B:E Project) Plenty of people will tell you how good and loyal they are - but someone who's actually faithful and reliable? That's rare to find.

Context: A standalone, somewhat cynical but realistic proverb on authenticity versus self-promotion.

Meaning: This warns against taking self-praise at face value - genuine faithfulness is proven over time through consistent action, not claimed through confident words.

Lesson: Don't just talk about your loyalty and goodness - live it out consistently. I'm looking for faithfulness in the small, unseen moments, not just the words people say about themselves.

See Also: Matthew 7:16 (ye shall know them by their fruits); Proverbs 27:2 (let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth).

20:7 *(KJV) The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him.*
(B:E Project) A person who lives with honesty and integrity leaves a blessing that carries on to their children after them.

Context: A standalone proverb on the legacy of integrity, connecting family life with the theme of personal character.

Meaning: This says your character doesn't just affect you - it shapes the environment and legacy you leave for the next generation, whether they consciously realise it or not.

Lesson: Live with integrity today, because the people who come after you - your children, your community - will carry the effects of how you chose to live.

See Also: Psalm 112:1-2 (his seed shall be mighty upon earth); Exodus 20:6 (shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me).

20:8 *(KJV) A king that sitheth in the throne of judgment scaftereth away all evil with his eyes.*
(B:E Project) A ruler who sits to judge fairly can spot wrongdoing and sweep it away just by paying close attention.

Context: A standalone proverb, part of a small 'king' cluster within the chapter (see also 20:26), on wise, discerning leadership.

Meaning: This highlights the power of attentive, discerning leadership to root out corruption - relevant to anyone in a position of responsibility, not only literal kings.

Lesson: Lead with clear eyes and discernment wherever you have influence, whether over a country or just your own household. Paying close attention is itself a form of justice.

See Also: Proverbs 20:26 (a wise king scattereth the wicked); Proverbs 25:5 (take away the wicked from before the king).

20:9 *(KJV) Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?*
(B:E Project) Who can honestly say, 'I've made my heart completely clean, I'm free of any wrongdoing'? No one really can.

Context: A standalone, rare moment of humble self-reflection amid the chapter's otherwise practical sayings, acknowledging universal human imperfection.

Meaning: This is a sobering, honest admission that nobody is flawless - an important check against self-righteousness or judging other people's failings too harshly.

Lesson: None of us gets to claim we're without fault, so let that make you gentle with others' failings the way I'm gentle with yours. Humility about your own flaws is where grace begins.

See Also: Romans 3:23 (all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God); 1 John 1:8 (if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves).

20:10 *(KJV) Divers weights, and divers measures, both of them are alike abomination to the LORD.*
(B:E Project) Rigged scales and dishonest measurements - both are equally detestable to God.

Context: A standalone proverb on business ethics and honesty, repeated almost identically at 20:23 later in the same chapter for emphasis.

Meaning: This applies moral integrity directly to everyday commerce - cheating customers through rigged measurements is treated with the same seriousness as any other wrongdoing.

Lesson: Be honest in the small transactions of daily life, not just the big moral questions. Integrity in the little things is where real character is actually tested.

See Also: Proverbs 20:23 (near-identical repetition); Leviticus 19:35-36 (ye shall do no unrighteousness in... measure).

20:11 *(KJV) Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right.*
(B:E Project) Even a child shows who they really are through what they do - whether their actions are honest and right.

Context: A standalone proverb on character revealed through action, relevant to how early such traits become visible in a person's life.

Meaning: This says character isn't hidden - it's visible in behaviour even from a young age, encouraging attentiveness to what actions reveal about the heart, rather than just judging by words.

Lesson: Your actions reveal who you really are far more than your words do, at any age. Let your life, not just your claims, show your character.

See Also: Matthew 7:16-20 (ye shall know them by their fruits); Proverbs 22:6 (train up a child in the way he should go).

20:12 *(KJV) The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the LORD hath made even both of them.*
(B:E Project) The ear that hears and the eye that sees - both were made by God.

Context: A standalone, reflective proverb praising the design and purpose behind basic human senses.

Meaning: This is an invitation to use your senses purposefully - really listening, really seeing - rather than taking perception for granted, and a small note of gratitude for how the body itself is designed.

- Lesson: Use your eyes and ears fully - really notice people and the world around you. Perception is a gift, don't waste it on distraction.

See Also: Psalm 94:9 (he that planted the ear, shall he not hear?); Proverbs 20:8 (a discerning king scattereth evil with his eyes).
- 20:13 (KJV) Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty; open thine eyes, and thou shalt be satisfied with bread.

(B:E Project) Don't love sleep too much, or you'll end up poor - stay alert and active, and you'll have enough to eat.

Context: A standalone proverb continuing the laziness theme first raised in 20:4, offering direct practical advice.

Meaning: This connects diligence and wakefulness with provision - encouraging proactive effort over passivity as the path to having enough.

Lesson: Wake up to your life, stay engaged and present. The effort you put in now is what provides for you later.

See Also: Proverbs 6:9-11 (yet a little sleep, a little slumber); Proverbs 19:15 (slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep).
- 20:14 (KJV) It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer: but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth.

(B:E Project) 'It's worthless, it's worthless,' says the buyer, haggling down the price - but the moment they walk away, they brag about the great deal they got.

Context: A standalone, shrewd and almost humorous observation on the dishonesty common in everyday bargaining and trade.

Meaning: This exposes a small, everyday form of deceit - talking something down to get a better deal, then boasting about it afterwards - a caution against manipulative dealing even in minor transactions.

Lesson: Be honest in your dealings with people, even in small negotiations. Don't say one thing to gain an advantage and then boast about deceiving someone.

See Also: Proverbs 20:10 (divers weights, and divers measures); Proverbs 11:1 (a false balance is abomination to the LORD).
- 20:15 (KJV) There is gold, and a multitude of rubies: but the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel.

(B:E Project) Gold and piles of rubies exist in the world, but words spoken with real knowledge are the rarer, more precious jewel.

Context: A standalone proverb on the surpassing value of wisdom and wise speech over material wealth, a comparison common across Proverbs (see 3:15, 8:11).

- Meaning: This reframes what's truly valuable in life - insight and wise words outlast and outvalue any material riches, however impressive those riches might look.

Lesson: Treasure wisdom and truth over money. The words you speak with real understanding are worth more than any wealth you could gather.

See Also: Proverbs 3:15 (wisdom is more precious than rubies); Proverbs 8:11 (wisdom is better than rubies).
- 20:16 (KJV) Take his garment that is surety for a stranger: and take a pledge of him for a strange woman.

(B:E Project) If someone's foolish enough to guarantee a stranger's debt, take their coat as collateral - hold something of theirs if they've made that risky promise for someone they barely know.

Context: A standalone proverb on the folly of financial guarantees for strangers, a recurring warning across Proverbs (see 6:1-5, 11:15, 22:26-27), nearly repeated again at 27:13.

Meaning: This is practical financial wisdom - be very cautious about co-signing debts or guaranteeing loans for people you don't know well, since it puts your own resources at real risk.

Lesson: Be generous, but be wise about financial commitments you make for others. Don't let a moment's pressure to seem generous put your own security recklessly at risk.

See Also: Proverbs 6:1-5 (surety for a stranger); Proverbs 22:26-27 (be not thou one of them that strike hands).
- 20:17 (KJV) Bread of deceit is sweet to a man; but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel.

(B:E Project) Food gained by deceit tastes sweet at first, but afterwards it turns to gravel in your mouth.

Context: A standalone proverb on ill-gotten gain, using vivid food imagery typical of Proverbs' concrete, everyday style.

Meaning: This warns that dishonest gain feels good only temporarily - the eventual cost and regret far outweigh the initial pleasure, like biting down on grit hidden in bread.

Lesson: Shortcuts built on dishonesty never satisfy in the end, no matter how good they taste at first. Choose the harder, honest road - it's the one that actually feeds you.

See Also: Proverbs 9:17 (stolen waters are sweet); Proverbs 1:19 (the greedy of gain taketh away the life of the owners thereof).
- 20:18 (KJV) Every purpose is established by counsel: and with good advice make war.

(B:E Project) Plans succeed when you get good advice - even something as serious as going to war needs wise counsel first.

Context: A standalone proverb on the value of seeking counsel before major decisions, echoing similar advice in 11:14 and 15:22.

Meaning: This encourages humility in decision-making - don't tackle big, consequential choices in isolation, but actively seek out wise input before committing.

Lesson: Don't make your biggest decisions in isolation. Seek out people who'll give you honest, wise counsel before you commit to something serious.

See Also: Proverbs 11:14 (in the multitude of counsellors there is safety); Proverbs 15:22 (without counsel purposes are disappointed).

20:19 ***(KJV)** He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips.*
(B:E Project) A gossip who goes around spreading talk will reveal your secrets too - so keep your distance from anyone who's overly flattering with their words.

Context: A standalone proverb on gossip and flattery, warning about the risks of untrustworthy company.

Meaning: This connects gossip and flattery as two sides of the same untrustworthy character - someone who talks about others behind their back will likely do the same to you eventually.

Lesson: Be discerning about who you let close, especially those whose words seem too smooth. True friends protect your trust, they don't trade in your secrets.

See Also: Proverbs 11:13 (a talebearer revealeth secrets); Proverbs 26:24-26 (he that hateth dissembleth with his lips).

20:20 ***(KJV)** Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness.*
(B:E Project) Whoever curses their father or mother will have their own life's light snuffed out into total darkness.

Context: A standalone proverb on honouring parents, echoing the seriousness of the same theme in 19:26.

Meaning: This treats dishonouring parents as a severe moral failure with real, lasting consequences, underscoring how much weight Proverbs places on family respect.

Lesson: Honour your parents even when it's difficult. The relationship you have with them shapes more of your life's 'light' than you might expect.

See Also: Exodus 20:12 (honour thy father and thy mother); Proverbs 30:17 (the eye that mocketh at his father).

20:21 ***(KJV)** An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning; but the end thereof shall not be blessed.*
(B:E Project) Wealth grabbed quickly at the start won't end up being a blessing in the end.

Context: A standalone proverb on the dangers of hasty or ill-gained wealth, connecting to the chapter's broader financial-ethics theme found in verses 10, 14 and 17.

Meaning: This warns against get-rich-quick approaches to money - sustainable, well-earned gain tends to outlast a rushed windfall, which often brings its own problems.

Lesson: Be patient in how you build your life. The things worth having are usually worth working for slowly, not grabbing all at once.

See Also: Proverbs 13:11 (wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished); Proverbs 28:20 (he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent).

20:22 ***(KJV)** Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the LORD, and he shall save thee.*
(B:E Project) Don't say 'I'll get back at them for this' - instead, wait, and trust that things will be set right.

Context: A standalone proverb counselling against personal revenge, a theme picked up strongly again in the New Testament's teaching on non-retaliation.

Meaning: This counsels patience and restraint instead of retaliation - trusting a larger, unseen process of justice rather than taking matters entirely into your own hands.

Lesson: Let go of revenge. I know how much it hurts to be wronged, but holding onto payback only chains you to the person who hurt you. Release it, and you'll be free.

See Also: Romans 12:19 (vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord); Matthew 5:38-39 (turn to him the other cheek also).

20:23 ***(KJV)** Divers weights are an abomination unto the LORD; and a false balance is not good.*
(B:E Project) Rigged weights are detestable to God, and a dishonest scale is simply not good.

Context: A standalone proverb, a near-repeat of 20:10, reinforcing the seriousness of honesty in trade and business within the same chapter.

Meaning: The deliberate repetition of this idea within a single chapter underscores just how seriously fair dealing is treated - it's clearly not a throwaway concern.

Lesson: Integrity in your business and dealings with others matters to me. Don't let profit tempt you into cutting corners on honesty.

See Also: Proverbs 20:10 (near-identical repetition); Micah 6:10-11 (the bag of deceitful weights).

20:24 ***(KJV)** Man's goings are of the LORD; how can a man then understand his own way?*

(B:E Project) A person's steps are guided by something greater than themselves - so how can anyone fully understand their own path?

Context: A standalone, reflective proverb on the limits of human self-understanding and control, echoing similar themes in 19:21 and 16:9.

Meaning: This encourages humility about how much we actually control or understand about our own lives - a thought that can be genuinely freeing, releasing the pressure of needing to have your whole future figured out.

Lesson: You don't have to have your whole path figured out. Trust that there's a bigger story unfolding even when your own way feels unclear.

See Also: Proverbs 16:9 (a man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps); Jeremiah 10:23 (the way of man is not in himself).

20:25 *(KJV) It is a snare to the man who devoureth that which is holy, and after vows to make enquiry.*
(B:E Project) It's a trap to rashly promise something sacred and only afterwards stop to think about whether you can actually follow through.

Context: A standalone proverb warning against rash vows or promises, echoing the caution given about hasty vows in Ecclesiastes 5:4-5.

Meaning: This cautions against making commitments impulsively - the wisdom here is to think a promise through before you make it, not regret it after the fact.

Lesson: Let your yes be yes. Think carefully before you make promises, so your word can be something people - and you - can actually trust.

See Also: Ecclesiastes 5:4-5 (better is it that thou shouldest not vow); Matthew 5:37 (let your communication be, Yea, yea).

20:26 *(KJV) A wise king scaftereth the wicked, and bringeth the wheel over them.*
(B:E Project) A wise leader roots out wrongdoing among his people and brings the full weight of justice down on it.

Context: A standalone proverb continuing the small 'king' cluster begun at 20:8, on discerning, decisive leadership.

Meaning: This reinforces the value of leadership that actively confronts wrongdoing rather than ignoring it, using the harsh image of a threshing wheel to picture thorough justice.

Lesson: Wherever you have responsibility over others, don't shy away from addressing wrongdoing fairly and directly. Real care sometimes means confronting what's wrong, not avoiding it.

See Also: Proverbs 20:8 (a king that sitteth in the throne of judgment scattereth away all evil); Romans 13:3-4 (rulers are not a terror to good works).

20:27 *(KJV) The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly.*
(B:E Project) A person's spirit is like a lamp lit by God, shining light into every hidden corner inside them.

Context: A standalone, almost poetic proverb reflecting on inner self-awareness and conscience.

Meaning: This suggests each person carries an inner capacity for honest self-examination - an invitation to look inward with real honesty, rather than only judging by outward appearances.

Lesson: Let the light inside you search out what's hidden in your own heart. Real change starts with honest self-examination, not pretending everything's already fine.

See Also: Psalm 139:23-24 (search me, O God, and know my heart); 1 Corinthians 2:11 (the spirit of man which is in him).

20:28 *(KJV) Mercy and truth preserve the king: and his throne is upholden by mercy.*
(B:E Project) Mercy and honesty are what keep a ruler secure - his authority is held up by mercy, not fear or force.

Context: A standalone proverb on the qualities that sustain good leadership, closing out the chapter's 'king' cluster begun in verses 8 and 26.

Meaning: This challenges the assumption that power is maintained by force alone - it suggests kindness and honesty are actually what make leadership durable over time.

Lesson: Lead with mercy, not control. Whatever influence you carry in your family, workplace or community will last longest when it's built on kindness and truth.

See Also: Proverbs 16:12 (the throne is established by righteousness); Psalm 89:14 (mercy and truth shall go before thy face).

20:29 *(KJV) The glory of young men is their strength: and the beauty of old men is the grey head.*
(B:E Project) A young man's glory is his physical strength, and an old man's beauty is his grey hair.

Context: A standalone, closing-toned reflection on the value of different life stages, fitting as the chapter approaches its end.

Meaning: This affirms that every stage of life has its own distinct worth - youthful strength isn't 'better' than the wisdom and dignity of old age, just different, and both deserve honour.

Lesson: Don't measure your worth only by youthful strength, and don't dismiss age as decline. Every season of your life has its own kind of beauty and value - honour both in yourself and others.

See Also: Leviticus 19:32 (thou shalt rise up before the hoary head); Proverbs 16:31 (the hoary head is a crown of glory).

20:30 *(KJV) The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil: so do stripes the inward parts of the belly.*
(B:E Project) A painful wound can actually cleanse away wrongdoing - sharp correction reaches down and purifies what's inside a person.

Context: The closing verse of chapter 20, a standalone proverb on the purifying power of painful discipline or consequence.

Meaning: This is a hard-edged but honest observation - sometimes real, even painful correction is what it takes to purify bad character, closing the chapter on a theme of discipline that echoes 19:18 in the previous chapter.

Lesson: Don't run from the hard, painful moments that correct you. Sometimes the sharpest lessons are the ones that reshape you for the better - I won't leave you there, but I won't spare you the growth either.

See Also: Hebrews 12:11 (no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous); Proverbs 19:18 (chasten thy son while there is hope).

CHAPTER 21

Chapter Summary: Proverbs 21

Proverbs Chapter 21 offers a collection of wise sayings that underscore God's ultimate sovereignty over all aspects of life, from the decisions of rulers to the intentions of individuals. It emphasises that sincere justice and righteousness are far more pleasing to God than religious rituals alone. The chapter contrasts the diligent and the lazy, the righteous and the wicked, highlighting that true prosperity and peace come from living wisely, honestly, and generously. It also warns against pride, greed, and a contentious spirit, particularly within a household. Throughout, the chapter reminds readers that while humans make plans, God determines the outcome, and true security and success are found in Him.

21:1 *(KJV) The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.*
(B:E Project) Even the most powerful ruler's mind is like a stream of water in God's hands - he can direct it wherever he wants, whenever he wants.

Context: This is the opening proverb of chapter 21, a general saying (not part of a continuous discourse) about God's sovereignty over even the most powerful humans, setting the tone for a chapter that repeatedly reminds readers that ultimate control lies beyond human hands.

Meaning: In the ancient world a king held the power of life and death - about as close to unchallengeable authority as a person could get. This verse says that even that person's inner decisions are like water channelled by unseen hands. It's not fatalism or an excuse to give up on effort; it's a way of saying that no matter how much power someone appears to hold, there's a larger order to things that even they don't fully control. For someone living under an unfair boss, a corrupt system, or a leader they didn't choose, this can be oddly freeing: the people who seem to hold all the cards aren't actually the final word.

Lesson: I want you to know that no earthly power, however intimidating it looks, has the last say over your life. Don't let fear of people in authority shrink your world - stay grounded, keep doing what's right, and trust that things are held by something bigger than any one person's whim.

See Also: Proverbs 16:9 - "A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps" makes the same point about planning versus outcome; Daniel 2:21 - God "removeth kings, and setteth up kings," echoing this same sovereignty over rulers.

21:2 *(KJV) Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD pondereth the hearts.*
(B:E Project) Everyone thinks their own choices are justified - but it's what's underneath, the real motives, that get weighed and tested.

Context: A standalone proverb in the ch10-29 collection, on the theme of self-deception versus true inner motive - a recurring idea across Proverbs.

Meaning: This is one of the quietly devastating lines in the book: nobody wakes up thinking "today I will do wrong." We all narrate our own choices as reasonable, even the selfish or cruel ones. This verse punctures that self-justifying instinct by pointing to a deeper audit that looks past the story we tell ourselves to the actual motive underneath. Practically, it's an invitation to self-honesty: before assuming you're in the right, ask what's really driving the decision - fear, pride, laziness, self-interest - rather than trusting the comfortable version you've already told yourself.

Lesson: I'm not interested in the excuses you give yourself - I see what's underneath. That's not a threat, it's an invitation: you don't have to keep performing a version of yourself even to your own mind. Bring your real motives into the light and let them be examined honestly; that's where actual change starts.

See Also: Jeremiah 17:9-10 - "The heart is deceitful above all things... I the LORD search the heart"; Proverbs 16:2, a near-identical companion verse on weighed motives.

21:3 *(KJV) To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.*
(B:E Project) Treating people fairly matters more to God than any religious ritual or offering.

Context: A standalone proverb that voices a theme found throughout the Hebrew prophets - that ethical action outweighs ritual performance.

Meaning: In ancient Israel, sacrifice was the central religious act - the thing everyone assumed pleased God most. This verse cuts through that assumption: actually treating people justly matters more than any ceremony. It's a strikingly modern point too - it's easy to perform "being good" (attending the right events, saying the right things, looking spiritual or virtuous) while quietly being unfair or unkind in daily dealings. This verse says the real test isn't the performance, it's how you actually treat people when it costs you something.

Lesson: Don't confuse looking religious with being good. I care far more about whether you dealt honestly with the person you argued with today, whether you were fair to someone with less power than you, than whether you performed any ritual. Justice done quietly is worth more than any show.

See Also: 1 Samuel 15:22 - "to obey is better than sacrifice"; Micah 6:8 - "what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly..."; Matthew 23:23, Jesus rebuking religious leaders for majoring on ritual while neglecting "judgment, mercy, and faith."

21:4 *(KJV) An high look, and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked, is sin.*

(B:E Project) A superior sneer, a proud heart, and even the everyday work of wicked people - all of it counts as sin.

Context: A standalone proverb linking outward arrogance (the look, the heart) with something as mundane as "plowing" - ordinary daily activity - under the theme of pride.

Meaning: The surprising word here is "plowing" - an entirely ordinary, unglamorous task. The verse is saying pride isn't only found in dramatic acts; it can flavour the most mundane parts of a wicked person's life too, because the heart behind an action taints it. Arrogance (the high look, the proud heart) isn't just a personality quirk - Proverbs treats it as a moral fault with real consequences, because it distorts how you treat other people.

Lesson: It's not only your big dramatic decisions I care about - it's the posture of your heart in the ordinary, everyday stuff: how you talk to people, how you carry yourself when you think no one important is watching. Let your daily life, not just your best moments, be marked by humility.

See Also: Proverbs 16:18 - "Pride goeth before destruction"; James 4:6 - "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."

21:5 *(KJV) The thoughts of the diligent tend only to plenteousness; but of every one that is hasty only to want.*

(B:E Project) Careful, hard-working planning leads to plenty - but rushing and cutting corners leads to poverty.

Context: A standalone proverb on the theme of diligence versus haste, part of Proverbs' recurring contrast between patient, disciplined effort and impulsive shortcuts.

Meaning: This verse isn't against speed as such - it's against haste, the kind of rushed thinking that skips planning in favour of quick results. Diligence here means steady, thought-through effort; the picture is someone who thinks ahead, plans, and works consistently, versus someone chasing quick wins who ends up worse off. It's a very practical, unglamorous truth: sustainable success is boring and comes from planning, not from chasing shortcuts.

Lesson: Don't measure your worth by how fast you can get somewhere. Take the slower, careful road with your work and your plans - it's not exciting, but it's the road that actually holds up. I'd rather you build something steady than grab at something quick and watch it slip through your hands.

See Also: Proverbs 13:11 - "wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour shall increase"; Proverbs 28:20 on the one hasty to be rich not going unpunished.

21:6 *(KJV) The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death.*

(B:E Project) Wealth gained through lies is like smoke, chased by people who are really courting their own destruction.

Context: A standalone proverb warning against dishonest gain, using vivid imagery ("vanity tossed to and fro") to picture how fleeting and dangerous ill-gotten wealth is.

Meaning: The image is of something insubstantial being blown around - vapour, or a snare tossed about - not something solid you can hold onto. Money made through lying, cheating, or deception looks like a win in the moment but is described here as ultimately hollow and even lethal to the person chasing it, because that lifestyle of deceit tends to catch up with a person. It's a warning that the shortcut of dishonesty doesn't actually deliver the security it promises.

Lesson: If you're building your security on lies, you're building on smoke - it will not hold you up when you need it to. I want better for you than that fragile kind of wealth; build something honest, even if it's slower and smaller, because that's the only kind that actually lasts.

See Also: Proverbs 20:17 - "Bread of deceit is sweet to a man; but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel"; Luke 12:15 on life not consisting in the abundance of possessions.

21:7 *(KJV) The robbery of the wicked shall destroy them; because they refuse to do judgment.*

(B:E Project) Wicked people's own violent taking will end up destroying them, because they refuse to act fairly.

Context: A standalone proverb continuing the chapter's theme of consequences catching up with the unjust and violent.

Meaning: This is a statement about moral cause-and-effect: exploiting and robbing others isn't a strategy that pays off in the end - it circles back and destroys the person doing it. The reason given is telling: "because they refuse to do judgment" - refusing fairness isn't incidental to their downfall, it's the actual cause. It reflects a consistent Proverbs theme that injustice is ultimately self-destructive, not just wrong.

Lesson: Taking from others through force or unfairness might look like it's working in the short term, but it isn't a foundation you can build a life on - it collapses. Choose fairness even when exploitation would be easier and faster; it's the only path that doesn't eventually turn on you.

See Also: Proverbs 1:18-19 on those who "lay wait for their own blood"; Galatians 6:7 - "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

21:8 *(KJV) The way of man is froward and strange: but as for the pure, his work is right.*
(B:E Project) A crooked person's path twists and turns unpredictably - but a person of integrity walks a straight, honest road.

Context: A standalone proverb contrasting the erratic, deceptive lifestyle of the dishonest with the straightforward consistency of the honest.

Meaning: "Froward and strange" paints a picture of someone whose behaviour is twisted, evasive, hard to pin down - the kind of person whose story keeps changing. Against that, the "pure" (someone of honest, clear-hearted integrity) is described simply as having work that "is right" - straightforward, consistent, reliable. It's a picture of two very different ways to move through life: one zigzagging to cover tracks, the other walking a clear line because there's nothing to hide.

Lesson: Living honestly means you don't have to remember which version of the story you told which person - your path can be straight because you have nothing to disguise. That simplicity is a gift I want for you: a life so honest it doesn't need to twist and turn.

See Also: Proverbs 10:9 - "He that walketh uprightly walketh surely: but he that perverteth his ways shall be known"; 2 Corinthians 1:12 on simplicity and godly sincerity.

21:9 *(KJV) It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house.*
(B:E Project) It's better to live cramped in a corner of the roof than share a spacious house with a constantly quarrelling wife.

Context: A standalone proverb, the first of two similar sayings in this chapter (see also 21:19) about the misery of living with constant conflict at home - part of Proverbs' recurring domestic-harmony theme.

Meaning: Flat roofs in the ancient Near East were usable living space, so "a corner of the housetop" pictures cramped, exposed, uncomfortable quarters - and the verse says even that beats a big, comfortable house filled with constant arguing. The point isn't really about gender (a hostile spouse of either sex fits the principle) - it's that a peaceful

environment matters more than material comfort. Constant conflict at home is genuinely corrosive to wellbeing, more so than most people admit while chasing bigger houses and more stuff.

Lesson: Peace in your home is worth more than square footage. If you're in a relationship defined by constant conflict, don't assume comfort or status makes up for it - and if you're the one bringing the conflict, consider what it's costing the people who live with you. I want your home to be a place of rest, not a battlefield.

See Also: Proverbs 21:19, the wilderness/contentious woman parallel; Proverbs 25:24, the same saying repeated almost word for word later in the book.

21:10 *(KJV) The soul of the wicked desireth evil: his neighbour findeth no favour in his eyes.*
(B:E Project) A wicked person's whole being craves wrongdoing - they show no kindness even to the people right next to them.

Context: A standalone proverb describing the inner disposition of a wicked person, emphasising how that inner craving plays out in cold treatment of neighbours.

Meaning: This verse goes past behaviour to describe appetite - the wicked person's "soul," their deepest wanting, is oriented toward evil, not just occasionally slipping into it. One visible symptom is a total lack of grace toward the person nearest to them - literally, their neighbour gets no favour, no benefit of the doubt, no kindness. It's a picture of how a corrupted inner life shows up first in how you treat the people closest to you, not strangers far away.

Lesson: How you treat the people right next to you - your actual neighbour, not some abstract idea of humanity - is the real test of what's inside you. I'm not impressed by grand gestures toward people far away if you can't show basic kindness to the person living beside you.

See Also: 1 John 4:20 - "if a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar"; Luke 10:29-37, the parable of the Good Samaritan, redefining who counts as "neighbour."

21:11 *(KJV) When the scorner is punished, the simple is made wise: and when the wise is instructed, he receiveth knowledge.*
(B:E Project) When a mocker gets punished, even a naive bystander learns a lesson from it - and when a wise person gets taught, they actually take the knowledge in.

Context: A standalone proverb about two different routes to wisdom - learning by watching consequences fall on others, and learning by direct instruction - both part of Proverbs' broader teaching on how wisdom is acquired.

Meaning: This verse describes two learning styles working together. The "simple" (naive, easily led, not yet formed in judgement) may not respond to advice directly, but they can still learn by watching what happens to someone who scoffs at wisdom and pays for it. The "wise," meanwhile, don't need to watch a disaster - they can be taught directly and actually absorb it. Both are legitimate ways to grow: sometimes we learn

from a hard example, sometimes from a good teacher, and being willing to learn either way is itself a mark of wisdom.

Lesson: You don't have to make every mistake yourself to learn from it - pay attention to the consequences you see land on other people's choices, and let that teach you too. And when good instruction comes your way directly, don't dismiss it out of pride; actually take it in.

See Also: Proverbs 19:25, a very similar pairing of the scorner being smitten and the simple becoming wary; 1 Corinthians 10:11 on past events being written "for our admonition."

21:12 *(KJV) The righteous man wisely considereth the house of the wicked: but God overthroweth the wicked for their wickedness.*
(B:E Project) A righteous person watches carefully and learns from what happens to wicked households - because God brings the wicked down for their wrongdoing.

Context: A standalone proverb continuing the theme of consequences for wickedness, with the righteous learning by observation from the fate of unjust households.

Meaning: The "righteous man" here is thoughtful and observant - watching how things eventually unravel in a household built on wickedness, and drawing wise lessons from it rather than being naive about how these things play out. The verse pairs that human observation with a claim about ultimate justice: wrongdoing tends to collapse under its own weight, and that isn't random - it's connected to the wickedness itself. It's an encouragement not to envy people who seem to be winning through injustice, because their foundation is unstable.

Lesson: Don't be fooled by wickedness that looks successful right now - pay attention, be observant, and you'll see it doesn't hold. I want you to build your life on something sturdier than what looks impressive today but has no real foundation underneath it.

See Also: Psalm 37:35-36 on the wicked flourishing like a green tree and then vanishing; Proverbs 24:20 - "there shall be no reward to the evil man."

21:13 *(KJV) Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.*
(B:E Project) Anyone who deliberately ignores the cries of the poor will one day cry out themselves and get no answer.

Context: A standalone proverb on generosity and justice toward the poor, one of Proverbs' many sayings on this theme, framed as a matching consequence.

Meaning: The structure here is precise justice: the specific act (refusing to listen) gets the specific matching consequence (not being listened to). It's not that poverty and need are contagious punishments - it's that a habit of deliberately shutting out other people's suffering shapes the kind of world, and the kind of person, you end up being in. If you've

trained yourself not to hear anyone else's need, don't be surprised if help isn't there when you need it.

Lesson: The compassion you refuse to give has a way of coming back around as the compassion you don't receive. Keep your ears - and your heart - open to people who are struggling, even when it's inconvenient, because that openness is part of what it means to actually love your neighbour.

See Also: Matthew 25:41-45, the sheep and goats judged by whether they fed, clothed, and visited those in need; Proverbs 19:17 - kindness to the poor is lending to the LORD.

21:14 *(KJV) A gift in secret pacifieth anger: and a reward in the bosom strong wrath.*
(B:E Project) A quiet gift given privately can calm down someone's anger - even a hidden payoff can cool strong rage.

Context: A standalone proverb offering practical, almost transactional observation about human nature - how discreet generosity can defuse conflict.

Meaning: This is a pragmatic observation rather than a moral endorsement of bribery: as a matter of fact, people's anger softens when they receive something valuable, especially given quietly and without public fuss. It's describing how human relationships often actually work, not necessarily prescribing it as ideal for every conflict (elsewhere Proverbs condemns bribery in the context of justice, e.g. 17:23). Read practically, it's a nudge toward thoughtful, even costly generosity as a real tool for repairing a strained relationship.

Lesson: Sometimes the way back to peace with someone isn't a clever argument - it's a genuine, generous gesture given without making a show of it. Don't be too proud to soften a hard moment with real, quiet kindness; it can do what words alone cannot.

See Also: Proverbs 15:1 - "A soft answer turneth away wrath"; Genesis 32:20 - Jacob sending gifts ahead to pacify Esau's anger.

21:15 *(KJV) It is joy to the just to do judgment: but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity.*
(B:E Project) Doing what's right is a genuine pleasure for good people - but it spells ruin for those who do wrong.

Context: A standalone proverb summing up the emotional and practical difference between the righteous and wicked's relationship to justice.

Meaning: This verse makes a claim many people don't expect: acting justly isn't a grim duty for a genuinely good person - it's a source of actual joy. Meanwhile, for people committed to wrongdoing, the same justice that delights the righteous spells their downfall. It's an invitation to notice how differently the same moral reality (justice being done) lands depending on which side of it you're standing on - and to want to be someone who finds joy in fairness rather than someone threatened by it.

Lesson: Doing the right thing shouldn't feel like a burden you're forced to carry - I want it to become something that genuinely brings you joy, the satisfaction of alignment between your values and your actions. If justice being done feels threatening to you rather than good news, that's worth examining honestly.

See Also: Psalm 106:3 - "Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times"; Matthew 5:6 on hungering and thirsting after righteousness.

21:16 *(KJV) The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead.*
(B:E Project) Anyone who strays from the path of understanding ends up among the dead.

Context: A standalone proverb using stark, final imagery to warn about the consequences of abandoning wisdom.

Meaning: This is one of Proverbs' bluntest warnings - wandering away from understanding isn't described as a minor detour, but as ending in death, specifically joining "the congregation of the dead," an image of finality and separation from the living community. It reflects the book's consistent conviction that wisdom isn't optional decoration on life - it's connected to actually staying alive and thriving, while folly leads, directly or indirectly, toward ruin.

Lesson: Don't drift casually away from wisdom and understanding, thinking it doesn't matter much - the direction you're walking in has real consequences over time, even when they're not obvious today. Stay close to what gives you genuine understanding of how to live, because that closeness is what keeps you truly alive.

See Also: Proverbs 2:18-19 on the path to the "strange woman" leading down to death; Proverbs 9:18 - the guests of folly are "in the depths of hell."

21:17 *(KJV) He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man: he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich.*
(B:E Project) A person who chases pleasure will end up poor; anyone obsessed with fine wine and luxury oils won't stay wealthy.

Context: A standalone proverb warning against a lifestyle built around indulgence, naming wine and oil as period examples of luxury consumption.

Meaning: Wine and oil were genuine luxury goods in the ancient world - this verse isn't against enjoying life's good things occasionally, but against making pleasure-seeking the organising principle of your life. Someone whose priority is constant indulgence tends to spend beyond their means and neglect the disciplined effort that actually builds and sustains wealth. It's a timeless observation, easily translated into any era's version of luxury spending and lifestyle inflation.

Lesson: There's nothing wrong with enjoying good things, but don't build your whole life around chasing pleasure - that appetite is bottomless and it will quietly hollow out your

security. Find your deeper satisfaction somewhere that doesn't need constant, expensive feeding.

See Also: Proverbs 23:20-21 on gluttons and winebibbers coming to poverty; Luke 15:13-14 - the prodigal son wasting his substance in riotous living and ending up in want.

21:18 *(KJV) The wicked shall be a ransom for the righteous, and the transgressor for the upright.*
(B:E Project) The wicked end up paying the price meant for the righteous; the treacherous take the fall that was coming for the honest.

Context: A standalone proverb expressing a striking reversal - trouble intended for or falling near the righteous ends up landing on the wicked instead.

Meaning: A "ransom" is a substitute payment - someone or something given in the place of another. This verse pictures the wicked ending up as that substitute, absorbing the trouble or consequence that might otherwise have touched the righteous. It's not a promise that bad things never happen to good people, but a broader statement of confidence that, over time, the moral weight of consequences tends to land where it actually belongs.

Lesson: If you're trying to live with integrity and it feels like trouble keeps finding you unfairly, hold on - the deeper pattern of things doesn't ultimately favour those who cause harm. Keep choosing the upright path; it's not the one that ends up paying the final bill.

See Also: Proverbs 11:8 - "The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in his stead"; Esther 7:10, Haman hanged on the gallows he built for Mordecai.

21:19 *(KJV) It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman.*
(B:E Project) It's better to live alone out in the wild than share a home with a quarrelsome, angry wife.

Context: A standalone proverb, a companion to 21:9, restating the same idea with even starker imagery - total isolation preferred over constant domestic conflict.

Meaning: This verse pushes the point of 21:9 further: not just a cramped corner of a roof, but the harsh, empty wilderness - genuinely difficult, isolated terrain - is preferable to living with constant contention. The repetition across the chapter signals how seriously Proverbs takes ongoing conflict at home: it isn't a minor annoyance, it's genuinely corrosive to a person's peace, worth avoiding even at real cost. As with 21:9, the principle applies regardless of which partner is doing the quarrelling.

Lesson: Chronic conflict in your closest relationships can cost you more than isolation would - don't stay trapped in constant hostility just because it looks more "normal" or comfortable from the outside. And if you're the source of conflict in your home, take this as a nudge to examine your own contribution honestly.

See Also: Proverbs 21:9, the housetop-corner version of the same warning; Proverbs 25:24, the third repetition of this exact saying later in the book.

21:20 *(KJV) There is treasure to be desired and oil in the dwelling of the wise; but a foolish man spendeth it up.*
(B:E Project) A wise person's home has valuable resources stored up - but a foolish person just spends everything they have.

Context: A standalone proverb contrasting wise saving with foolish spending, part of Proverbs' recurring financial-wisdom theme.

Meaning: This is straightforward financial wisdom: wisdom shows up practically in a household that has stored resources - some margin, some reserve - while foolishness shows up as a pattern of spending everything as soon as it comes in, with nothing kept back. It's not about hoarding out of fear, but about the discipline of restraint that lets a household weather hard times rather than being wiped out by the first setback.

Lesson: Building some margin into your life - not spending every last bit the moment it arrives - isn't about greed, it's about wisdom and care for your future self and the people who depend on you. Practise a little restraint now so you're not caught empty when hard times come.

See Also: Proverbs 6:6-8, the ant storing up provision in summer; Proverbs 13:11 on wealth gathered by labour increasing over time.

21:21 *(KJV) He that followeth after righteousness and mercy findeth life, righteousness, and honour.*
(B:E Project) Chase after doing right and showing mercy, and you'll find life, righteousness, and honour.

Context: A standalone proverb pairing two core virtues - righteousness and mercy - and promising that pursuing them brings real reward.

Meaning: The pairing of righteousness (doing what's right) and mercy (kindness toward others, especially the struggling) matters - this isn't cold, rigid rule-following, it's justice tempered with compassion. The promise attached - life, righteousness, honour - describes a rich, integrated kind of flourishing, not just material reward. It's a picture of character as something actively pursued, like a chase, rather than something that just happens to you.

Lesson: Chase after doing right and being kind to people the way you'd chase something you actually wanted - actively, on purpose, every day. That pursuit itself becomes the good life you're looking for; it isn't a means to some other reward, it's the reward.

See Also: Matthew 5:6-7 - "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness... Blessed are the merciful"; Micah 6:8 on loving mercy and walking humbly.

21:22 *(KJV) A wise man scaleth the city of the mighty, and casteth down the strength of the confidence thereof.*
(B:E Project) A wise person can climb into a strongly defended city and bring down the fortress its defenders were counting on.

Context: A standalone proverb using a military image to illustrate the power of wisdom over brute strength or numbers.

Meaning: This pictures a heavily fortified city, defended by "the mighty" - strong, well-armed people confident in their defences - and yet a single wise person manages to breach it and tear down the very strength they were relying on. The point isn't literal siege warfare; it's that clever strategy and understanding can outmatch raw power and confident force. Wisdom beats muscle, again and again, in ways that surprise people who only trust strength.

Lesson: Don't assume the people who look strongest or most confident are actually the hardest to overcome - wisdom, patience, and clear thinking can achieve what raw force cannot. Trust the quieter power of understanding over the loud confidence of strength.

See Also: Ecclesiastes 9:15-16 on a poor wise man delivering a city by his wisdom, though no one remembered him; Proverbs 24:5 - "A wise man is strong; yea, a man of knowledge increaseth strength."

21:23 *(KJV) Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles.*
(B:E Project) Watch what you say and you'll keep yourself out of a lot of trouble.

Context: A standalone proverb on the theme of controlled speech, one of Proverbs' most repeated topics across the whole book.

Meaning: This is one of Proverbs' simplest and most practical pieces of advice: so much unnecessary trouble in life - broken relationships, regrets, conflict - comes directly from things we said that we didn't need to say. "Keeping" your mouth means exercising deliberate control rather than blurting out every reaction. It's not about being silent or fearful, but about the discipline of thinking before speaking, which the verse ties directly to protecting your own wellbeing, not just other people's feelings.

Lesson: A huge amount of pain in your life - and other people's - can be avoided just by pausing before you speak. I'm not asking you to bottle everything up; I'm asking you to choose your words with care, because that discipline protects you as much as anyone else.

See Also: James 1:19 - "swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath"; James 3:5-6 on the tongue as a small member that can set a whole life on fire; Proverbs 13:3 - "He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life."

21:24 *(KJV) Proud and haughty scorner is his name, who dealeth in proud wrath.*
(B:E Project) "Proud mocker" is the fitting name for someone who acts with arrogant, furious contempt.

Context: A standalone proverb, essentially naming and defining a character type - the arrogant scoffer - that recurs throughout Proverbs.

Meaning: This verse works almost like a definition: it takes a cluster of traits (pride, haughtiness, mocking contempt, angry outbursts) and says that's what a "scorner" actually is - the label fits the behaviour. It's a warning to recognise this pattern, both in others and in yourself: someone who combines arrogance with anger and contempt for others has become a specific, recognisable, and unflattering type of person, and it's worth noticing before you become one.

Lesson: If arrogance and anger have become your default way of dealing with people, that's a pattern worth naming honestly rather than excusing. I'd rather you be known for humility than for proud contempt - one builds relationships, the other destroys them.

See Also: Proverbs 22:10 on casting out the scorner to end strife; Proverbs 3:34 - "Surely he scorneth the scorners: but he giveth grace unto the lowly."

21:25 *(KJV) The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour.*
(B:E Project) A lazy person's own wanting is what destroys them - because their hands won't actually do the work.

Context: A standalone proverb on laziness, one of Proverbs' major recurring themes, framed here as self-destruction through inaction.

Meaning: The irony this verse highlights is sharp: the lazy person isn't destroyed by lacking desire - they have plenty of wanting - but by refusing to convert that desire into action. Wishing for something without working for it is described almost as a form of self-harm: the gap between what you want and what you're willing to do for it eventually catches up with you. It's a warning against passive longing that never becomes effort.

Lesson: Wanting something isn't the same as working for it, and letting that gap sit unaddressed will slowly wear you down. I want you to turn your desires into real effort - not because I don't care about your dreams, but because I do, and dreams need hands willing to work.

See Also: Proverbs 13:4 - "The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat"; Proverbs 6:9-11 on the sluggard and poverty coming like an armed man.

21:26 *(KJV) He coveteth greedily all the day long: but the righteous giveth and spareth not.*
(B:E Project) The greedy person is grasping for more all day long - but the righteous person gives generously without holding back.

Context: A standalone proverb contrasting constant greedy craving with generous, unrestrained giving - part of Proverbs' theme on money and generosity.

Meaning: This verse draws a vivid contrast in orientation: one person's whole day is spent wanting more for themselves, endlessly grasping; the other person's default is giving, and giving generously, without stinginess or holding back. It's less about the specific amounts and more about the underlying posture - is your default motion toward yourself or toward others? The verse invites you to notice which pattern actually describes your daily life.

Lesson: Notice the difference between a life spent grasping and a life spent giving - one leaves you always hungry, the other leaves you genuinely satisfied. I want your default posture toward the world to be open hands, not clenched ones.

See Also: Acts 20:35 - "It is more blessed to give than to receive"; 2 Corinthians 9:6-7 on the cheerful giver who sows bountifully.

21:27 *(KJV) The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination: how much more, when he bringeth it with a wicked mind?*
(B:E Project) A wicked person's religious offering is already disgusting to God - and it's even worse when they bring it with dishonest intentions.

Context: A standalone proverb echoing 21:3's theme, intensifying the point with a "how much more" argument about hypocritical religious practice.

Meaning: This verse uses a common rhetorical structure - if something is already bad, how much worse is the aggravated version of it. A wicked person's outward religious performance is already condemned as false, but doing it while actively harbouring dishonest or evil intent makes it worse still - it turns worship into a kind of active hypocrisy rather than mere emptiness. It's a pointed warning against using religious appearance to disguise a corrupt inner life.

Lesson: Don't use outward performances of goodness - whatever form that takes in your life - to mask what's actually going on inside you; that combination is worse than doing nothing at all. I want your insides to match your outsides, because that alignment is what real integrity looks like.

See Also: Isaiah 1:11-15 on God rejecting sacrifices offered alongside injustice; Matthew 23:27-28, Jesus comparing hypocrites to whitewashed tombs, clean outside, corrupt within.

21:28 *(KJV) A false witness shall perish: but the man that heareth speaketh constantly.*
(B:E Project) A lying witness will be brought down - but a person who genuinely listens will keep on being able to speak with confidence.

Context: A standalone proverb on honesty in testimony, connecting to Proverbs' repeated concern for truthful speech, especially in matters of justice.

Meaning: This verse contrasts two speakers: one whose words are lies and who is heading for destruction, and one who "heareth" - who actually listens carefully, presumably to truth and evidence - and whose words therefore have staying power. The implication is that speech built on careful listening and honesty holds up over time, while

speech built on lies eventually collapses under its own weight, especially in situations (like a courtroom or a dispute) where truth ultimately gets tested.

Lesson: Ground what you say in what you've genuinely heard and understood, not in what's convenient to claim - that honesty is what gives your words lasting weight. Lies might work for a moment, but they don't survive scrutiny, and I want your word to be something people can actually stand on.

See Also: Exodus 20:16, the commandment against false witness; Proverbs 19:5 - "A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall not escape."

21:29 *(KJV) A wicked man hardeneth his face: but as for the upright, he directeth his way.*
(B:E Project) A wicked person puts on a bold, unflinching front - but an honest person carefully thinks through and directs their path.

Context: A standalone proverb contrasting bravado (a hardened, defiant face) with the thoughtful, deliberate path-setting of the upright.

Meaning: "Hardeneth his face" describes putting on a mask of shameless boldness or defiance - a front to cover for a lack of genuine substance or direction. Against that, the upright person "directeth his way" - they actually think about where they're going and make deliberate choices about how to get there. It's a contrast between bluster (looking confident to hide uncertainty) and genuine, considered direction (actually having somewhere to go and knowing how you're getting there).

Lesson: Don't mistake a confident front for real direction - true confidence comes from actually knowing where you're headed and why, not from putting on a hard face to hide uncertainty. Take the time to genuinely think through your path rather than just performing certainty.

See Also: Proverbs 4:26 - "Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established"; Jeremiah 5:3 on people making their faces harder than a rock, refusing to return.

21:30 *(KJV) There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the LORD.*
(B:E Project) No amount of human wisdom, understanding, or clever planning can succeed against what God has decided.

Context: A standalone proverb that functions as a summary statement near the chapter's close, restating the theme of divine sovereignty introduced back in 21:1.

Meaning: This verse pulls together everything human beings might rely on - wisdom, understanding, strategic counsel - and says that none of it can ultimately override a larger reality beyond human control. It's not anti-wisdom; Proverbs spends nearly its entire length praising wisdom. Rather, it's putting human wisdom in its proper place - genuinely valuable, but never absolute, never the final word against the deeper order of things. There's a humility built into real wisdom: knowing its own limits.

Lesson: However clever your plans are, hold them with open hands - real wisdom includes knowing you're not the one ultimately in control. That's not a reason to stop planning or thinking carefully; it's a reason to do it without the anxious grip of needing to control every outcome yourself.

See Also: Isaiah 55:8-9 on God's thoughts and ways being higher than ours; Job 42:2 - "I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee."

21:31 *(KJV) The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but safety is of the LORD.*
(B:E Project) You can prepare the horse for battle all you like - but real safety and victory come from somewhere beyond your own preparation.

Context: The closing verse of chapter 21, using a military image (the war-horse, a symbol of human military strength) to conclude the chapter's theme of divine sovereignty over human striving.

Meaning: This closing verse doesn't dismiss preparation - training the horse for battle was genuinely wise and necessary. But it insists that even the best preparation doesn't guarantee the outcome; ultimate safety or deliverance rests on something beyond what human effort can manufacture. It's a fitting bookend to the chapter that opened with the king's heart in God's hand: human effort matters and should be taken seriously, but it isn't the final source of security.

Lesson: Prepare well, work hard, do everything within your power - and then hold the outcome loosely, because real security was never something you could fully manufacture on your own. That balance between real effort and genuine trust is where peace actually lives.

See Also: Psalm 20:7 - "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God"; Psalm 33:16-17 on a horse being a vain thing for safety.

CHAPTER 22

Chapter Summary: Proverbs 22

Proverbs Chapter 22 offers a diverse collection of practical advice for living a wise and godly life. It emphasises the lasting value of a good reputation over material wealth, highlights God's sovereignty over all people, and contrasts the outcomes of diligent and foolish behaviour. The chapter provides guidance on raising children, managing finances, exercising generosity, avoiding harmful influences, and pursuing justice. It repeatedly stresses the importance of humility, fearing the Lord, and listening to wise instruction as pathways to a fulfilling life, while warning against laziness, oppression, and bad company.

22:1 *(KJV) A GOOD name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold.*

(B:E Project) A good reputation is worth more than a fortune - being genuinely well thought of beats having piles of silver and gold.

Context: The opening verse of chapter 22, a standalone proverb that sets a values-driven tone for the chapter by ranking character and relationship above wealth.

Meaning: This verse asks you to actually choose, when the two come into conflict, between reputation/character and money - and it says character wins, hands down. "Loving favour" - being genuinely liked and trusted by others, not just feared or envied - is placed right alongside a good name as more valuable than gold. It's a challenge to a mindset (ancient or modern) that treats wealth as the ultimate measure of success, insisting instead that trustworthiness and being well-regarded is the rarer, more valuable asset.

Lesson: If you ever have to choose between doing something that would make you richer and something that would keep your integrity intact, choose the integrity - it's the asset that actually lasts and that people actually remember you by. Riches can vanish overnight; a trustworthy name follows you everywhere.

See Also: Ecclesiastes 7:1 - "A good name is better than precious ointment"; Proverbs 3:3-4 - mercy and truth bringing favour and good understanding.

22:2 ***(KJV)** The rich and poor meet together: the LORD is the maker of them all.*
(B:E Project) Rich and poor cross paths in the same world - and God made every single one of them.

Context: A standalone proverb affirming the fundamental equality of all people before God, regardless of economic status, and setting up later verses in the chapter about how the poor should be treated.

Meaning: Economic class was as real a dividing line in the ancient world as it is now, but this verse punctures the idea that wealth makes someone fundamentally different or superior. Rich and poor "meet together" - they share the same streets, the same humanity - and crucially, they share the same maker. It undercuts any sense of inherited superiority based on money and lays the groundwork for the chapter's repeated warnings against oppressing or despising the poor.

Lesson: However different your bank balance is from someone else's, you were made by the same hands, and that gives you the same fundamental worth. Never let money convince you that you're better than someone, or that someone is worth less than you because they have less.

See Also: Galatians 3:28 on there being neither bond nor free in Christ; James 2:1-4 warning against showing partiality to the rich over the poor.

22:3 ***(KJV)** A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.*

(B:E Project) A sensible person spots trouble coming and gets out of the way - a naive person just walks straight into it and pays the price.

Context: A standalone proverb on foresight and prudence, later repeated almost identically at 27:12, emphasising the practical value of anticipating danger.

Meaning: This is straightforward, practical advice about paying attention: a prudent person notices warning signs and takes evasive action, while a naive person barrels ahead regardless and suffers the consequences. It's not about paranoia or living in fear, but about the basic wisdom of reading a situation honestly rather than optimistically assuming everything will be fine when the signs suggest otherwise.

Lesson: Pay attention to the warning signs in your life - a relationship, a decision, a situation - rather than pushing through on hope alone. Genuine wisdom includes the humility to notice danger and adjust course, not stubbornly walking into trouble because you didn't want to look.

See Also: Proverbs 27:12, the near-identical repetition of this same saying; Proverbs 14:16 - "A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil."

22:4 ***(KJV)** By humility and the fear of the LORD are riches, and honour, and life.*
(B:E Project) Humility and a genuine reverence for God lead to real riches, honour, and life.

Context: A standalone proverb linking two core Proverbs virtues - humility and "the fear of the LORD" (a phrase meaning deep reverence and respect, not terror) - to genuine flourishing.

Meaning: "The fear of the LORD" is one of Proverbs' central themes - a phrase for taking God, and therefore reality's moral structure, seriously, rather than living as though nothing beyond yourself matters. Paired with humility, it's presented as the actual root of lasting riches, honour, and life - not the pursuit of status and wealth directly, but the character quality underneath it. It flips the usual order most people assume: chase humility and reverence, and genuine flourishing follows, rather than chasing flourishing directly and hoping character comes along for the ride.

Lesson: Chase humility and a genuine respect for what's bigger than you, and watch what actually grows from that soil - it's more durable than anything you could grab for directly. Don't skip the root to grab at the fruit; the fruit only lasts if the root is real.

See Also: Proverbs 15:33 - "before honour is humility"; Matthew 6:33 - "seek ye first the kingdom of God... and all these things shall be added unto you."

22:5 ***(KJV)** Thorns and snares are in the way of the froward: he that doth keep his soul shall be far from them.*
(B:E Project) A crooked person's path is littered with thorns and traps - stay careful and you'll steer well clear of them.

Context: A standalone proverb warning of the hidden dangers built into a dishonest or perverse way of life, and the safety of guarding your own conduct.

Meaning: The image is of a path scattered with thorns (painful obstacles) and snares (hidden traps) - not external punishments imposed from outside, but the natural hazards that come baked into a crooked, dishonest way of living. The one who "keeps his soul" - stays watchful and guards their own conduct and character - avoids that whole minefield simply by not walking that path in the first place. It's a reminder that avoiding trouble is often less about dramatic rescue and more about simply not choosing the dangerous road to begin with.

Lesson: A lot of trouble in life isn't bad luck - it's the natural hazard of the road you chose to walk. Stay watchful over your own choices and character, and you'll find yourself steering clear of dangers that ensnare people who weren't paying attention to where they were headed.

See Also: Proverbs 4:14-15 - "Enter not into the path of the wicked... avoid it, pass not by it"; Proverbs 13:15 - "the way of transgressors is hard."

22:6 *(KJV) Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*
(B:E Project) Raise a child in the way they're meant to go, and even when they're grown up, they won't wander from it.

Context: A standalone proverb, one of the most famous in the whole book, on the theme of parenting and the lasting impact of early moral formation - fitting within the chapter's broader guidance on wise living.

Meaning: This is a foundational statement about the power of upbringing: the habits, values, and character shaped in childhood tend to stay with a person for life, even if there are detours along the way. It's often read as an absolute guarantee, but it's better understood as a proverb - a general principle of how life usually works, not a mechanical promise (Proverbs itself contains other cases showing outcomes aren't perfectly predictable). Its real force is a serious call to parents and caregivers: what you invest in a child early shapes the trajectory of their whole life, so that investment matters enormously.

Lesson: If you're raising a child - or shaping any young person's life - take that seriously, because what you plant now tends to grow for decades. And if you're the child now grown, know that whatever direction you were pointed as a child, you're never beyond finding your way back to what's good and true.

See Also: Deuteronomy 6:6-7 on teaching commandments diligently to children; Ephesians 6:4 - fathers bringing up children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

22:7 *(KJV) The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.*

(B:E Project) Rich people have power over the poor, and if you owe someone money, you're effectively working for them.

Context: A standalone proverb offering a blunt, practical observation about the real-world power dynamics created by wealth and debt.

Meaning: This verse doesn't moralise - it simply describes how economic power actually functions: money buys influence and control, and debt creates a real, ongoing obligation that limits your freedom, whether or not anyone calls it "servitude" out loud. It's a sober warning about the practical loss of independence that comes with borrowing, and an implicit encouragement toward financial caution rather than casual debt.

Lesson: Be careful about debt - it's not just a number, it's a real constraint on your freedom, tying you to another person's terms until it's paid off. Where you can, choose the harder, slower road of living within your means over the easier road of owing someone else.

See Also: Romans 13:8 - "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another"; Proverbs 22:26-27 later in this same chapter, warning against becoming surety for another's debt.

22:8 *(KJV) He that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity: and the rod of his anger shall fail.*
(B:E Project) Plant wrongdoing, and you'll harvest nothing but emptiness - and the power you used to hurt others will eventually give out.

Context: A standalone proverb using agricultural imagery (sowing and reaping) to describe the ultimately futile outcome of a life built on wrongdoing and cruelty.

Meaning: The sowing/reaping metaphor is one of the Bible's most consistent images for moral cause and effect: whatever you plant in your actions eventually produces a matching harvest. Here, wrongdoing produces "vanity" - emptiness, nothing of real substance - despite whatever short-term gain it seemed to bring. "The rod of his anger" pictures someone using force or cruelty to dominate others, and the verse promises that power, too, eventually fails. It's a long-view assurance that injustice, even when it seems to be winning, doesn't have staying power.

Lesson: Whatever you're planting through how you treat people - kindness or cruelty, honesty or manipulation - you will eventually harvest more of that same thing. Choose to plant something worth harvesting, because the harvest always comes, one way or another.

See Also: Galatians 6:7-8 - "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap"; Job 4:8 - "they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same."

22:9 *(KJV) He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor.*
(B:E Project) A generous person will be blessed - because they share their food with those who have none.

Context: A standalone proverb praising practical generosity toward the poor, continuing the chapter's earlier theme (22:2) about rich and poor sharing common humanity.

Meaning: A "bountiful eye" is a vivid way of describing an outlook - the way you see the world and the people in it - that's oriented toward sharing rather than hoarding. The specific example (sharing bread) keeps this grounded and practical, not abstract charity but the concrete act of giving someone food when you have it and they don't. The blessing described isn't presented as a reward for a transaction, but as the natural result of a generous, outward-looking character.

Lesson: Look at the world with generous eyes - notice who's hungry, who's struggling, and let that noticing lead to actual sharing, not just sympathy. That generosity isn't a loss to you; it's part of what makes a genuinely good life.

See Also: Proverbs 11:25 - "The liberal soul shall be made fat"; Matthew 25:35 - "I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat."

22:10 *(KJV) Cast out the scorner, and contention shall go out; yea, strife and reproach shall cease.*
(B:E Project) Remove the mocker from the group, and the fighting stops with them - the arguing and insults go too.

Context: A standalone proverb on the social effect of mockers and contentious people, following on from 21:24's description of the "proud and haughty scorner."

Meaning: This verse makes a striking claim about group dynamics: a huge amount of ongoing conflict in a community, family, or workplace can trace back to one contentious, mocking person, and removing that one source can genuinely calm the whole environment. It's a reminder that conflict isn't always evenly distributed - sometimes it really does centre on one person's attitude - and that setting healthy boundaries (rather than tolerating disruption indefinitely) is a legitimate way to restore peace.

Lesson: If one person's mockery or contempt keeps stirring up conflict around you, you're allowed to set a boundary rather than endlessly absorbing the damage. Protecting peace sometimes means having the courage to remove what's poisoning it, not just enduring it forever.

See Also: Titus 3:10 - "A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject"; Proverbs 26:20 - "where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth."

22:11 *(KJV) He that loveth pureness of heart, for the grace of his lips the king shall be his friend.*
(B:E Project) Someone who genuinely values a pure heart, and who speaks graciously, will find even a king wanting to be their friend.

Context: A standalone proverb linking inner integrity ("pureness of heart") with gracious speech, and the social reward that combination brings, even reaching the highest levels of society.

Meaning: This verse pairs an inner quality (loving purity of heart - genuine, unmixed integrity, not performance) with an outward one (grace in speech - how you talk to and about people). Together, the verse says, that combination is so attractive that it can win favour even with the most powerful people around. It's a picture of how authentic character and considerate speech open doors that manipulation or flattery never genuinely can.

Lesson: Cultivate real integrity on the inside and let your words be genuinely gracious on the outside - that combination is magnetic in a way that trying to impress people never is. Don't chase influence directly; build real character and kind speech, and influence tends to follow.

See Also: Matthew 5:8 - "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God"; Proverbs 16:13 - "Righteous lips are the delight of kings."

22:12 *(KJV) The eyes of the LORD preserve knowledge, and he overthroweth the words of the transgressor.*
(B:E Project) God watches over and protects true knowledge, and he brings down the words of those who lie and betray trust.

Context: A standalone proverb affirming that truth is ultimately protected and preserved, while deceit is ultimately undone.

Meaning: This verse gives a kind of cosmic backing to the value of truth: knowledge and truthful understanding are actively "preserved" - watched over and protected - while dishonest, treacherous speech is actively overturned. It's an assurance, especially relevant in times when lies seem to spread faster than truth, that deception doesn't have the final word; truth has a kind of durability that falsehood lacks over the long run.

Lesson: Don't despair when lies seem to spread faster than truth in the moment - truth has a staying power that deception doesn't, even when it takes time to show. Keep speaking and holding onto what's actually true, because that's the side that ultimately holds up.

See Also: John 8:32 - "ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"; Psalm 119:160 - "Thy word is true from the beginning."

22:13 *(KJV) The slothful man saith, There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets.*
(B:E Project) The lazy person makes excuses, saying "There's a lion outside, I'll be killed if I go into the street!"

Context: A standalone proverb, almost comic in tone, mocking the lazy person's habit of inventing absurd excuses to avoid work - a recurring caricature across Proverbs.

Meaning: This verse is deliberately exaggerated for effect - a lion loose in the street is an outlandish, almost paranoid excuse, and that's the point: the lazy person isn't genuinely afraid, they're grasping for any justification, however implausible, to avoid effort. It's a sharp, slightly humorous portrait of self-deceiving procrastination - the way people

- convince themselves that staying inactive is actually the sensible, cautious choice, when really it's just avoidance dressed up as prudence.

Lesson: Notice when your excuses for avoiding something have started sounding more like fear-shaped stories than real obstacles - be honest with yourself about the difference. I'd rather you take a real risk and try than hide behind an imaginary lion.

See Also: Proverbs 26:13, the same "lion in the streets" excuse repeated almost word for word; Proverbs 6:9-10 mocking the sluggard's endless "yet a little sleep."
- 22:14** *(KJV) The mouth of strange women is a deep pit: he that is abhorred of the LORD shall fall therein.*
(B:E Project) A seductive, immoral woman's talk is like a deep pit - and someone who's turned away from what's good will fall right into it.

Context: A standalone proverb echoing the extended warnings against the "strange woman" (sexual immorality/adultery) found throughout chapters 1-9, condensed here into a single vivid image.

Meaning: This picks up a theme spelled out at much greater length in the early chapters of Proverbs - the danger of being drawn into destructive sexual relationships through persuasive, flattering talk. The "deep pit" image conveys a hidden trap: you don't see it as danger while you're being drawn in, only once you're already falling. The verse links falling into this trap with having drifted from what's good in the first place - it's less about one weak moment and more about a pattern of having turned away from wisdom that leaves someone vulnerable.

Lesson: Watch for the traps that come dressed up as flattering, exciting talk - the danger is rarely obvious in the moment, that's exactly what makes it a trap. Stay rooted in what you know is genuinely good for you, because that rootedness is what keeps you from falling into pits you didn't see coming.

See Also: Proverbs 5:3-5 on the seductress whose feet "go down to death"; Proverbs 7:21-27, the extended warning of the young man led like an ox to slaughter.
- 22:15** *(KJV) Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.*
(B:E Project) Foolishness is naturally tangled up in a child's heart - but firm correction can drive it far away.

Context: A standalone proverb continuing the chapter's parenting theme begun at 22:6, on the necessity of discipline in shaping character.

Meaning: This verse assumes that foolishness isn't something children pick up from outside only - it's naturally present, "bound" or tied up, within a child from the start, part of the ordinary process of growing up and learning self-control. "The rod of correction" (discipline, firm and loving guidance, not cruelty) is presented as the tool that addresses this, helping to draw that foolishness out over time. Read in its ancient context alongside

- the rest of Proverbs' teaching on gentleness and love, this is about the necessity of real boundaries and consequences in raising a child, not harshness for its own sake.

Lesson: Loving someone - especially a child - sometimes means holding firm boundaries and real consequences, not just warm feelings; both are part of genuine care. Discipline given out of love, not anger, is one of the most caring things you can offer someone still learning how to live well.

See Also: Proverbs 13:24 - "he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes"; Hebrews 12:11 on chastening not being joyous but grievous at first, yet yielding "the peaceable fruit of righteousness" afterward.
- 22:16** *(KJV) He that oppresseth the poor to increase his riches, and he that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want.*
(B:E Project) Squeezing the poor to get richer, or giving handouts to people who are already wealthy - both roads lead to poverty in the end.

Context: A standalone proverb, somewhat cryptic in structure, pairing two seemingly opposite financial behaviours - exploiting the poor and flattering the rich - and giving both the same outcome.

Meaning: This verse links two behaviours that might look unrelated: actively oppressing poor people for personal profit, and currying favour with the wealthy through gifts (perhaps hoping for connections or influence). Both, the verse says, end the same way - in poverty. The underlying thread may be that both actions are driven by the same misplaced values: chasing status and gain through exploiting or flattering the powerful, rather than through honest generosity, and that kind of self-serving strategy ultimately backfires.

Lesson: Neither exploiting the vulnerable for gain nor flattering the powerful for favour is a real strategy for security - both are shortcuts that eventually collapse. Build your life instead on honest dealing with everyone, whatever their position, and that's the foundation that actually holds.

See Also: Proverbs 22:22-23 later in this same chapter, warning explicitly against robbing the poor; James 2:1-9 on the sin of showing partiality to the rich.
- 22:17** *(KJV) Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply thine heart unto my knowledge.*
(B:E Project) Lean in and listen carefully to what wise people say, and take my teaching seriously to heart.

Context: This verse opens a new section within chapter 22 (often called "the words of the wise," running through roughly 22:17-24:22), a shift back toward direct, personal address like the discourses of chapters 1-9, urging attentive listening.

Meaning: After a long run of short, standalone proverbs, the text shifts gear here into a more personal, direct appeal - a teacher speaking to a student, urging real attentiveness rather than passive hearing. "Bow down thine ear" pictures active, deliberate listening,

leaning in rather than half-listening. "Apply thine heart" goes further - it's not enough to hear the words, you have to actually let them shape you internally. It's an invitation into a longer stretch of concentrated wisdom teaching that follows.

Lesson: There's a real difference between hearing advice and actually letting it change you - I'm asking for the second kind of listening from you now. Lean in with your full attention when wisdom is being offered to you; half-listening rarely changes anything.

See Also: Proverbs 4:20-21 - the father in chapters 1-9 urging his son to attend to his words and keep them "in the midst of thine heart"; James 1:19, 22 on being swift to hear and doers of the word, not hearers only.

22:18 *(KJV) For it is a pleasant thing if thou keep them within thee; they shall withal be fitted in thy lips.*
(B:E Project) Holding onto this wisdom inside you will be genuinely satisfying, and it will show up naturally in what you say.

Context: Continuing directly from 22:17, part of the "words of the wise" section's opening appeal for the value of internalising wise teaching.

Meaning: This verse promises two things about genuinely internalised wisdom: it's pleasant - not a burden but a source of real satisfaction to carry within you - and it becomes natural, showing up unforced in your speech, rather than something you have to consciously perform. The image is of wisdom becoming so much a part of you that it simply flows out when you speak, because it's genuinely rooted inside rather than just memorised on the surface.

Lesson: When wisdom actually settles into you rather than staying as facts you memorised, it stops being effort and starts being who you are - it just comes out naturally in how you speak and act. Let good teaching sink in deep enough that it becomes part of your character, not just information you carry around.

See Also: Colossians 3:16 - "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly"; Psalm 119:11 - "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."

22:19 *(KJV) That thy trust may be in the LORD, I have made known to thee this day, even to thee.*
(B:E Project) I'm telling you all this today so that your trust will be placed in God.

Context: Continuing the "words of the wise" address, this verse states the ultimate purpose behind the teaching that follows - not just practical advice, but a deeper trust.

Meaning: This verse pauses to clarify the whole point of the teaching: it isn't just a checklist of practical life tips, useful as those are - it's aimed at something deeper, building a foundation of genuine trust. The personal, direct address ("even to thee") makes it feel individually addressed, as though the teacher is speaking specifically and personally to the listener, not just to a crowd in general.

Lesson: All the practical advice in the world is aimed at something deeper - I want you to trust in something bigger than your own effort and cleverness, not just to pick up life tips. Let good instruction lead you toward that deeper trust, not just toward being more efficient at life.

See Also: Proverbs 3:5 - "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding"; Psalm 37:3 - "Trust in the LORD, and do good."

22:20 *(KJV) Have not I written to thee excellent things in counsels and knowledge,*
(B:E Project) Haven't I written down excellent advice and knowledge for you?

Context: Continuing the "words of the wise" preface, this rhetorical question underlines the value and seriousness of the teaching being given.

Meaning: This is a rhetorical question expecting the answer "yes" - the teacher is reminding the listener of the substantial effort already invested in writing down this wisdom for them, underlining that it deserves to be taken seriously rather than dismissed casually. It also implies a personal relationship between teacher and student - this wasn't generic advice, it was written with this specific listener in mind.

Lesson: Good advice that's been carefully thought through and written down for you deserves your genuine attention, not a quick skim. Recognise the care behind wisdom that's been passed down to you, and let that care earn your real consideration.

See Also: 2 Timothy 3:16 - "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine..."; Proverbs 1:1-6, the book's own opening statement of purpose.

22:21 *(KJV) That I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth; that thou mightest answer the words of truth to them that send unto thee?*
(B:E Project) So that you'll know truth with real certainty, and be able to give a truthful answer to whoever sends you questions.

Context: The closing verse of this short preface (22:17-21) to the "words of the wise" section, stating the practical goal - genuine, reliable knowledge that equips the listener to answer others truthfully.

Meaning: This verse gives the practical payoff of the whole preceding appeal: not vague spirituality, but "certainty" - solid, reliable knowledge - that equips the listener to respond truthfully when others come to them with questions. It pictures wisdom as something you're meant to pass on, not just privately hold - being formed by truth so that you can, in turn, be a trustworthy source for others who come asking.

Lesson: The wisdom I want to give you isn't just for your own private benefit - it's so you can be a genuinely trustworthy answer for other people when they come to you with real questions. Let what you learn make you someone others can rely on for honest, solid answers.

See Also: 1 Peter 3:15 - being ready always to give an answer to every man that asks a reason of your hope; Proverbs 15:28 - "The heart of the righteous studieth to answer."

22:22 *(KJV) Rob not the poor, because he is poor: neither oppress the afflicted in the gate:*
(B:E Project) Don't take advantage of poor people just because they're poor, and don't oppress the vulnerable in court.

Context: Part of the "words of the wise" section, this verse opens a specific instruction against exploiting the poor and vulnerable, particularly in legal or civic settings ("the gate" being where legal and business matters were handled in ancient towns).

Meaning: "The gate" was the ancient equivalent of a courthouse or town square where legal disputes and business were settled publicly - so this verse specifically addresses systemic or institutional exploitation of the poor, not just personal unkindness. It calls out a particular temptation: because poor people often have less power to defend themselves, they're easier to exploit, and this verse names that exact vulnerability as exactly why they must not be targeted, not a justification for it.

Lesson: Never take advantage of someone specifically because they're less able to defend themselves - that ease of exploitation is not permission, it's a reason for greater care and protection. Use whatever power or advantage you have to protect vulnerable people, not to exploit the very vulnerability that makes them easy targets.

See Also: Exodus 22:22 on not afflicting the widow or fatherless; Amos 5:12 on those who "afflict the just... and turn aside the poor in the gate from their right."

22:23 *(KJV) For the LORD will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those that spoiled them.*
(B:E Project) God himself will take up their case, and he will take from those who took from them.

Context: Directly continuing 22:22, giving the reason behind the command not to exploit the poor - God personally takes their side.

Meaning: This verse gives the "why" behind 22:22's command: the poor may lack legal or social power to defend themselves in the moment, but they aren't undefended - the verse pictures God personally taking up their legal case, and turning the exploiter's own tactic (spoiling/taking) back on them. It's a powerful assurance for anyone who has ever been taken advantage of by someone more powerful and had no way to fight back through ordinary channels.

Lesson: If you've ever been exploited by someone more powerful and had no way to get justice yourself, know that you are not actually undefended - your case matters and is not forgotten. And if you're ever tempted to exploit someone weaker than you, know that you're not dealing only with them.

See Also: Psalm 68:5 - God as "a father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows"; Deuteronomy 10:18 on God executing "the judgment of the fatherless and widow."

22:24 *(KJV) Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go:*
(B:E Project) Don't become close friends with someone who's constantly angry, and don't spend your time with someone who's easily enraged.

Context: Part of the "words of the wise" section, this verse begins a two-verse warning (continuing into 22:25) about the influence of choosing angry, hot-tempered friends.

Meaning: This is direct, practical advice about the company you keep - specifically warning against close friendship with someone whose defining trait is anger or rage. It's not about avoiding every person who's ever angry (that would be everyone at some point), but about deliberately not building close, formative relationships with people whose anger is a habitual pattern, because closeness inevitably rubs off.

Lesson: Pay attention to who you're letting shape you through close friendship - anger, like most emotional patterns, is contagious in relationships. Choose your closest companions with real care, because who you spend the most time with quietly becomes part of who you are.

See Also: Proverbs 22:25, the immediate continuation explaining the risk of learning that person's ways; 1 Corinthians 15:33 - "evil communications corrupt good manners."

22:25 *(KJV) Lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul.*
(B:E Project) Otherwise you'll pick up his habits and end up trapped by them yourself.

Context: The direct continuation of 22:24, giving the specific reason for avoiding close friendship with an angry, hot-tempered person.

Meaning: This verse spells out exactly why the warning in 22:24 matters: the danger isn't abstract, it's that you genuinely absorb the habits of the people you're closest to, often without realising it's happening. "A snare to thy soul" pictures the outcome as a trap you've unknowingly set for yourself, by imitation, rather than something imposed on you from outside. It's a sober reminder that we become like the people we spend the most time with, for better or worse.

Lesson: You become like the people you keep closest to you, whether you intend to or not - so choose those relationships with real intention. Protecting your own character sometimes means having the courage to create distance from an influence that's quietly shaping you for the worse.

See Also: Proverbs 13:20 - "he that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed"; 1 Corinthians 15:33 on evil company corrupting good character.

22:26 *(KJV) Be not thou one of them that strike hands, or of them that are sureties for debts.*
(B:E Project) Don't be someone who shakes hands on a deal to guarantee someone else's debt.

Context: Part of the "words of the wise" section, this verse opens a two-verse warning (continuing into 22:27) against becoming a guarantor for another person's debt - a recurring caution across Proverbs.

Meaning: "Striking hands" was the ancient equivalent of signing a contract - a physical gesture sealing an agreement, here specifically to act as a guarantor (surety) for someone else's debt. Proverbs repeatedly warns against this specific financial arrangement, not because helping people is wrong, but because becoming legally liable for someone else's obligation puts your own financial security entirely at the mercy of another person's choices and circumstances, which you can't control.

Lesson: Be generous with what's yours, but be very careful about putting your own security at the mercy of someone else's future choices - that's a different kind of risk than giving. Wisdom isn't stinginess; it's knowing the difference between helping someone and handing them control over your own stability.

See Also: Proverbs 6:1-5, a longer warning to escape quickly if you've already become surety for a neighbour; Proverbs 11:15 - "He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it."

22:27 *(KJV) If thou hast nothing to pay, why should he take away thy bed from under thee?*
(B:E Project) If you can't pay up, why should you lose even the bed you sleep in?

Context: The direct continuation of 22:26, spelling out the real, tangible cost of becoming surety for someone else's debt.

Meaning: This verse makes the warning of 22:26 painfully concrete: if the debt you guaranteed goes unpaid, you could genuinely lose your most basic possessions - even your bed, the most minimal, personal item imaginable - to cover someone else's obligation. It's a vivid, almost uncomfortable image chosen precisely to make the risk feel real and immediate, not theoretical, driving home why this kind of financial entanglement deserves real caution.

Lesson: Think through the real, concrete cost before you take on someone else's financial risk - not the vague idea of it, but the actual, specific loss you could face. Caring for people doesn't require putting your own basic security on the line for a debt that was never yours to begin with.

See Also: Proverbs 20:16 - taking a garment as pledge for a stranger's debt; Proverbs 27:13, an almost identical warning repeated later in the book.

22:28 *(KJV) Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set.*
(B:E Project) Don't move the old boundary markers that your ancestors set in place.

Context: A standalone proverb within the "words of the wise" section, using the specific image of ancient property boundary stones to warn against dishonestly encroaching on what belongs to others.

Meaning: In the ancient world, boundary stones marked the edge of a family's land, and moving one under cover of darkness was a quiet, hard-to-detect way of stealing land from a neighbour. This verse forbids that specific form of dishonest encroachment, but it carries a broader principle too: respect what genuinely belongs to others and to the

past, rather than quietly redrawing lines in your own favour when you think no one's watching.

Lesson: Don't quietly take advantage in the small, hard-to-notice ways - shifting boundaries, bending rules when you think no one's watching - because integrity in the unseen details is exactly where real character is tested. Respect what belongs to others, even when moving the line just a little would be easy and unnoticed.

See Also: Deuteronomy 19:14 on not removing a neighbour's landmark set by former generations; Proverbs 23:10, the same warning repeated, extending it to the fatherless's fields.

22:29 *(KJV) Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men.*

(B:E Project) Do you see someone who's genuinely skilled and diligent at their work? They'll end up serving before kings, not stuck among nobodies.

Context: The closing verse of chapter 22, a standalone proverb praising diligence and skill in one's work as the path to genuine advancement and recognition.

Meaning: This verse closes the chapter with a practical, encouraging observation: real diligence and skill in your work - not luck, not flattery, not connections alone - tend to be recognised and rewarded with real advancement over time, even reaching the highest levels ("stand before kings"). It's a vote of confidence in the long-term value of genuinely mastering your craft and working with real diligence, rather than looking for shortcuts to status.

Lesson: Put real care and diligence into your work, even when no one important seems to be watching - genuine skill has a way of eventually being seen and valued. Don't chase recognition directly; build real competence and let recognition come as its natural result.

See Also: Colossians 3:23 - "whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord"; Proverbs 12:24 - "the hand of the diligent shall bear rule."

CHAPTER 23

Chapter Summary: Proverbs 23

Proverbs Chapter 23 offers a collection of practical advice, primarily in the form of a father's guidance to his son, covering various aspects of life. It begins with warnings about social conduct, particularly when dining with important people, emphasising self-control and discernment. The chapter then cautions against the fleeting nature of wealth and the dangers of greed. It stresses the importance of wisdom in dealings with others, advising against sharing deep thoughts with fools and upholding justice for the vulnerable. A significant portion encourages diligent learning and the value of parental discipline. The text highlights the profound joy a parent experiences when their child chooses a path of wisdom and integrity. It also strongly warns against the perils of drunkenness, gluttony, and sexual immorality, detailing their destructive consequences on

one's health, finances, and relationships, urging the reader to embrace a life of truth, understanding, and reverence for the Lord.

23:1 *(KJV)* When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee:
(B:E Project) When you sit down to eat with someone powerful or important, pay close attention to what's really going on in front of you - don't just dig in without thinking.

Context: Opens the second collection of "sayings of the wise" (running from 22:17 to 24:22); a practical piece of etiquette-wisdom about staying alert around powerful people.

Meaning: This isn't really about table manners for their own sake - it's about staying self-possessed around power. Powerful people can create situations where you're tempted to overindulge, show off, or lower your guard to impress them. The proverb tells you to stay observant and in control, not swept up by the occasion.

Lesson: I want you to be free even at another person's table - not performing, not grasping, just present and clear-headed. Power in a room can pull you off balance; steady yourself before you let it.

See Also: Luke 14:7-11 (Jesus' teaching on humility at a feast); Ecclesiastes 10:17 (rulers who eat for strength, not for drunkenness).

23:2 *(KJV)* And put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite.
(B:E Project) If you know you tend to overdo it with food, treat it as seriously as putting a blade to your own throat - rein yourself in hard.

Context: Continues the dinner-with-a-ruler scene; a deliberately shocking, hyperbolic image warning against lack of self-control at the table.

Meaning: The image is startling on purpose - it's Hebrew idiom for extreme self-discipline, not literal violence. Appetite, whether for food or anything else, can make you look foolish or vulnerable in front of people who matter, so if that's your weak spot, guard it fiercely.

Lesson: I'm not asking you to hate your body - I'm asking you to notice where a craving runs the show instead of you. Self-control isn't punishment, it's how you stay free rather than owned.

See Also: 1 Corinthians 9:27 (Paul disciplining his own body); Philippians 3:19 ("whose god is their belly").

23:3 *(KJV)* Be not desirous of his dainties: for they are deceitful meat.
(B:E Project) Don't crave the fancy food a powerful host is offering - it's not what it looks like.

Context: Still part of the ruler's-table scene; warns that a powerful host's generosity often comes with strings attached.

Meaning: "Deceitful meat" means the meal isn't free in the way it appears - accepting lavish hospitality from someone powerful can quietly obligate you, or hide an ulterior motive. The wisdom is to see past the surface generosity to what's actually being asked of you.

Lesson: I want you to notice when a gift has a hook in it. Not everyone who feeds you does it out of love - some are buying your loyalty or your silence. Stay awake to the difference.

See Also: Proverbs 22:24-25 (caution about the company you keep); Genesis 3:6 (desirable-looking fruit that deceives).

23:4 *(KJV)* Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom.
(B:E Project) Don't wear yourself out trying to get rich - have the sense to stop relying on your own cleverness to chase it.

Context: Opens a short two-verse unit (23:4-5) within the sayings of the wise, warning against making wealth the driving goal of life.

Meaning: The verse pairs two ideas: stop labouring obsessively for riches, and stop trusting your own scheming to get there. The drive to get rich is often paired with an inflated confidence in your own cunning - and both need to be checked.

Lesson: I want your energy going into something that lasts, not a race you can't win by outsmarting the odds. Rest your ambition; there's a wiser way to live than a life spent grasping.

See Also: Matthew 6:24 ("ye cannot serve God and mammon"); Ecclesiastes 4:6 ("better is an handful with quietness").

23:5 *(KJV)* Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.
(B:E Project) Why fix your eyes on something so unstable? Riches can sprout wings in an instant and fly off like an eagle into the sky.

Context: Closes the 23:4-5 unit, using vivid imagery of wealth's instability.

Meaning: This drives home just how unreliable wealth is - loss can come almost mockingly fast, as if it was never really yours to hold. The eagle image suggests total, swift, unstoppable loss, underscoring why chasing riches as life's goal is foolish.

Lesson: Don't build your identity on something that can disappear overnight - what's truly yours is what can't be taken by a bad market or a stroke of luck. Set your eyes on something with real staying power.

See Also: 1 Timothy 6:17 ("trust not in uncertain riches"); Proverbs 27:24 ("riches are not for ever").

- 23:6

(KJV) Eat thou not the bread of him that hath an evil eye, neither desire thou his dainty meats:

(B:E Project) Don't eat food offered by a stingy, ill-intentioned person, and don't crave his fancy delicacies.

Context: Opens a short unit (23:6-8) about a two-faced host, within the sayings of the wise.

Meaning: An "evil eye" here describes someone begrudging or calculating beneath a friendly surface. The warning is to be wary of accepting generosity from someone whose heart isn't genuinely behind it.

Lesson: Notice who actually wants good for you versus who's just performing kindness - real hospitality comes from an open heart, and you can usually feel the difference if you pay attention.

See Also: Matthew 20:15 ("is thine eye evil, because I am good?"); Proverbs 28:22 ("he that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye").
- 23:7

(KJV) For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee.

(B:E Project) Because deep down he's calculating the whole time - his real self lives in his private thoughts. "Eat, drink," he tells you, but his heart isn't actually with you at all.

Context: The middle of the 23:6-8 unit, giving the psychological reasoning behind the warning against the stingy host.

Meaning: This contains one of Proverbs' most quoted lines about human nature - a person's true character is revealed by inner thought, not outward words. The host's polite invitation is hollow because his heart doesn't match his mouth.

Lesson: Judge people less by their words and more by what their actions and patterns reveal - I always looked past the surface to what was really going on inside someone. Ask yourself honestly whether your own words and heart line up too.

See Also: Matthew 15:8 ("this people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me"); Luke 6:45 ("out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh").
- 23:8

(KJV) The morsel which thou hast eaten shalt thou vomit up, and lose thy sweet words.

(B:E Project) You'll end up vomiting back the little you ate, and all the kind, pleasant things you said to him will have been wasted.

Context: Closes the 23:6-8 unit, describing the sour aftermath of accepting a two-faced host's hospitality.

Meaning: Accepting hollow hospitality leaves you feeling physically and socially sick, having wasted your own goodwill on someone who never valued it.

Lesson: Don't pour your warmth into a relationship that was never going to receive it honestly - spend that energy on people who'll actually meet you with an open heart.

- See Also:

Matthew 7:6 ("cast not your pearls before swine"); Proverbs 23:9 (the very next verse, about not wasting wisdom on a fool).
- 23:9

(KJV) Speak not in the ears of a fool: for he will despise the wisdom of thy words.

(B:E Project) Don't waste your wise words on a closed-minded fool - he'll only sneer at how sensible you're being.

Context: A standalone proverb in the sayings-of-the-wise collection about knowing your audience before offering wisdom.

Meaning: This is practical, not cruel: some people aren't in a place to hear good advice, and offering it just gets it mocked or thrown back at you. Recognising who's receptive protects your energy from being wasted on someone determined not to listen.

Lesson: I sent my followers out knowing not every door would open - if a place won't receive you, you shake the dust off and move on, you don't force it. Save your best wisdom for the people ready to use it.

See Also: Matthew 7:6 ("neither cast ye your pearls before swine"); Proverbs 9:8 ("reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee").
- 23:10

(KJV) Remove not the old landmark; and enter not into the fields of the fatherless:

(B:E Project) Don't move an old boundary stone, and don't take over land that belongs to orphaned children.

Context: Opens a two-verse unit on protecting the vulnerable from property theft, within the sayings of the wise (see also 22:28).

Meaning: Boundary stones marked family land; moving them was a quiet, hard-to-prove way to steal from people too weak to defend themselves - especially orphans who'd lost their natural protector. The command resists the temptation to exploit the defenceless simply because you can get away with it.

Lesson: Just because someone can't fight back doesn't mean you're free to take advantage - I always stood with the ones who had no one else standing for them. Protect what belongs to the powerless rather than helping yourself to it.

See Also: Deuteronomy 19:14 ("thou shalt not remove thy neighbour's landmark"); James 1:27 (true religion cares for orphans and widows).
- 23:11

(KJV) For their redeemer is mighty; he shall plead their cause with thee.

(B:E Project) Because their defender is powerful - he will take up their case against you himself.

Context: Closes the unit begun in 23:10, giving the reason behind the warning against exploiting the fatherless.

Meaning: The "redeemer" is a legal-family term for the relative or protector who fights for someone unable to defend themselves - here applied to God as the ultimate

advocate of the vulnerable. Wronging the powerless doesn't go unanswered, even if no human steps in.

Lesson: I see every quiet injustice done to someone who has no one to speak for them, and I take their side. Don't assume that because a person can't defend themselves, no one ever will.

See Also: Psalm 68:5 ("a father of the fatherless... is God"); Proverbs 22:23 ("the LORD will plead their cause").

23:12 *(KJV) Apply thine heart unto instruction, and thine ears to the words of knowledge.*
(B:E Project) Commit yourself fully to learning - open your ears to knowledge.

Context: A brief transition verse in the sayings of the wise, a general call to embrace teaching before the following section on disciplining children.

Meaning: A simple but foundational instruction: wisdom doesn't arrive passively, it requires deliberate effort - engaging your whole self, not half-listening.

Lesson: Growth takes willingness, not just information landing on you - lean in, ask questions, stay teachable your whole life. The moment you think you've learned enough is the moment you stop growing.

See Also: Proverbs 4:13 ("take fast hold of instruction"); James 1:19 ("swift to hear").

23:13 *(KJV) Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die.*
(B:E Project) Don't hold back from disciplining a child - even firm physical correction won't kill him.

Context: Opens a two-verse unit (23:13-14) on firm parental discipline, a recurring Proverbs theme.

Meaning: The verse counters a fear that firm correction is dangerous - reassuring that appropriate discipline, though it feels harsh, isn't the catastrophe a hesitant parent might fear. Modern readers may reasonably separate the underlying principle (children need firm guidance) from the specific ancient method described.

Lesson: Don't let fear of a hard conversation or firm boundary stop you from actually protecting someone you love. Real love sometimes looks like the harder choice, not the easier one.

See Also: Hebrews 12:11 ("no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous"); Proverbs 29:15 ("the rod and reproof give wisdom").

23:14 *(KJV) Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.*
(B:E Project) Firm discipline like that can save him from a path that leads to real destruction.

Context: Closes the 23:13-14 unit, stating the positive purpose behind firm discipline.

Meaning: "Hell" here (sheol) points to death, ruin, or a wasted, destructive life rather than a later doctrinal concept - the logic is that short-term discomfort of discipline prevents a far greater, longer-term loss.

Lesson: The boundaries you set out of love for someone now can be the very thing that saves them from a much harder road later. Don't confuse kindness with never saying no.

See Also: Proverbs 19:18 ("chasten thy son while there is hope"); Proverbs 22:6 ("train up a child in the way he should go").

23:15 *(KJV) My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine.*
(B:E Project) My son, if your heart grows wise, my own heart will be glad - truly glad.

Context: Opens a tender, personal address from father to son within the sayings-of-the-wise collection, expressing the emotional payoff of a child choosing wisdom.

Meaning: This shifts from instruction to raw emotion - the parent isn't just teaching rules, he's expressing genuine joy at the thought of his child living well.

Lesson: When you choose what's good and true, it doesn't just help you - it brings real joy to everyone who loves you. I rejoice over one person turning toward wisdom the way a shepherd rejoices finding one lost sheep.

See Also: Luke 15:7 (joy in heaven over one sinner who repents); 3 John 1:4 ("no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth").

23:16 *(KJV) Yea, my reins shall rejoice, when thy lips speak right things.*
(B:E Project) My inmost being will rejoice when your words are honest and right.

Context: Closes the father's heartfelt address begun in 23:15.

Meaning: "Reins" (kidneys, the seat of deep emotion in Hebrew thought) intensifies the point - this isn't polite approval but joy felt at the deepest level, tied specifically to honest speech.

Lesson: What you say reveals who you're becoming, and it matters to the people who love you far more than you realise. Let your words be honest ones; they carry more weight than you know.

See Also: Proverbs 15:23 ("a word spoken in due season, how good is it"); Psalm 19:14 ("let the words of my mouth... be acceptable").

23:17 *(KJV) Let not thine heart envy sinners: but be thou in the fear of the LORD all the day long.*
(B:E Project) Don't let your heart envy people who do wrong - instead, stay in awe and respect of God all day, every day.

Context: A standalone proverb addressing the temptation to envy wicked people who seem to prosper, a recurring worry across wisdom literature (compare Psalm 73).

- Meaning:** It can look, short term, like people who cut corners get ahead faster. This counters that illusion: envy of wrongdoers is misplaced because their apparent success has no lasting foundation.

Lesson: Don't measure your life against someone who's winning by cheating - their story isn't finished, and neither is yours. Stay anchored in what's true and good.

See Also: Psalm 73:2-17 (wrestling with envy of the wicked's prosperity); Proverbs 24:19-20 (a near-identical warning later in this same collection).
- 23:18

(KJV) For surely there is an end; and thine expectation shall not be cut off.

(B:E Project) Because there really is a future ahead, and your hope won't be cut off.

Context: Completes the thought of 23:17, giving the reason envy of sinners is misplaced.

Meaning: Even when a life built on integrity looks slower or less flashy right now, the proverb insists it has genuine, lasting hope, unlike the wrongdoer's fleeting success.

Lesson: Hold on. What looks unrewarded today isn't the end of the story - keep going, because your hope has a real future attached to it.

See Also: Jeremiah 29:11 ("an expected end"); Romans 8:24-25 (hope that is patient).
- 23:19

(KJV) Hear thou, my son, and be wise, and guide thine heart in the way.

(B:E Project) Listen, my son, and become wise - keep your heart pointed straight down the right path.

Context: Opens a short unit (23:19-21) on avoiding overindulgence in food and drink, within the sayings of the wise.

Meaning: A general call to attentiveness and intentional direction before the specific warning that follows - wisdom requires actively steering your heart, not drifting.

Lesson: Choose your direction on purpose - don't just let your life drift wherever old habits or cravings pull it. I want you awake and steering, not asleep at the wheel.

See Also: Proverbs 4:23 ("keep thy heart with all diligence"); Joshua 24:15 ("choose you this day whom ye will serve").
- 23:20

(KJV) Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh:

(B:E Project) Don't run with heavy drinkers or people who gorge themselves on meat.

Context: Continues the 23:19-21 unit, naming the specific company to avoid.

Meaning: This is about the influence of company - habitual overindulgence is often reinforced by who you spend time with. Avoiding that crowd is practical self-protection, not snobbery.

Lesson: The people you surround yourself with shape your habits more than you realise - choose companions who bring out your best, not your worst appetites.

- See Also:** 1 Corinthians 15:33 ("evil communications corrupt good manners"); Proverbs 13:20 ("he that walketh with wise men shall be wise").
- 23:21

(KJV) For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags.

(B:E Project) Because drunks and gluttons end up poor, and constant drowsiness dresses a person in rags.

Context: Closes the 23:19-21 unit with the practical consequence of overindulgence.

Meaning: The link is concrete: excess dulls a person into drowsiness and neglect, which directly produces poverty and shabby ruin - a natural, observable outcome, not an abstract penalty.

Lesson: Notice the quiet way small excesses pile up into real loss - not as punishment, but as simple cause and effect. Wake up to your own life before drowsiness costs you more than you meant to spend.

See Also: Proverbs 21:17 ("he that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man"); Proverbs 6:9-11 ("a little sleep... and poverty comes").
- 23:22

(KJV) Harken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old.

(B:E Project) Listen to your father who gave you life, and don't look down on your mother once she's old.

Context: Opens a two-verse unit (23:22-23) on honouring parents and valuing truth, within the sayings of the wise.

Meaning: This extends the command to honour parents specifically into old age, when a parent might become less capable or more dependent - explicitly warning against contempt at that vulnerable stage.

Lesson: Honour your parents not just when they're strong and impressive, but especially when age has made them frailer - that's when your care means the most.

See Also: Exodus 20:12 (honour thy father and mother); Leviticus 19:32 ("rise up before the hoary head").
- 23:23

(KJV) Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding.

(B:E Project) Buy the truth, and never sell it back - get wisdom, discipline, and understanding too.

Context: Closes the 23:22-23 unit, pivoting to the value of truth and wisdom.

Meaning: "Buying" implies truth costs something - effort, humility, sometimes discomfort - while "not selling" means once gained, it should never be traded away for convenience or profit.

Lesson: Whatever it costs you to learn what's true, don't let it go later for an easier life or an easier lie. Truth is worth protecting long after the moment you first paid for it.
See Also: Matthew 13:44-46 (the treasure and pearl worth all a man has); John 8:32 ("the truth shall make you free").

23:24 *(KJV) The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice: and he that begetheth a wise child shall have joy of him.*
(B:E Project) The father of a truly good person will be filled with joy; whoever raises a wise child gets real delight from him.

Context: Opens a two-verse unit (23:24-25) on the joy parents take in a child's wisdom and goodness.
Meaning: This restates and intensifies the earlier point (23:15-16) - wisdom and righteousness aren't just personal virtues, they're gifts a child gives back to the people who raised them.
Lesson: The good choices you make don't stay contained to you - they become someone else's joy too. Let that be part of your motivation, but not the whole of it.
See Also: 3 John 1:4 ("no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth"); Proverbs 10:1 ("a wise son maketh a glad father").

23:25 *(KJV) Thy father and thy mother shall be glad, and she that bare thee shall rejoice.*
(B:E Project) So make your father and mother glad - let the woman who gave birth to you rejoice.

Context: Closes the 23:24-25 unit, turning the general observation into a direct call to action for the reader.
Meaning: Where 23:24 describes the principle, this verse makes it personal and immediate - a direct appeal to actively bring that joy to your own parents through how you live.
Lesson: Don't just accept that good living pleases your parents in theory - actually live in a way that lets them see it, today, while they're here to see it.
See Also: Proverbs 15:20 ("a wise son maketh a glad father"); Ephesians 6:1-3.

23:26 *(KJV) My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways.*
(B:E Project) My son, give me your heart - let your eyes stay fixed on how I live.

Context: Opens a unit (23:26-28) warning against sexual immorality, echoing the extended warnings against the "strange woman" in chapters 5-7.
Meaning: Before the specific warning, the father asks for something deeper than obedience to rules - full-hearted trust and attentive imitation.

Lesson: I don't want your rule-following, I want your heart - real change starts there. Watch how people who love you actually live, and let that guide you more than any single warning could.
See Also: Deuteronomy 6:5 ("love the LORD thy God with all thine heart"); Proverbs 4:23 ("out of it are the issues of life").

23:27 *(KJV) For a whore is a deep ditch; and a strange woman is a narrow pit.*
(B:E Project) Because a prostitute is like a deep pit, and another man's wife is like a narrow well.

Context: Continues the 23:26-28 unit with vivid trap imagery for sexual temptation.
Meaning: A pit or narrow well is a trap that's easy to fall into and hard to climb back out of - the image captures how this temptation can look harmless at first glance but leads somewhere genuinely difficult to escape.
Lesson: Some doorways look exciting from the outside and turn out to be far harder to leave than they were to enter - think ahead, not just about the moment, but about where the path actually leads.
See Also: Proverbs 5:3-5 (the same trap imagery in the earlier discourse); Proverbs 22:14 ("the mouth of strange women is a deep pit").

23:28 *(KJV) She also lieth in wait as for a prey, and increaseth the transgressors among men.*
(B:E Project) She lies in ambush like a robber waiting for prey, and she adds to the number of unfaithful men in the world.

Context: Closes the 23:26-28 unit, describing the wider, spreading damage of sexual betrayal.
Meaning: This names the ripple effect - infidelity isn't a private, contained event, it multiplies broken trust across relationships, becoming a pattern rather than an isolated incident.
Lesson: The choices you make about faithfulness don't just affect you - they ripple outward into every relationship connected to yours. Guard your commitments.
See Also: Proverbs 6:32 ("whoso committeth adultery... destroyeth his own soul"); Hebrews 13:4 ("marriage is honourable... but whoremongers... God will judge").

23:29 *(KJV) Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes?*
(B:E Project) Who's always in trouble? Who's always miserable? Who's always arguing, always complaining, covered in random bruises, with bloodshot eyes?

Context: Opens the closing poem of chapter 23 (23:29-35), a vivid picture of the effects of chronic drinking, part of the sayings of the wise.

Meaning: This rapid string of questions builds a recognisable portrait before naming the cause in the next verse - a diagnostic list of symptoms that makes the coming answer land harder.

Lesson: I notice the exhaustion behind someone's constant trouble and unexplained wounds - often it's a sign something deeper is running their life. If this fits you, that's not a verdict on your worth, it's an invitation to look honestly at the cause.

See Also: Isaiah 5:11 (woe to those who rise early to chase strong drink); Galatians 5:19-21 (drunkenness among the "works of the flesh").

23:30 *(KJV) They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine.*
(B:E Project) It's the people who linger too long over wine, who go looking for the strongest mixed drinks.

Context: Answers the riddling questions of 23:29, naming heavy drinking as the cause of the described misery.

Meaning: "Tarry long" and "seek mixed wine" point to habitual, escalating drinking - not a single drink, but a repeated pattern of chasing more.

Lesson: Notice when "just one more" becomes a pattern you keep returning to - that repetition is where the real danger lives, more than any single choice.

See Also: Proverbs 20:1 ("wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging"); Ephesians 5:18.

23:31 *(KJV) Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright.*
(B:E Project) Don't stare at wine when it looks so inviting - glowing red in the cup, going down smoothly.

Context: A warning within the closing poem against even lingering to admire the appeal of drink before it does harm.

Meaning: Wisdom about resisting temptation at its most attractive stage, before consequences are visible - the warning is not to let your eyes linger on what's dressed up to look appealing, because the appeal is precisely the trap.

Lesson: Be honest about what's tempting you before it takes hold, not after - the moment to walk away is while it still just looks appealing, not once you're already caught.

See Also: Genesis 3:6 (fruit "pleasant to the eyes" before it caused ruin); Matthew 6:22-23 (the eye as the light of the body).

23:32 *(KJV) At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.*
(B:E Project) In the end it bites like a snake and stings like a viper.

Context: The turning point of the closing poem, revealing the true nature behind wine's inviting appearance.

Meaning: This deliberately contrasts the smooth, attractive image of 23:31 with sudden, venomous harm - wisdom literature's classic move of unmasking a pleasant surface to show the real danger underneath.

Lesson: What looks harmless in the moment can still carry a hidden sting - don't judge something only by how good it feels going down; watch for what it costs you afterwards.

See Also: Numbers 21:6 (fiery serpents as judgement); Proverbs 5:4 ("her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword").

23:33 *(KJV) Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things.*
(B:E Project) Your eyes will start seeing strange things, and your mind will pour out confused, twisted thoughts.

Context: Describes the disorienting mental and perceptual effects of drunkenness, continuing the closing poem.

Meaning: This captures how intoxication distorts both perception and judgement together - what you see and what you think both become unreliable.

Lesson: Guard your mind as much as your body - the things that cloud your judgement don't just hurt you physically, they can twist how you see everyone around you.

See Also: 1 Peter 5:8 ("be sober, be vigilant"); Romans 13:13 ("not in rioting and drunkenness").

23:34 *(KJV) Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast.*
(B:E Project) You'll feel like you're lying down in the middle of a stormy sea, or clinging to the top of a ship's mast.

Context: Continues the closing poem's description of drunkenness as profound physical disorientation and danger.

Meaning: Images of extreme instability and peril - someone utterly unable to find their footing, in genuine danger, yet (as the next verse shows) unaware of just how much danger they're in.

Lesson: When you feel like the ground beneath you keeps shifting, that's worth paying attention to, not numbing further - steadiness comes from stepping back onto solid ground, not from staying up the mast.

See Also: Matthew 7:26-27 (the house built on sand, collapsing in the storm); Jonah 1:5 (Jonah asleep in the ship during the storm, oblivious to danger).

23:35 *(KJV) They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again.*

(B:E Project) "They hit me," you'll say, "but I didn't feel it; they beat me, and I didn't notice it - when will I wake up? I need to go find another drink."

Context: The closing, haunting line of the poem and of chapter 23, giving voice to the addicted person themselves.

Meaning: This final verse is chilling precisely because of its numbness - real physical harm has happened and gone unfelt, and even so the very next thought is craving more. It's an unflinching, psychologically accurate portrait of addiction's grip, ending the chapter without tidy moral closure.

Lesson: I see the person trapped inside that numbness, still worth reaching, still worth loving - addiction isn't a moral failure that puts you beyond help, it's a real chain, and I came to set people free from exactly this kind of chain. If this is you, or someone you love, don't wait to "wake up" alone; reach for a hand now.

See Also: Luke 15:17 ("when he came to himself" - the prodigal son's moment of waking up); Romans 7:15-19 (Paul's own struggle doing what he doesn't want to do); John 8:36 ("if the Son... shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed").

CHAPTER 24

Chapter Summary: Proverbs 24

Proverbs Chapter 24 presents a collection of insightful teachings covering a range of topics essential for living a wise and upright life. It begins by warning against jealousy of the wicked and the dangers of associating with them, emphasising their destructive intentions. The chapter then highlights the foundational role of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge in building a stable home and character. It underscores the importance of strength in adversity, the responsibility to help those in peril, and the inevitability of divine judgement based on actions. Further counsel advises against rejoicing in an enemy's misfortune, fostering an attitude of diligence, and avoiding laziness. It also touches on civic duties, fair judgement, and the peril of showing favouritism, while encouraging honesty, avoiding false testimony, and resisting the urge for personal revenge. The chapter concludes with a vivid illustration of the consequences of slothfulness.

24:1 **(KJV)** *Be not thou envious against evil men, neither desire to be with them.*
(B:E Project) Don't envy wicked people, and don't want to spend time with them.

Context: Opens chapter 24's sayings-of-the-wise collection; the first of several warnings in this chapter against envying people who do wrong (echoed again at 24:19).

Meaning: This targets the pull toward wrongdoers who might look successful or exciting, naming both the inner feeling (envy) and the outer action (wanting their company) as things to actively resist.

Lesson: Don't let someone's confidence or apparent success make wrongdoing look appealing - what looks like winning from the outside often isn't, once you see the whole picture.

See Also: Psalm 37:1 ("fret not thyself because of evildoers"); Proverbs 24:19-20 (the same warning repeated later in this chapter).

24:2 **(KJV)** *For their heart studieth destruction, and their lips talk of mischief.*
(B:E Project) Because deep down they're plotting harm, and their words are all about causing trouble.

Context: Gives the reason behind the warning in 24:1 - what's actually going on beneath a wrongdoer's surface appeal.

Meaning: This strips away any glamour by exposing what's underneath: constant scheming for harm. It's a reminder to judge people by their inner direction, not how impressive they appear.

Lesson: Look past the surface at what someone is actually building with their thoughts and words - that's the truest sign of who they are and whether they're safe to follow.

See Also: Matthew 12:34 ("out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh"); Psalm 36:4 ("he deviseth mischief upon his bed").

24:3 **(KJV)** *Through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established:*
(B:E Project) A house gets built through wisdom, and it's made solid through understanding.

Context: Opens a short unit (24:3-4) using house-building as a metaphor for a well-founded life, within the sayings of the wise.

Meaning: "House" represents a life, family, or household as a whole. This half credits wisdom with providing the structural plan and understanding with the strength that keeps it standing.

Lesson: Build your life on real understanding of what matters, not guesswork or impulse - what's built that way can actually stand when pressure comes.

See Also: Matthew 7:24-25 (the wise man's house built on rock); Proverbs 14:1 ("every wise woman buildeth her house").

24:4 **(KJV)** *And by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches.*
(B:E Project) Through knowledge, its rooms get filled with valuable, beautiful things.

Context: Completes the 24:3-4 unit, describing the good outcome of a life built on wisdom and understanding.

Meaning: Where wisdom and understanding provide the structure, knowledge fills that structure with things genuinely worth having - real reward follows real effort to learn and understand.

Lesson: The good things worth having come after the work of building something solid - don't chase the furnishings before the foundation is in place.

- See Also: Colossians 2:3 ("in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"); Proverbs 8:18-19 (wisdom's riches better than fine gold).
- 24:5

(KJV) A wise man is strong; yea, a man of knowledge increaseth strength.

(B:E Project) A wise person is strong; someone with knowledge grows even stronger.

Context: Opens a unit (24:5-6) linking wisdom to strength, particularly strategic strength in facing challenges.

Meaning: This challenges a purely physical idea of strength - real capability to face life's battles comes from knowledge and judgement, which can be built and grown, unlike raw physical power alone.

Lesson: You have more power than you think when you keep learning and understanding - strength isn't only muscle, it's clarity, and clarity grows the more you seek it.

See Also: Proverbs 21:22 ("a wise man scaleth the city of the mighty"); Ecclesiastes 9:16 ("wisdom is better than strength").
- 24:6

(KJV) For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war: and in multitude of counsellors there is safety.

(B:E Project) Wage your battles with wise strategy, because victory comes from having plenty of good advisers.

Context: Closes the 24:5-6 unit, applying wisdom's strength specifically to strategic decisions and conflict.

Meaning: This extends personal wisdom into communal wisdom - even a strong, knowledgeable person benefits from outside counsel before high-stakes decisions, framing seeking advice as strength rather than dependency.

Lesson: You don't have to face your hardest battles with only your own judgement - gather wise voices around you, and let that be part of your strength.

See Also: Proverbs 15:22 ("without counsel purposes are disappointed"); Proverbs 11:14 ("in the multitude of counsellors there is safety").
- 24:7

(KJV) Wisdom is too high for a fool: he openeth not his mouth in the gate.

(B:E Project) Wisdom is out of a fool's reach - he has nothing worth saying when decisions are being made in public.

Context: A standalone proverb about a fool's inability to grasp or contribute wisdom, set against the "wise counsel" theme just discussed. The "gate" was the ancient public square where civic and legal matters were decided.

- Meaning: This isn't mocking someone for lacking intelligence - it describes someone who hasn't done the inner work to grow wise, and so has nothing of substance to offer when it counts, in the places where real decisions get made.

Lesson: Don't be afraid to stay quiet if you have nothing worth saying yet - wisdom is available to anyone willing to seek it, but it has to actually be sought. Keep growing so that when your voice is needed, it's ready.

See Also: Proverbs 17:28 ("even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise"); James 1:5 (ask God for wisdom).
- 24:8

(KJV) He that deviseth to do evil shall be called a mischievous person.

(B:E Project) Someone who schemes up ways to do evil earns the label of a troublemaker.

Context: Opens a short unit (24:8-9) on how deliberate scheming and contemptuous mockery are judged, within the sayings of the wise.

Meaning: This links reputation to deliberate intent - the label "schemer" is earned not by a single bad act but by a habitual pattern of calculated planning to cause harm.

Lesson: What you spend your private thinking time planning shapes who you're becoming, even before anyone else sees it - choose your inner life as carefully as your outer one.

See Also: Micah 2:1 ("woe to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds"); Proverbs 6:18 ("an heart that deviseth wicked imaginations").
- 24:9

(KJV) The thought of foolishness is sin: and the scorner is an abomination to men.

(B:E Project) Even just thinking up foolish plans counts as sin, and someone who mocks what's right is despised by people.

Context: Closes the 24:8-9 unit, extending moral responsibility to the thought-stage and naming the scorner as a distinct, widely disliked figure.

Meaning: This makes clear that wrongdoing isn't confined to actions alone - the planning and mocking attitude itself matters morally, and it damages a person's standing among others.

Lesson: I care about what you're dwelling on in your own head, not only what you eventually do - catch the mocking, dismissive thought early, before it shapes how you treat people.

See Also: Matthew 5:28 (looking with lust already counts as adultery in the heart); Proverbs 21:24 ("proud and haughty scorner is his name").
- 24:10

(KJV) If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small.

(B:E Project) If you give up when times get hard, that shows how little strength you really had.

Context: A standalone proverb - often read as a hinge into the following section about coming to the aid of others in danger - about facing hardship without collapsing.

Meaning: This isn't shaming someone for struggling; it's an honest observation that real strength is proven under pressure, not in easy times, and an invitation to build resilience before adversity hits.

Lesson: I never promised you an easy road, but I promised to walk it with you - your strength isn't tested on the good days, it's revealed on the hard ones. When you feel like giving up, reach for help rather than facing it alone.

See Also: James 1:2-4 (trials produce endurance); Philippians 4:13 ("I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me").

24:11 *(KJV) If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain;*
(B:E Project) Rescue people who are being dragged off to death; don't hold back from saving those about to be killed.

Context: Opens a weighty unit (24:11-12) on the moral obligation to intervene for those in mortal danger, within the sayings of the wise.

Meaning: A direct command to act, not merely feel sympathy, when someone else's life is in danger - refusing to intervene isn't presented as a neutral, safe choice.

Lesson: When you see someone in real danger, I'm asking you to move towards them, not away - love that only feels compassion but never acts isn't yet the love I'm describing.

See Also: Luke 10:30-37 (the Good Samaritan); 1 John 3:17-18 ("let us not love in word... but in deed and in truth").

24:12 *(KJV) If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?*
(B:E Project) If you say, "But we didn't know about it" - doesn't the one who examines hearts see through that excuse? Doesn't the one who watches over your life know the truth? And won't he repay everyone according to what they've actually done?

Context: Closes the 24:11-12 unit, confronting the excuse of claimed ignorance with the idea of an inner accounting that sees through it.

Meaning: This directly challenges a self-protective excuse - claiming not to have known. Willful ignorance or looking away doesn't erase moral responsibility, because there's a deeper reckoning that sees intent and inaction clearly.

Lesson: "I didn't know" doesn't hold up when you actually had the chance to look and chose to look away - I see past the excuse to the choice underneath it. Take responsibility for what you could have done, not just what you directly caused.

See Also: James 4:17 ("to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin"); Matthew 25:42-45 ("inasmuch as ye did it not").

24:13 *(KJV) My son, eat thou honey, because it is good; and the honeycomb, which is sweet to thy taste:*
(B:E Project) Eat honey, my son, because it's good, and honeycomb because it tastes sweet.

Context: Opens a two-verse unit (24:13-14) using the universal pleasure of honey as a metaphor for the pleasure of wisdom.

Meaning: This starts with a simple, sensory, uncontested good - honey's sweetness - before drawing a comparison, establishing that what follows applies to something equally genuine pleasurable.

Lesson: I want you to actually enjoy the good things placed in front of you - simple pleasures aren't a distraction from a good life, they're part of it.

See Also: Psalm 34:8 ("O taste and see that the LORD is good"); Exodus 3:8 ("a land flowing with milk and honey").

24:14 *(KJV) So shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul: when thou hast found it, then there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off.*
(B:E Project) Know that wisdom is just as good for your soul as honey is for your taste - once you've found it, there's a real reward waiting, and your hope won't be cut off.

Context: Closes the 24:13-14 unit, applying honey's sweetness directly to wisdom's effect on the soul.

Meaning: This completes the comparison: wisdom isn't dry duty but genuine nourishment and delight for the inner self, with a concrete promised reward and lasting hope attached.

Lesson: Let becoming wise feel like something good is happening to you, not just something hard you're enduring - there's real reward waiting, and it's worth the pursuit.

See Also: Psalm 119:103 ("sweeter also than honey"); Proverbs 3:13-18 (wisdom's rewards described at length).

24:15 *(KJV) Lay not wait, O wicked man, against the dwelling of the righteous; spoil not his resting place:*
(B:E Project) Don't lie in ambush against a good person's home, wicked man - don't try to wreck the place where he rests.

Context: Opens a unit (24:15-16) warning wrongdoers off targeting the righteous, within the sayings of the wise.

Meaning: This directly addresses someone plotting harm against a good person's home or security, warning that such schemes, however carefully planned, are ultimately futile given what follows in the next verse.

Lesson: Don't let envy or resentment turn into a plan to tear down someone else's peace - build your own life rather than plotting against someone else's.

See Also: Psalm 37:12-13 ("the wicked plotteth against the just... the Lord shall laugh at him"); Proverbs 3:29 ("devise not evil against thy neighbour").

24:16 *(KJV) For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief.*
(B:E Project) Because even a good person falls seven times and gets back up again - while the wicked collapse into real disaster.

Context: Closes the 24:15-16 unit, contrasting the righteous person's resilience with the wicked person's lasting downfall.

Meaning: One of Proverbs' most reassuring lines: righteousness was never about never failing, but about consistently rising after failure. The wicked, by contrast, lack that resilience - their falls are final.

Lesson: Falling isn't the opposite of a good life - staying down is. Get back up every time you stumble; that persistence itself is what faithfulness actually looks like.

See Also: Micah 7:8 ("when I fall, I shall arise"); 1 John 1:9 (confession and restoration).

24:17 *(KJV) Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth:*
(B:E Project) Don't celebrate when your enemy falls, and don't let your heart feel glad when he stumbles.

Context: Opens a two-verse unit (24:17-18) about resisting the urge to gloat over an enemy's downfall.

Meaning: This targets the private, internal reaction as much as any outward celebration - even quietly feeling glad at someone's misfortune, when that someone has wronged you, is named as something to resist.

Lesson: Even towards people who've hurt you, guard your heart from taking pleasure in their pain - that bitterness costs you more than it costs them.

See Also: Job 31:29 ("if I rejoiced at the destruction of him that hated me"); Romans 12:19-21.

24:18 *(KJV) Lest the LORD see it, and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him.*

(B:E Project) Because God might see it, disapprove, and turn his anger away from your enemy instead.

Context: Closes the 24:17-18 unit, giving a striking reason for the warning: gloating can backfire against the very outcome it seems to celebrate.

Meaning: A strikingly practical, almost paradoxical argument - beyond the ethical wrongness of gloating, it suggests such gloating can actually shift consequence or sympathy away from the wrongdoer, working against justice rather than for it.

Lesson: Let go of the urge to see your enemy suffer - not because they don't deserve consequences, but because your bitterness towards them isn't yours to hold onto; leave the outcome to a fairer judge than your own resentment.

See Also: Deuteronomy 32:35 ("to me belongeth vengeance"); Proverbs 20:22 ("say not thou, I will recompense evil").

24:19 *(KJV) Fret not thyself because of evil men, neither be thou envious at the wicked;*
(B:E Project) Don't get worked up over wicked people, and don't envy them either.

Context: Opens a two-verse unit (24:19-20), closely echoing 24:1-2 earlier in the chapter, again addressing the temptation to envy wrongdoers.

Meaning: The repetition within the same chapter underlines how persistent and tempting this particular struggle was considered - watching wrongdoers seemingly do well is a recurring test of perspective.

Lesson: If you catch yourself getting agitated or envious watching someone prosper by cutting corners, that feeling is worth noticing, not acting on - it usually says more about your own anxiety than about the truth of their situation.

See Also: Psalm 37:1-2 (fret not because of evildoers, they wither like grass); Proverbs 24:1-2 (the same warning stated earlier in this chapter).

24:20 *(KJV) For there shall be no reward to the evil man; the candle of the wicked shall be put out.*
(B:E Project) Because there's no lasting reward waiting for someone who does evil - the wicked person's light will be snuffed out.

Context: Closes the 24:19-20 unit, explaining why envy of the wicked is misplaced.

Meaning: The "candle" image conveys something temporary and fragile about wrongdoers' apparent success - however bright it looks now, it's inherently unsustainable, unlike a life built on what's genuinely good.

Lesson: Don't measure your life against someone whose light is already flickering, even if you can't see it yet - build on something that isn't going to go out.

See Also: Job 18:5 ("the light of the wicked shall be put out"); Psalm 37:35-36 (the wicked flourishing then vanishing).

24:21 *(KJV) My son, fear thou the LORD and the king: and meddle not with them that are given to change:*
(B:E Project) My son, hold God and the king in reverence, and don't get mixed up with rebels who are always stirring up change.

Context: Opens a unit (24:21-22) about avoiding entanglement with political rebellion, framed as loyalty to legitimate authority.
Meaning: In its original setting, this counsels steering clear of conspirators against the king, since joining such upheaval brought serious risk. It pairs reverence for God with respect for lawful authority as parallel commitments.
Lesson: Think carefully before throwing yourself into a cause built mainly on rebellion and disruption - not all change is wise change, and not every rebellion is righteous.
See Also: Romans 13:1-2 (subjection to governing authorities); 1 Peter 2:17 ("fear God. Honour the king").

24:22 *(KJV) For their calamity shall rise suddenly; and who knoweth the ruin of them both?*
(B:E Project) Because disaster will hit them suddenly, and no one knows just how bad the ruin from both will be.

Context: Closes the 24:21-22 unit, giving the reason for caution: the unpredictable severity of consequences for rebellion.
Meaning: This emphasises the unknown scale of risk - not just that consequences will come, but that their full extent can't be predicted, making reckless involvement in upheaval especially dangerous.
Lesson: Count the cost honestly before you commit to something disruptive and irreversible - some risks are worth taking, but only with your eyes open, not swept along by momentum.
See Also: Luke 14:31-32 (a king counting the cost before going to war); Proverbs 22:3 ("a prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself").

24:23 *(KJV) These things also belong to the wise. It is not good to have respect of persons in judgment.*
(B:E Project) These sayings also come from the wise: showing favouritism when judging a matter is never good.

Context: Opens a new section, "further sayings of the wise" (24:23-34), beginning with a saying about fair, unbiased judgement.
Meaning: This introduces a fresh mini-collection with a clear statement of principle: fairness in judgement must not bend based on who someone is - their status, wealth, or relationship to the judge.

Lesson: Treat people the same regardless of their power or popularity - fairness that changes depending on who's asking isn't fairness at all.
See Also: Leviticus 19:15 ("ye shall not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty"); James 2:1-4 (warning against favouritism).

24:24 *(KJV) He that saith unto the wicked, Thou art righteous; him shall the people curse, nations shall abhor him:*
(B:E Project) Whoever tells a guilty person, "You're innocent," will be cursed by people and hated by whole nations.

Context: Continues the "further sayings of the wise" unit on judgement, describing the specific consequence of corrupt or dishonest verdicts.
Meaning: This names a specific form of corruption - declaring the guilty innocent - as earning widespread public contempt, showing people instinctively recognise and resent this kind of injustice even when they benefit from it.
Lesson: Don't twist the truth to protect someone who's actually done wrong, even if it's easier or safer in the short term - people see through it eventually, and so do I.
See Also: Isaiah 5:20 ("woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil"); Proverbs 17:15 ("he that justifieth the wicked... are abomination").

24:25 *(KJV) But to them that rebuke him shall be delight, and a good blessing shall come upon them.*
(B:E Project) But those who honestly correct the guilty will be delighted in, and good things will come their way.

Context: Closes the pairing with 24:24, contrasting the shame of dishonest judgement with the reward of honest correction.
Meaning: This completes the contrast: where flattering the guilty earns contempt, honest correction - even though uncomfortable in the moment - earns real, lasting goodwill and blessing.
Lesson: Speaking an honest, hard truth to someone who's done wrong is a genuine kindness, even when it doesn't feel like one at the time - don't shy away from it out of fear of being disliked.
See Also: Proverbs 27:5 ("open rebuke is better than secret love"); Galatians 6:1 (restoring someone gently, but honestly).

24:26 *(KJV) Every man shall kiss his lips that giveth a right answer.*
(B:E Project) Everyone loves a straight, honest answer - it's like a kiss on the lips.

Context: A standalone proverb in the "further sayings of the wise" continuing the theme of honest speech, using an affectionate image for how welcome directness truly is.

- Meaning:** The kiss image signals genuine warmth and appreciation - people crave honesty even when it's blunt, more than they crave being told what they want to hear.

Lesson: Speak plainly and truthfully to people - they will trust you far more for a straight answer than a comfortable one. I always spoke plainly, even when it was hard to hear, because truth builds real closeness, not distance.

See Also: Proverbs 27:5-6 ("faithful are the wounds of a friend"); Ephesians 4:15 ("speaking the truth in love").
- 24:27** *(KJV) Prepare thy work without, and make it fit for thyself in the field; and afterwards build thine house.*

(B:E Project) Get your outdoor work in order and prepare your fields first - only after that should you build your house.

Context: A standalone proverb about wise sequencing in life and work, prioritising provision before comfort.

Meaning: A practical principle about ordering priorities correctly: secure your means of provision before investing in comfort or permanence. Building the house first, before you can support it, risks a home you can't sustain.

Lesson: I want you to build your life on something that can hold it up, not the other way round - get the foundation of provision and purpose in place before you chase comfort.

See Also: Luke 14:28-30 (count the cost before building a tower); Proverbs 24:3-4 (building a house through wisdom, earlier in this chapter).
- 24:28** *(KJV) Be not a witness against thy neighbour without cause; and deceive not with thy lips.*

(B:E Project) Don't testify against your neighbour without good reason, and don't deceive people with your words.

Context: Opens a two-verse unit (24:28-29) on honest testimony and rejecting personal revenge, within the further sayings of the wise.

Meaning: This targets using speech as a weapon - either through baseless accusation or outright deception - both of which damage another person's standing without just cause.

Lesson: Use your words to protect people's reputations, not to settle scores or advantage yourself - speech is powerful, and I hold that power to a high standard.

See Also: Exodus 20:16 ("thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour"); Ephesians 4:25 ("putting away lying, speak every man truth").
- 24:29** *(KJV) Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me: I will render to the man according to his work.*

- (B:E Project)** Don't say, "I'll do to him exactly what he did to me - I'll pay him back for what he's done."

Context: Closes the 24:28-29 unit, rejecting the impulse toward personal revenge as a guiding principle.

Meaning: This directly confronts the instinct for tit-for-tat retaliation, framing it as its own kind of wrongdoing rather than justice - taking matters into your own hands instead of trusting a fairer process.

Lesson: Revenge might feel fair in the moment, but it just keeps the wound open for both of you - I taught letting go of the score, not because the wrong didn't matter, but because carrying it forward hurts you more than it ever hurts them.

See Also: Matthew 5:38-39 (turn the other cheek rather than "eye for an eye"); Romans 12:19 ("vengeance is mine, saith the Lord; I will repay").
- 24:30** *(KJV) I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding;*

(B:E Project) I walked past the field of a lazy man, past the vineyard of someone with no sense.

Context: Opens the closing poem of chapter 24 (24:30-34), a first-person parable drawn from observing a neglected field, closing the "further sayings of the wise" section.

Meaning: Unlike most short two-line proverbs, this opens a small narrative told from personal observation - the speaker sets the scene by describing whose property he's looking at, someone characterised by laziness and poor judgement.

Lesson: Sometimes the clearest lessons come simply from paying attention to what's around you - I want you to actually notice the state of things in your own life, honestly, the way this observer does.

See Also: Proverbs 6:6-8 ("go to the ant, thou sluggard"); Ecclesiastes 10:18 ("by slothfulness the building decayeth").
- 24:31** *(KJV) And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down.*

(B:E Project) It was completely overgrown with thorns, weeds covered the whole surface, and its stone wall had crumbled down.

Context: Continues the closing poem, describing in vivid detail what neglect has produced.

Meaning: This is the visible, undeniable evidence of accumulated neglect - not a single dramatic failure, but the slow, compounding result of not tending to what needed tending, now plain for anyone to see.

- Lesson:** Neglect rarely announces itself all at once - it creeps in through small omissions until the damage is impossible to miss. Look honestly at what in your life might be quietly growing over with thorns.
- See Also:** Isaiah 5:5-6 (the neglected vineyard, briars and thorns); Hebrews 6:7-8 (ground that produces thorns is rejected).
- 24:32** *(KJV) Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction.*
(B:E Project) I looked at it, thought it over carefully, and took the lesson to heart.
- Context:** The pivot point of the closing poem, where the observer moves from simply seeing the ruin to actively learning from it.
- Meaning:** This models the very process wisdom requires - not just witnessing something, but pausing to genuinely reflect on it and let it teach you something applicable to your own life.
- Lesson:** Don't just notice a warning sign and move on - actually stop and let it change something in how you live. Observation without reflection teaches you nothing.
- See Also:** Psalm 119:59 ("I thought on my ways, and turned my feet"); Haggai 1:5 ("consider your ways").
- 24:33** *(KJV) Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep:*
(B:E Project) A little more sleep, a little more dozing, a little more folding of the hands to rest.
- Context:** The lesson the observer draws, quoting the sluggard's own excuse-making pattern - this line closely echoes Proverbs 6:10, part of an earlier warning against laziness.
- Meaning:** The repetition of "a little" three times captures how laziness rarely presents itself as a big decision - it's always framed as just a small, harmless extra rest, which is exactly what makes it so easy to keep choosing.
- Lesson:** Watch out for the small, reasonable-sounding excuses you give yourself to avoid what needs doing - they add up far more than any single one seems to matter.
- See Also:** Proverbs 6:9-10 (the near-identical passage earlier in Proverbs); Romans 13:11 ("now it is high time to awake out of sleep").
- 24:34** *(KJV) So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man.*
(B:E Project) And poverty will come on you like a traveller steadily arriving, and need will hit you suddenly, like an armed robber.
- Context:** Closes chapter 24 and the entire "further sayings of the wise" section, delivering the poem's final, stark warning.

- Meaning:** The two images work together - poverty approaches gradually and inevitably like a traveller on a journey, then finally strikes suddenly and forcefully like an armed attacker. A fitting close to the chapter's wider theme: small, repeated choices about diligence versus laziness determine a person's future far more than any single dramatic event.
- Lesson:** The road to real trouble is usually walked one small, comfortable choice at a time - don't wait for the "armed man" moment to wake up. Start with the smallest overdue task today; that's how you turn the field back around.
- See Also:** Proverbs 6:11 (the identical earlier passage, "as one that travelleth... as an armed man"); 2 Thessalonians 3:10 ("if any would not work, neither should he eat").

CHAPTER 25

Chapter Summary: Proverbs 25

- Chapter 25 presents a new collection of King Solomon's wise sayings, which were later compiled by King Hezekiah's officials. These proverbs offer guidance on various aspects of life, particularly focusing on how to behave around rulers and influential people, stressing humility, discretion, and careful speech. The chapter also provides wisdom on managing conflicts, the power of well-chosen words, the value of honesty, and the importance of self-control. It includes practical advice on being a reliable person, treating others—even enemies—with kindness, and avoiding excess in all things, illustrating the consequences of both good and bad conduct.
- 25:1** *(KJV) These are also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out.*
(B:E Project) This is a new set of Solomon's wise sayings, written down generations later by scribes working for King Hezekiah of Judah.
- Context:** This is the editorial heading opening a second major collection of Solomon's proverbs (chapters 25-29), noting they were compiled roughly two centuries after Solomon by Hezekiah's officials.
- Meaning:** This verse is basically a footnote, but a fascinating one - it shows that wisdom worth keeping gets preserved and passed down deliberately. Hezekiah was a reforming king who cared about restoring good tradition; his officials thought Solomon's sayings mattered enough to collect and copy centuries later. It's a reminder that practical wisdom about how to live doesn't expire, which is exactly why these proverbs still speak to readers today.
- Lesson:** I want you to notice something here: someone thought this wisdom was worth saving for people who hadn't even been born yet. That's what I want for you too - not just to take in wisdom for yourself, but to become someone who passes on what's true and good to those who come after you.
- See Also:** 2 Kings 18:1-6 (Hezekiah's reforms and faithfulness); Proverbs 1:1 (the heading of the first collection of Solomon's proverbs).

25:2 *(KJV) It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter.*

(B:E Project) It is God's glory to keep some things hidden; but the honour of kings is shown in their skill at investigating and getting to the bottom of a matter.

Context: Opens a short run of 'royal' proverbs (25:2-7) offering guidance on kingship and how to conduct yourself around powerful people, fitting for a collection compiled for a royal court.

Meaning: This draws a contrast between two kinds of greatness. Some things are genuinely mysterious - we don't get to know everything, and that's part of what makes existence awe-inspiring. But a good leader's job is the opposite: to dig, question, and not settle for surface answers. Applied more broadly, it's a nice permission slip - you don't need all the answers to the big cosmic questions to still be sharp and diligent about the practical matters actually in front of you.

Lesson: Some mysteries aren't yours to solve, and that's alright - stop torturing yourself trying to master what was never meant to be fully known. But where you can dig for truth, do it wholeheartedly; a curious, honest mind that keeps searching honours the life you've been given.

See Also: Deuteronomy 29:29 ('the secret things belong unto the LORD our God'); 1 Kings 3:9 (Solomon asking God for discernment to govern well).

25:3 *(KJV) The heaven for height, and the earth for depth, and the heart of kings is unsearchable.*

(B:E Project) You can't measure how high the sky goes or how deep the earth reaches - and in the same way, you can't fully know what's going on inside a ruler's mind.

Context: Continues the royal-court sequence begun in 25:2, reflecting on the vastness and unpredictability of those who hold power.

Meaning: This isn't flattery of kings - it's a warning. People in positions of power often keep their real intentions hidden, so you can't assume you've got them figured out. It's practical advice for anyone dealing with someone who holds power over them, whether a literal ruler, a boss, or anyone whose decisions affect your life: read situations carefully rather than assuming you know what's really going on.

Lesson: Don't build your sense of security on thinking you've got powerful people completely worked out - you can't see inside anyone's heart. Build your security instead on how you act with integrity, whatever those above you are really thinking.

See Also: Proverbs 25:2 (the companion thought on kings); 1 Samuel 16:7 ('the LORD looketh on the heart' - only God truly sees what's inside a person).

25:4 *(KJV) Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer.*

(B:E Project) Remove the impurities from silver, and the silversmith can shape it into something valuable.

Context: A short two-verse pair (25:4-5) using the imagery of refining metal, here applied literally to metalwork before the next verse applies it to leadership.

Meaning: This is a simple observation about metalworking used as a set-up for the next verse's political point: you can't make something excellent while junk is still mixed into it. Purification has to happen first. The principle applies far beyond metal - whether it's a team, an organisation, or your own habits, real quality only emerges once you're willing to identify and remove what's dragging things down.

Lesson: I ask you to be honest about what needs removing from your own life before you expect real growth - the good things you're capable of can't fully form while junk is still mixed in. Let the refining happen; it's uncomfortable but it's how you become useful and whole.

See Also: Proverbs 25:5 (the very next verse, applying this to removing corrupt advisors); Malachi 3:3 (God pictured as a refiner purifying silver).

25:5 *(KJV) Take away the wicked from before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness.*

(B:E Project) Get rid of corrupt people from the king's presence, and his rule will be built on solid, honest foundations.

Context: Completes the pair begun in 25:4, applying the refining-metal image directly to government: a leader's authority depends on the character of those they keep close.

Meaning: This is straightforward political wisdom - leadership succeeds or fails partly based on who's whispering in the leader's ear. Surround anyone in charge with dishonest people and the whole structure becomes unstable. It applies outside politics too: who you let influence you - friends, advisors, the voices you listen to - determines whether your own life stands on something solid.

Lesson: Look honestly at who has influence over your decisions. I don't ask you to cut people off in anger, but I do ask you to notice whose voice you're letting shape you, and to choose wisely who gets closest to your heart and your choices.

See Also: Proverbs 25:4 (the refining image this verse applies); Psalm 101:6-7 (a king resolving to keep the faithful near him and the deceitful far away).

25:6 *(KJV) Put not forth thyself in the presence of the king, and stand not in the place of great men:*

(B:E Project) Don't push yourself forward in front of important people, and don't claim a seat among the powerful that isn't yours.

Context: Continues the royal-court etiquette sequence, giving direct advice on humility and self-promotion around people of high status.

Meaning: This is advice against self-promotion - don't manoeuvre for status or claim honour you haven't earned, because it tends to backfire embarrassingly, as verse 7 explains. There's real social wisdom here that still applies today: pushy self-promotion at work, in friendship groups or online usually reads as insecurity, not confidence, and invites correction.

Lesson: I want you to let go of the need to grab the best seat, the biggest title, the loudest credit. There's real freedom in not needing to prove your worth by muscling to the front - let your character be seen instead, and trust that genuine worth doesn't need to shout.

See Also: Proverbs 25:7 (the reason this verse gives); Luke 14:8-10 (Jesus tells a nearly identical parable about not taking the highest seat at a feast).

25:7 *(KJV) For better it is that it be said unto thee, Come up hither; than that thou shouldest be put lower in the presence of the prince whom thine eyes have seen.*
(B:E Project) It's better to be invited to move up to a better seat than to be publicly demoted in front of someone important who's watching.

Context: Completes the thought from 25:6 - the humiliation of self-promotion versus the honour of being deliberately elevated by someone else.

Meaning: The logic is simple: if you wait to be recognised rather than grabbing status yourself, the worst that happens is you stay where you are; the best that happens is you get publicly honoured. But push yourself forward and get it wrong, and you're humbled in front of everyone. Patience protects your dignity in a way self-promotion never can.

Lesson: Real honour, the kind that matters, is never something you can seize for yourself - it's given. Do good quietly, be patient, and let recognition come in its own time; you'll never regret the dignity patience protects.

See Also: Proverbs 25:6 (sets up this verse); Luke 14:10-11 ('whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted').

25:8 *(KJV) Go not forth hastily to strive, lest thou know not what to do in the end thereof, when thy neighbour hath put thee to shame.*
(B:E Project) Don't rush into an argument or legal dispute, because you might not know what to do once your opponent proves you wrong and embarrasses you.

Context: Shifts from royal-court etiquette to everyday conflict resolution, opening a short sequence (25:8-10) about handling disputes wisely and keeping secrets.

Meaning: This warns against jumping into conflict - whether a legal case or just an argument - before thinking it through. Act too fast on an assumption and you might discover you were wrong, and now you're the one who looks foolish. The wisdom here is patience: check your facts and cool your temper before you charge in.

Lesson: Before you fight for what feels urgent and right, take a breath and check whether you actually have the full picture. I'd rather you be slow to anger and careful with conflict than quick to accuse and later ashamed - humility before a disagreement saves you real pain after it.

See Also: Proverbs 25:9-10 (continues with advice on handling disputes without exposing secrets); James 1:19 ('swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath').

25:9 *(KJV) Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself; and discover not a secret to another:*
(B:E Project) If you have a dispute with someone, sort it out directly with that person - don't go telling someone else their private business.

Context: Continues the conflict-resolution sequence, giving concrete advice: settle disagreements one-to-one rather than dragging in outside parties or exposing secrets.

Meaning: Good practical relationship advice - when you have a problem with someone, go to them directly rather than venting to everyone else first, which usually just spreads gossip and makes reconciliation harder. It also warns against using a private disagreement as an excuse to reveal something confidential about the other person - that's a betrayal dressed up as an argument.

Lesson: When you have a conflict with someone, have the courage to go to them directly instead of talking about them behind their back. That takes more bravery than gossip does, but it's the only path that actually heals a relationship instead of just damaging a reputation.

See Also: Matthew 18:15 ('if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone'); Proverbs 11:13 (a talebearer reveals secrets).

25:10 *(KJV) Lest he that heareth it put thee to shame, and thine infamy turn not away.*
(B:E Project) Otherwise, whoever hears about it will shame you, and you won't be able to shake off your bad reputation.

Context: Completes the thought from 25:9 - the consequence of exposing someone else's private business during a dispute.

Meaning: This spells out the cost of gossiping during a conflict: once you've betrayed someone's trust by airing their secrets, word gets around, and your own reputation for trustworthiness takes a lasting hit. Unlike most damage, a reputation for being a blabbermouth is hard to undo - people remember who can't be trusted with private information.

Lesson: Guard what people tell you in confidence as if it were treasure, because it is. I promise you, the discipline of being someone others can trust with their secrets is worth far more than any short-term satisfaction you'd get from sharing them.

See Also: Proverbs 25:9 (sets up this consequence); Proverbs 11:13 ('a talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter').

25:11 *(KJV) A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.*
(B:E Project) The right word said at exactly the right moment is as beautiful and valuable as gold apples set in silver carvings.

Context: A standalone proverb celebrating the power and beauty of well-timed speech, one of the most quoted verses in the collection.

Meaning: This is one of the most beloved lines in Proverbs precisely because it's true to experience - we've all had a moment when someone said exactly the right thing at exactly the right time, and it changed everything. The image of gold set into silver artwork suggests something precious framed perfectly - the point isn't just having good words, but timing them well. A kind truth spoken too early or too late loses its power.

Lesson: Don't just think about what to say - think about when to say it. I want you to pay attention to timing: a word of encouragement, correction or truth, offered at the moment someone can actually receive it, can be one of the most valuable gifts you ever give another person.

See Also: Proverbs 15:23 ('a word spoken in due season, how good is it!'); Ecclesiastes 3:1,7 ('a time to keep silence, and a time to speak').

25:12 *(KJV) As an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprovcr upon an obedient ear.*
(B:E Project) A wise person's correction, given to someone actually willing to listen, is as valuable as fine gold jewellery.

Context: Pairs naturally with 25:11 on the value of well-placed words, this time focused specifically on receiving criticism well.

Meaning: This flips the usual dread of being corrected on its head - honest, wise feedback, given to someone humble enough to actually hear it, is precious rather than painful. But notice the condition: it only works with an 'obedient ear', someone willing to listen and change. The same correction offered to a closed-off person is wasted; offered to someone open, it's a gift.

Lesson: Don't be afraid of correction from people who genuinely want your good - learn to receive it as the gift it is rather than an attack. When someone finally has the courage to be honest with you, that's often a sign of real love, not rejection.

See Also: Proverbs 9:8 ('rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee'); Proverbs 15:31-32 (the one who heeds reproof gains understanding).

25:13 *(KJV) As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him: for he refresheth the soul of his masters.*
(B:E Project) A reliable messenger is as refreshing to the people who sent him as a cool blast of snow would be in the middle of a hot harvest - he brings relief to those who rely on him.

Context: A standalone proverb praising trustworthiness and reliability, using an agricultural image that would resonate strongly with its original farming audience.

Meaning: Reliability is treated here as something genuinely refreshing - like relief from the heat. Think about how good it feels when someone you've trusted with a task actually comes through exactly as promised, versus the constant low-grade stress of relying on someone who might flake. Being that dependable person for others is a real gift you can give, not just a box-ticking virtue.

Lesson: Be the person others can send out and trust completely to represent them well - not because you're chasing praise, but because faithfulness itself brings relief and peace to the people who depend on you. That kind of reliability is a quiet form of love.

See Also: Proverbs 13:17 ('a faithful ambassador is health'); Luke 16:10 ('he that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much').

25:14 *(KJV) Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift is like clouds and wind without rain.*
(B:E Project) Someone who brags about giving something they never actually deliver is like storm clouds and wind that promise rain but never produce any.

Context: A standalone proverb warning against empty boasting and broken promises, especially the specific case of promising generosity you don't follow through on.

Meaning: This exposes a very specific kind of dishonesty - the person who talks up their generosity or a gift they're supposedly giving, but never actually delivers. Like clouds that build up dramatically but produce no rain, all the expectation comes to nothing, and it's more disappointing than if nothing had been promised at all. It's a warning about the gap between image and substance.

Lesson: Let your promises match your actions. I'd rather you promise less and deliver fully than build people's hopes up with words that never turn into anything real - broken promises don't just disappoint, they erode the trust real relationships are built on.

See Also: Proverbs 3:27-28 (don't withhold good when it's in your power to give it now); Matthew 5:37 ('let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay').

25:15 *(KJV) By long forbearing is a prince persuaded, and a soft tongue breaketh the bone.*
(B:E Project) A ruler can be won over through patience, and a gentle way of speaking can break down resistance as hard as bone.

Context: A standalone proverb on the power of patience and gentleness, particularly in dealing with people who hold authority or power over you.

Meaning: This is a striking paradox - something as fragile-sounding as a 'soft tongue' is said to break something as hard as bone. The point is that gentleness and patience are actually more powerful tools than force or aggression, especially when dealing with someone more powerful than you. Persistence combined with calm, respectful speech wins arguments and softens hard hearts far more often than shouting does.

Lesson: Don't mistake gentleness for weakness - it's often the strongest tool you have, especially when you're up against someone stubborn or more powerful than you. Stay patient, keep your words soft, and trust that this quiet strength can accomplish what force never could.

See Also: Proverbs 15:1 ('a soft answer turneth away wrath'); Proverbs 16:14 (a wise man pacifying the wrath of a king).

25:16 *(KJV) Hast thou found honey? eat so much as is sufficient for thee, lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it.*
(B:E Project) If you find honey, only eat as much as you need - overdo it and you'll make yourself sick and throw it up.

Context: A standalone proverb using a vivid, physical image to introduce the theme of self-control and moderation, which echoes on into verse 27 later in the chapter.

Meaning: Even good things become harmful in excess - honey is genuinely good and sweet, but gorging on it leads to sickness, not more pleasure. This is one of Proverbs' clearest statements of a principle that applies to almost everything: food, pleasure, work, even good habits. Moderation isn't about denying yourself good things; it's about actually being able to enjoy them without ruining yourself.

Lesson: Enjoy the good things in your life fully, but learn to recognise 'enough'. I'm not asking you to deprive yourself - I'm asking you to notice when more of a good thing stops adding joy and starts causing harm, and to have the wisdom to stop there.

See Also: Proverbs 25:27 (the same principle applied to seeking your own glory); Philippians 4:5 ('let your moderation be known unto all men').

25:17 *(KJV) Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbour's house; lest he be weary of thee, and so hate thee.*
(B:E Project) Don't visit your neighbour's house too often - overstay your welcome and they'll get tired of you and end up resenting you.

Context: A standalone proverb about social boundaries and knowing when to give people space, continuing the moderation theme just raised in verse 16.

Meaning: This is refreshingly practical relationship advice - even good friendships can be damaged by too much closeness without any space. Constant presence, even from someone you genuinely like, can wear a relationship thin. Respecting other people's need for space isn't coldness; it's actually what keeps a friendship healthy and wanted rather than dreaded.

Lesson: Love people well by also respecting their need for space - real friendship isn't measured by how much of someone's time you take up. Pay attention to whether your presence is a gift to someone or a burden, and have the humility to notice the difference.

See Also: Proverbs 25:16 (the moderation principle applied to relationships here); Proverbs 27:14 (blessing someone too loudly, too early, can also wear thin - excess even in kindness).

25:18 *(KJV) A man that beareth false witness against his neighbour is a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow.*
(B:E Project) Someone who lies about another person in testimony is as dangerous as a war-club, a sword and a sharp arrow all at once.

Context: A standalone proverb condemning perjury and slander, stacking up violent weapon imagery to stress just how destructive lying about someone actually is.

Meaning: The pile-up of three different weapons makes the point emphatically: lying about someone isn't a small social misstep, it's an act of real violence against their life, reputation and relationships. A false accusation can destroy a career, a marriage, a friendship, or a person's standing in their community just as thoroughly as a physical weapon can destroy a body.

Lesson: Guard your tongue especially when speaking about someone who isn't in the room to defend themselves - words spoken against another person's character can wound as deeply as any weapon. If you love your neighbour, protect their reputation the way you'd want your own protected.

See Also: Exodus 20:16 ('thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour', one of the Ten Commandments); Proverbs 6:16-19 (a lying tongue and a false witness among the things God hates).

25:19 *(KJV) Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint.*
(B:E Project) Trusting an unreliable person when things get hard is as painful and useless as biting down on a broken tooth or trying to walk on a dislocated foot.

Context: A standalone proverb warning about the danger of relying on untrustworthy people, especially in a crisis - continuing the relational-trust theme running through this chapter.

Meaning: The images here are brilliantly specific - a broken tooth and a dislocated foot are both things you desperately need in a moment of pressure that suddenly betray you exactly when it matters most. The lesson is about discernment: figure out who is actually reliable before the crisis hits, not during it, because that's the worst possible time to discover someone can't be trusted.

Lesson: Choose carefully who you lean on when life gets hard - not everyone who says they'll be there for you actually will be. Test trust in the calm seasons of life, and don't be afraid to notice, without bitterness, who consistently shows up and who doesn't.

See Also: Proverbs 25:13 (the contrast - a faithful messenger who does the opposite); Micah 7:5 ('trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide').

25:20 *(KJV) As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, and as vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to an heavy heart.*

(B:E Project) Singing cheerful songs to someone whose heart is breaking is as jarring and useless as stripping off someone's coat in freezing weather, or pouring vinegar onto soda - it just creates an unpleasant reaction.

Context: A standalone proverb about emotional sensitivity - specifically, the harm of offering forced cheerfulness to someone who is grieving or in real pain.

Meaning: This is remarkably perceptive about emotional care - being relentlessly upbeat around someone who's suffering doesn't help them, it actually makes things worse, because it ignores what they actually need. The vinegar-on-soda image describes an unwanted chemical reaction, fizzing and pointless agitation instead of comfort. Real compassion means matching your response to the other person's actual state, not imposing the mood you'd prefer them to have.

Lesson: When someone you love is grieving, resist the urge to cheer them up or rush them past their pain - sit with them in it instead. I don't ask you to fix people's sorrow with forced positivity; I ask you to be present with them in it, the way real love always is.

See Also: Romans 12:15 ('weep with them that weep'); Job 2:11-13 (Job's friends sitting with him in silence for seven days before speaking).

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

(B:E Project) If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he's thirsty, give him water.

Context: Opens a two-verse teaching (25:21-22) on responding to enemies with active kindness rather than revenge, one of the most striking ethical statements in the book, later quoted directly by Paul.

Meaning: This is startlingly countercultural even by today's standards - not just tolerating an enemy, but actively meeting their basic needs. It's not about being a doormat or pretending the conflict doesn't exist; it's a deliberate choice to respond to hostility with practical generosity rather than matching hatred with hatred. This principle is quoted almost word-for-word in the New Testament, showing how central it became to the whole ethic of loving your enemies.

Lesson: This is close to the heart of everything I taught: love isn't just for people who are easy to love. When someone has wronged you, meeting their real need instead of their hostility is one of the most powerful, disarming things you can ever do - it breaks the cycle of revenge that otherwise just keeps spinning.

See Also: Romans 12:20 (Paul quotes this proverb almost exactly); Matthew 5:44 ('love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you').

25:22 *(KJV) For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee.*

(B:E Project) Doing this will be like heaping burning coals on his head, and the LORD will reward you for it.

Context: Completes the thought from 25:21 - the surprising effect and divine reward of responding to an enemy with kindness rather than retaliation.

Meaning: 'Heaping coals of fire' is a vivid, much-discussed image, but the most natural reading is that unexpected kindness can produce burning shame or conviction in the person who wronged you - it can soften an enemy in a way revenge never could. And there's a promise attached: this kind of costly generosity doesn't go unnoticed or unrewarded, even if the enemy never changes. Goodness has its own reward.

Lesson: You won't always see the coal-on-the-head moment - the enemy softening, feeling ashamed, changing their heart - but that's not why you do it. Do good because it's who you're becoming, and trust that nothing done in love is ever wasted, even when you can't see its effect.

See Also: Romans 12:20-21 ('be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good'); Luke 6:35 ('love your enemies... and your reward shall be great').

25:23 *(KJV) The north wind driveth away rain: so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue.*

(B:E Project) Just as a north wind drives rain away, a stern, disapproving face puts a stop to gossiping and slander.

Context: A standalone proverb linking natural weather patterns to social behaviour - how a visible display of disapproval can shut down backbiting talk.

Meaning: This observes something true about group dynamics: gossip and slander thrive when they're met with an interested or neutral reaction, but they wither fast when someone visibly disapproves. A firm, disapproving expression can be an effective, immediate way to stop harmful talk in its tracks - refusing to be an audience for it.

Lesson: You don't have to stay silent when you hear someone being torn down behind their back - your visible discomfort or disapproval can be enough to stop it. Have the quiet courage to not smile along with gossip; it protects both the person being talked about and your own integrity.

See Also: Proverbs 26:20 ('where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth'); Ephesians 4:29 ('let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth').

25:24 *(KJV) It is better to dwell in the corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman and in a wide house.*

(B:E Project) It's better to live crammed into a corner of the roof than share a spacious house with a constantly arguing spouse.

Context: A standalone proverb, identical in wording to 21:9, part of a recurring theme in Proverbs about the misery of constant domestic conflict.

Meaning: This repeats a proverb found earlier in the book (21:9), which shows how much this particular struggle mattered to the original audience - constant conflict at home outweighs almost any material comfort. Space and luxury mean nothing if the atmosphere inside is one of constant fighting; peace is worth more than square footage. The principle generalises well beyond marriage - any relationship defined by constant conflict costs more than it's worth, however comfortable the circumstances look.

Lesson: Don't measure your life by the size of your house or the comfort of your circumstances - measure it by the peace within your closest relationships. If you find yourself in constant conflict with someone you're meant to be closest to, that's worth far more attention than any external comfort.

See Also: Proverbs 21:9 (the same proverb, word for word, appearing earlier in the book); Proverbs 17:1 ('better is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, than an house full of sacrifices with strife').

25:25 *(KJV) As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country.*
(B:E Project) Good news arriving from far away is as refreshing as a drink of cold water to someone who is desperately thirsty.

Context: A standalone proverb celebrating the emotional relief of good news after a long wait, relevant in a world without instant communication, where news from distant places could take weeks to arrive.

Meaning: This captures something universally relatable - the specific relief of finally hearing good news after a period of anxious uncertainty, whether about a loved one travelling, a decision you've been waiting on, or any long silence finally broken with something positive. It's a reminder of how much power a simple message can carry, and maybe a nudge to be the one who sends good news to someone who's waiting for it.

Lesson: Think about who in your life might be thirsty for good news right now - a message, a call, a word of encouragement from you could be exactly the relief someone desperately needs. Don't underestimate how much good a small piece of good news, delivered at the right time, can do for someone waiting.

See Also: Proverbs 15:30 ('a good report maketh the bones fat'); Luke 2:10 ('I bring you good tidings of great joy').

25:26 *(KJV) A righteous man falling down before the wicked is as a troubled fountain, and a corrupt spring.*
(B:E Project) A good person who caves in and gives way to wicked people is like a clean spring that's been trampled and turned to mud - something meant to be pure has been ruined.

Context: A standalone proverb lamenting when a person of integrity compromises or is overcome by wicked influence, using the image of a spring, a community's vital, trusted water source, being fouled.

Meaning: A spring or well was the source of life for an entire community in the ancient world - if it got polluted, everyone suffered. This proverb compares a righteous person collapsing under pressure to that same disaster: something meant to be a source of clean, life-giving influence for others has instead become contaminated, and everyone who relied on it is affected. Integrity isn't a purely private matter - other people depend on it.

Lesson: When you stand for what's right, remember other people are drawing strength from your example, even when you don't realise it. I don't ask you to be perfect, but I do ask you to fight for your integrity - not just for your own sake, but because others are relying on the clean water you provide.

See Also: Matthew 5:13 ('ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour..'); Proverbs 24:16 ('a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again' - falling isn't final, but it matters).

25:27 *(KJV) It is not good to eat much honey: so for men to search their own glory is not glory.*
(B:E Project) Just as eating too much honey isn't good for you, chasing after your own glory and praise isn't actually glorious.

Context: A standalone proverb returning to the honey and moderation image from verse 16, this time applied specifically to the pursuit of self-glory and recognition.

Meaning: This directly echoes verse 16's honey warning and applies the same logic to ambition and ego - seeking honour for its own sake is self-defeating, just like overeating something sweet. The irony is sharp: genuinely admirable things (excellence, virtue, real achievement) become distasteful and even shameful the moment you're obviously chasing praise for them rather than doing them for their own sake.

Lesson: Do good things because they're good, not because you're hungry for recognition - the moment glory-seeking becomes the point, whatever you're doing loses its real worth. I promise you, the quiet good you do without an audience matters more than anything done for applause.

See Also: Proverbs 25:16 (the same honey-moderation image); Matthew 6:1-4 (doing good in secret rather than to be seen by others).

25:28 *(KJV) He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.*
(B:E Project) Someone who can't control their own temper and impulses is as exposed and defenceless as a city whose walls have been knocked down.

Context: Closes chapter 25 with a strong statement on self-control, echoing the moderation theme introduced with honey (v16, v27) and functioning as a fitting capstone for the whole chapter.

Meaning: Ancient cities depended entirely on their walls for survival - without them, any enemy could just walk in and take whatever they wanted. This proverb says self-control

functions the same way for a person: without it, you're defenceless against every impulse, temptation, and provocation that comes your way. Anger, appetite, and impulsiveness will simply walk in and ransack your life if there's nothing holding them back.

Lesson: Self-control isn't about restriction for its own sake - it's the wall that protects everything valuable inside you. I want you to build that wall, not because your desires are bad, but because an undefended life gets overrun by whatever shows up, and you deserve better than that.

See Also: Proverbs 16:32 ('he that ruleth his spirit' is better 'than he that taketh a city'); Galatians 5:22-23 (self-control listed among the fruit of the Spirit).

CHAPTER 26

Chapter Summary: Proverbs 26

Proverbs Chapter 26 presents a collection of insightful warnings and observations, primarily focusing on the characteristics and dangers of two particular types of individuals: the fool and the sluggard (or lazy person). It explains why giving respect to a fool is unwise and how their foolishness makes them dangerous in various situations. The chapter also strongly criticises laziness, showing how idle people invent excuses and live in a state of self-deception, believing themselves wiser than they are. Beyond these, it addresses the destructive nature of gossip, meddling in other people's arguments, and deceitful behaviour, concluding with the assurance that evil intentions ultimately backfire on the one who harbours them.

26:1 *(KJV) As snow in summer, and as rain in harvest, so honour is not seemly for a fool.*
(B:E Project) Just as snow in summer or rain during harvest season is completely out of place, giving honour to a fool is equally wrong and unnatural.

Context: Opens the chapter's extended sequence on fools (26:1-12), using out-of-season weather as an image for something fundamentally mismatched or inappropriate.

Meaning: Snow in summer and rain at harvest time would ruin crops and disrupt the natural order - both are things that simply don't belong where they occur. This proverb says handing status, praise or authority to someone who consistently acts foolishly is just as unnatural and damaging - it rewards the wrong behaviour and puts someone in a position they'll misuse. Honour should track wisdom and character, not just be handed out regardless.

Lesson: Be thoughtful about who you elevate and praise - honour given to the wrong character does real damage, both to the person receiving it and to everyone who has to live with the consequences. Look for wisdom and integrity, not just charisma or confidence, before you hand someone your trust or admiration.

See Also: Proverbs 26:8 (giving honour to a fool compared to a dangerous, pointless act); Proverbs 29:2 ('when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn').

26:2 *(KJV) As the bird by wandering, as the swallow by flying, so the curse causeless shall not come.*

(B:E Project) Just as a fluttering bird or a darting swallow never actually settles where you'd expect, an undeserved curse never actually lands on you either - it just flies past.

Context: A standalone proverb offering reassurance that unfair curses, insults or ill-wishes spoken against an innocent person don't have real power to harm them.

Meaning: In the ancient world, curses were taken very seriously - people genuinely feared being cursed unfairly. This proverb offers reassurance: if you haven't done anything to deserve it, an unjust curse has no real grip on you, just like a bird that never settles anywhere. It's a comfort for anyone dealing with unfair accusations or ill-wishes - your integrity isn't undone just because someone wished you harm.

Lesson: If you're living with integrity and someone still speaks ill of you unfairly, don't let their words control your peace - unjust words don't have the power over you that they seem to claim. Rest in the truth of who you actually are, not in what unfair voices say about you.

See Also: Numbers 23:8 ('how shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed?' - Balaam unable to curse Israel); Romans 8:31 ('if God be for us, who can be against us?').

26:3 *(KJV) A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool's back.*
(B:E Project) A horse needs a whip, a donkey needs a bridle, and a fool needs firm discipline to keep him in line.

Context: A standalone proverb continuing the 'fool' sequence, using working-animal imagery to make a blunt point about the limits of reasoning with persistent foolishness.

Meaning: This is deliberately blunt - it groups a fool with animals that need external control because they won't respond to reasoning. The underlying point isn't really about literal physical punishment; it's an observation that words and appeals to reason don't work on someone who has hardened themselves against wisdom - consequences and firm boundaries sometimes have to do the job persuasion can't.

Lesson: You can't talk everyone into wisdom - some people only learn through consequences, and that's not a failure on your part. Don't exhaust yourself trying to reason endlessly with someone who has closed their ears; sometimes the most loving thing is to let natural consequences do the teaching.

See Also: Proverbs 26:4-5 (further advice on dealing with fools); Proverbs 29:19 ('a servant will not be corrected by words: for though he understand he will not answer').

26:4 *(KJV) Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him.*
(B:E Project) Don't respond to a fool's foolish talk in the same foolish way, or you'll end up just as foolish as he is.

Context: The first half of a deliberately paired, seemingly contradictory couplet (26:4-5) about how to respond to foolish talk, meant to be read together rather than as a standalone rule.

Meaning: This warns against getting dragged down to someone's level - if a fool is being rude, dishonest, or irrational, matching their tone just makes you look and sound just as foolish. Sometimes the wisest response to nonsense is refusing to engage on its terms at all, staying above the fray rather than getting pulled into a fight you can't actually win.

Lesson: You don't have to match someone's foolishness to prove them wrong - sometimes staying calm and refusing to stoop to their level is the strongest response you can give. Guard your own character even in the heat of an argument; don't let someone else's foolishness pull you down to where they are.

See Also: Proverbs 26:5 (the paired, seemingly opposite proverb right after this one); 1 Peter 3:9 ('not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing').

26:5 *(KJV) Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit.*
(B:E Project) But sometimes you should respond to a fool according to his foolishness, or else he'll go on thinking he's actually wise.

Context: The second half of the paired couplet begun in 26:4 - together these two verses show that wisdom requires reading each situation rather than applying one fixed rule.

Meaning: This is the flip side of verse 4 - sometimes silence lets foolishness go unchallenged and lets the fool believe he's won, which does real harm, especially if others are watching and might be misled too. Put together, verses 4 and 5 aren't a contradiction but a call for discernment: read each situation and decide whether engaging will drag you down or whether staying silent will let a harmful lie stand unchallenged.

Lesson: Wisdom isn't a formula you apply the same way every time - it's discernment, learned through paying attention. Sometimes I want you to let foolish words go unanswered; other times, love for truth and for the people listening means you need to speak up. Ask, each time, which one actually serves the people involved.

See Also: Proverbs 26:4 (the paired opposite - together they teach discernment, not contradiction); Matthew 21:23-27 (Jesus declining to directly answer a bad-faith question from religious leaders).

26:6 *(KJV) He that sendeth a message by the hand of a fool cutheth off the feet, and drinketh damage.*
(B:E Project) Sending an important message through a fool is like cutting off your own feet - you're just asking for trouble and harm.

Context: Continues the 'fool' sequence with a specific, practical scenario: entrusting a foolish person with a task or responsibility.

Meaning: This is vivid, almost comic imagery - relying on someone unreliable to carry out an important task is self-sabotage, like deliberately disabling yourself. The message won't arrive right, the task won't get done properly, and you'll suffer the consequences of your own poor choice in who you trusted. It's a warning to be discerning about who you delegate to.

Lesson: Be wise about who you trust with something important to you - setting someone up to fail, or failing to notice they aren't equipped for the task, isn't kindness to them or to yourself. Match the responsibility to the person, and don't be afraid to be honest about someone's limits, including your own.

See Also: Proverbs 25:13 (the contrasting image - a faithful messenger who refreshes those who sent him); Proverbs 10:26 ('as vinegar to the teeth... so is the sluggard to them that send him').

26:7 *(KJV) The legs of the lame are not equal: so is a parable in the mouth of fools.*
(B:E Project) Just as a disabled person's legs don't work properly together, a wise saying spoken by a fool comes out useless and doesn't function as it should.

Context: A standalone proverb about how wisdom loses its power when it comes from someone who doesn't actually embody it, continuing the fool sequence.

Meaning: This makes a sharp point about authenticity: even a true, wise saying falls flat and does nothing useful when it's spoken by someone who clearly doesn't live it out. Wisdom isn't just about having the right words; it has to be paired with genuine character behind them, or the words go nowhere, just like uneven legs that can't actually carry you anywhere properly.

Lesson: It's not enough to know the right words to say - live them, or they'll ring hollow coming from you. I care far more about the wisdom that actually shapes how you live than about how eloquently you can quote it to other people.

See Also: Proverbs 26:9 (a similar comparison - a proverb in a fool's mouth like a thorn in a drunkard's hand); Matthew 23:3 (Jesus criticising religious leaders who 'say, and do not').

26:8 *(KJV) As he that bindeth a stone in a sling, so is he that giveth honour to a fool.*
(B:E Project) Giving honour to a fool is as pointless and dangerous as tying a stone into a slingshot so it can't be thrown - you've disabled the very tool meant to work.

Context: A standalone proverb continuing the theme opened in 26:1, the mismatch and danger of honouring a fool.

Meaning: A sling is a weapon meant to launch a stone at a target; tying the stone in place defeats its entire purpose and could even be dangerous to the person holding it. This proverb suggests that giving status or honour to a foolish person is similarly self-defeating - it disables something meant to function properly and can backfire on the very people who granted it.

Lesson: Think carefully before you hand someone influence, status or a platform - putting the wrong person in that position doesn't just fail to help; it can actively cause harm to everyone around them. Discernment about who you elevate is an act of care for your whole community, not just a personal preference.

See Also: Proverbs 26:1 (the opening statement this verse echoes); Proverbs 17:16 ('wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?').

26:9 *(KJV) As a thorn goeth up into the hand of a drunkard, so is a parable in the mouth of fools.*
(B:E Project) Just as a drunk person handling a thorny branch ends up hurting himself without even noticing, a wise saying in a fool's mouth causes harm without the fool even realising it.

Context: A standalone proverb closely paired in imagery with verse 7, again about the danger of wisdom in the wrong hands.

Meaning: A drunk person handling something sharp is numb to the pain and damage they're causing themselves and others - they're careless because they can't feel the consequences properly. Similarly, when a fool repeats wise sayings without understanding or living by them, they end up causing harm without any awareness of the damage they're doing.

Lesson: Understanding matters as much as knowledge - don't just collect wise sayings to repeat, actually let them shape how you see and treat people. Wisdom handled carelessly can wound others just as easily as it can help them, so hold it with care and humility.

See Also: Proverbs 26:7 (the paired image on the same theme); James 3:1 ('be not many masters... knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation').

26:10 *(KJV) The great God that formed all things both rewardeth the fool, and rewardeth transgressors.*
(B:E Project) God, the great Creator who made everything, gives fitting reward and consequence to both the fool and to those who deliberately do wrong.

Context: A standalone proverb - one of the most difficult verses in the Hebrew text to translate confidently, and other Bible translations render it quite differently; in the KJV's own wording, though, it's a statement about God's justice reaching everyone alike.

Meaning: Even in the plain sense of the KJV wording, the point is that no one escapes accountability before God, whoever they are - the person who acts foolishly out of ignorance and the person who knowingly transgresses both ultimately answer to the same Creator. It's a reminder that consequences are built into how the world works, under God's ultimate authority, whether or not we see them play out immediately.

Lesson: You don't have to be the one keeping score on other people's foolishness or wrongdoing - that's not your job to carry. Let go of the need to personally make sure everyone 'gets what's coming to them'; trust that real justice exists at a level bigger than what you can control, and spend your energy on your own integrity instead.

See Also: Romans 12:19 ('vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord'); Galatians 6:7 ('whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap').

26:11 *(KJV) As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly.*
(B:E Project) Just as a dog goes back and eats its own vomit, a fool keeps going back to repeat the same foolish mistakes over and over.

Context: A standalone proverb - one of the most vivid and famous images in the whole book, closing the 'fool' sequence with a memorably disgusting comparison, later quoted directly in 2 Peter 2:22.

Meaning: This is deliberately repulsive imagery, and it's meant to be - the point is that repeating a mistake you already know is harmful and destructive is genuinely as disgusting and self-defeating as a dog eating its own sick. It's not really about the mistake itself, since everyone makes mistakes - it's about the pattern of going right back to the same destructive behaviour after having already seen where it leads.

Lesson: I know how hard it is to break a pattern you've already regretted once. But I want you to notice the moment you're about to return to something you know hurts you, and choose differently this time - real change isn't about never falling, it's about refusing to keep circling back to the same wound.

See Also: 2 Peter 2:22 (quotes this proverb directly, applying it to people who fall back into old destructive ways after knowing better); Proverbs 26:12 (the next verse, a related warning about self-deception).

26:12 *(KJV) Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him.*
(B:E Project) Do you see someone who thinks he's wise all by himself? There's actually more hope for an obvious fool than for him.

Context: Closes the extended 'fool' sequence (26:1-12) with a striking twist, warning that self-satisfied arrogance is actually worse than open foolishness, because it can't be corrected.

Meaning: This is a sharp and surprising conclusion to the whole fool sequence - the person who knows they're struggling or foolish can still be reached, taught, and changed, because they're at least open to it. But someone convinced of their own wisdom has closed the door to learning anything new; their self-satisfaction makes them essentially uncorrectable. Overconfidence is more dangerous than obvious foolishness precisely because it doesn't look like a problem from the inside.

Lesson: Stay humble enough to keep learning - the moment you're sure you've got it all figured out is the moment you stop growing. I'd rather you admit what you don't know

than protect an image of having all the answers; humility keeps the door to real wisdom open.
See Also: Proverbs 3:7 ('be not wise in thine own eyes'); Romans 12:16 ('be not wise in your own conceits').

26:13 *(KJV) The slothful man saith, There is a lion in the way; a lion is in the streets.*
(B:E Project) The lazy person says, 'There's a lion on the road! There's a lion in the streets!' - as an excuse not to go outside and work.

Context: Opens the chapter's sequence on laziness (26:13-16), echoing an identical proverb found earlier in 22:13 - the lazy person inventing exaggerated dangers as an excuse not to act.
Meaning: This is almost comic in its exaggeration - inventing an absurd, unlikely danger as a justification for avoiding responsibility. It's a sharp psychological observation: laziness rarely admits itself honestly; it usually dresses itself up as caution, risk-awareness, or bad luck. The real issue isn't the supposed lion - it's the unwillingness to get up and act.
Lesson: Notice when your excuses for avoiding something are getting a little too elaborate - that's usually a sign the real obstacle is inside you, not outside. I don't ask you to be reckless, but I do ask you to be honest with yourself about the difference between genuine caution and dressed-up avoidance.
See Also: Proverbs 22:13 (the identical proverb appearing earlier in the book); Proverbs 6:6-11 (the extended call to the sluggard to learn from the ant).

26:14 *(KJV) As the door turneth upon his hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed.*
(B:E Project) Just as a door swings back and forth on its hinges without going anywhere, a lazy person just turns over in bed without ever actually getting up.

Context: A standalone proverb continuing the sluggard sequence, using the everyday image of a swinging door to capture endless motion that leads nowhere.
Meaning: The image is perfect - a door hinge moves constantly but never leaves its spot; it's motion without progress. The lazy person in bed is doing the same thing, rolling over again and again, perhaps even feeling restless, but never actually getting up to do anything real. It's a gentle mockery of the difference between activity and actual movement forward in life.
Lesson: Ask yourself honestly whether you're actually moving forward or just shifting position without going anywhere - busyness and restlessness aren't the same as real progress. Get up. Whatever it is you keep circling around, take the first real step today rather than tomorrow.
See Also: Proverbs 6:9-10 ('how long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard?... yet a little sleep, a little slumber'); Proverbs 26:15 (continues the sluggard theme).

26:15 *(KJV) The slothful hideth his hand in his bosom; it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth.*
(B:E Project) The lazy person tucks his hand into his robe and can't even be bothered to lift it back up to feed himself.

Context: A standalone proverb, virtually identical to 19:24, exaggerating laziness to an almost absurd extreme - too lazy even to feed oneself.
Meaning: This deliberately exaggerates for effect - the picture of someone too lazy to complete the simple act of feeding themselves is meant to be almost absurd, driving home just how self-defeating extreme laziness becomes. Taken to its logical end, laziness doesn't just fail to build anything - it eventually can't even meet its own most basic needs.
Lesson: Left unchecked, avoidance and laziness don't stay small - they grow until they start costing you things you actually need. Don't wait until inaction has cost you something serious; build the habit of finishing what you start, even in small things, starting today.
See Also: Proverbs 19:24 (the same proverb, almost word for word, appearing earlier in the book); Proverbs 21:25 ('the desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour').

26:16 *(KJV) The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason.*
(B:E Project) The lazy person thinks he's wiser than seven genuinely sensible people who can each give solid reasons for what they think.

Context: Closes the sluggard sequence (26:13-16) by connecting laziness to the same blind self-satisfaction condemned in verse 12 - the sluggard, like the fool, is convinced of his own wisdom.
Meaning: This ties laziness directly to arrogance and self-deception - the sluggard doesn't just avoid work, he's also convinced his approach to life is actually smarter than the input of multiple wise, reasonable people. This delusion is what keeps the laziness locked in place - if you're convinced you're already right, you'll never listen to advice that could change your course.
Lesson: Be willing to hear from people wiser or more disciplined than you, especially about the areas of your life where you're most tempted to make excuses. The moment you decide you know better than everyone who's telling you something you don't want to hear, you've shut the door on your own growth.
See Also: Proverbs 26:12 (the same self-deceived overconfidence, applied to the 'wise in his own eyes'); Proverbs 12:15 ('the way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise').

26:17 *(KJV) He that passeth by, and meddleth with strife belonging not to him, is like one that taketh a dog by the ears.*

(B:E Project) Someone who butts into an argument that isn't their business is like a person grabbing a strange dog by the ears - asking to get bitten.

Context: Opens a sequence (26:17-28) on the dangers of meddling, gossip, deceit and manufactured conflict, moving from the 'fool and sluggard' theme into interpersonal harm.

Meaning: Grabbing a dog by the ears is a vivid, almost comic image of an entirely unnecessary risk - the dog wasn't bothering you, but now it's aggravated and you're the one who'll get hurt. Inserting yourself into someone else's argument that has nothing to do with you carries the same needless risk: you weren't in danger before, but now you might be caught in the fallout of a conflict you didn't need to touch.

Lesson: Not every conflict needs your input - sometimes the wisest, most loving thing you can do is let two other people work out their own disagreement without you stepping in uninvited. Ask yourself honestly whether you're helping or just inserting yourself where you weren't asked.

See Also: 1 Peter 4:15 ('let none of you suffer... as a busybody in other men's matters'); 1 Thessalonians 4:11 ('study to be quiet, and to do your own business').

26:18 *(KJV) As a mad man who casteth firebrands, arrows, and death,*
(B:E Project) Like a lunatic randomly hurling flaming sticks, arrows and deadly weapons around -

Context: The first half of a two-verse comparison (26:18-19) about someone who causes real harm through deception and then tries to excuse it as harmless fun.

Meaning: This paints a picture of reckless, indiscriminate danger - someone throwing genuinely lethal things around carelessly, as if it's nothing. It sets up the comparison in the next verse: deceiving or hurting someone and then claiming it was 'just a joke' is exactly this reckless and exactly this dangerous, even if it doesn't look as dramatic on the surface.

Lesson: Words and 'jokes' that deceive or wound someone aren't harmless just because you didn't mean serious damage - real harm doesn't need real malice behind it to still be real harm. Take responsibility for the impact of what you say, not just the intention behind it.

See Also: Proverbs 26:19 (completes this comparison); James 3:6 (the tongue compared to a fire that can set a whole life ablaze).

26:19 *(KJV) So is the man that deceiveth his neighbour, and saith, Am not I in sport?*
(B:E Project) ...so is the person who deceives or tricks someone and then says, 'I was only joking!'

Context: Completes the comparison from 26:18, naming the specific behaviour being condemned: causing real harm through deception, then hiding behind 'I was just kidding.'

Meaning: This calls out a very familiar and still-common excuse - using 'it was just a joke' as cover for genuinely hurtful behaviour, whether a cruel prank, a lie, or manipulation dressed up as humour. The comparison to a lunatic throwing lethal weapons makes clear that the 'joke' defence doesn't erase the real damage done; the harm is exactly as real whether or not it was framed as fun.

Lesson: If something you've done or said has genuinely hurt someone, 'I was joking' doesn't undo that hurt - have the humility to actually own the impact rather than hiding behind the excuse. Real love takes responsibility for the wounds it causes, even accidental ones, rather than deflecting them.

See Also: Proverbs 26:18 (sets up this comparison); Ephesians 4:29 ('let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying').

26:20 *(KJV) Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth.*
(B:E Project) Just as a fire dies out when there's no more wood to burn, arguments and conflict die out when there's no gossip feeding them.

Context: A standalone proverb opening a run of verses (26:20-22) specifically about gossip and its role in fuelling conflict.

Meaning: This offers a genuinely useful, practical insight into how conflict actually spreads: it's usually not sustained by the original disagreement alone, but by people carrying stories back and forth, adding fuel. Cut off the gossip - the 'wood' - and most conflicts naturally burn themselves out far faster than you'd expect. It's a strong argument for simply refusing to pass along inflammatory talk.

Lesson: If you want to see less conflict around you, start by refusing to be the one who carries the story from one person to another. You have real power to starve a fire of gossip just by declining to add your own piece of wood to it.

See Also: Proverbs 26:21 (the next verse - a contentious person actively feeding conflict, the opposite of this verse); Proverbs 16:28 ('a froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends').

26:21 *(KJV) As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife.*
(B:E Project) Just as fresh coals feed a fire and wood keeps it burning, a quarrelsome person is exactly what keeps conflict alive and burning.

Context: Continues the fire-imagery sequence begun in 26:20, this time identifying the specific type of person who actively fuels conflict rather than just carrying gossip.

Meaning: Where verse 20 talked about removing the fuel to stop a fire, this verse names the person who keeps adding fuel deliberately - someone who seems to thrive on conflict, who can't leave an argument alone, who always has one more thing to add. Some people function like kindling for every disagreement they touch; recognising that pattern in someone, or in yourself, is the first step to not feeding it.

Lesson: Be honest with yourself about whether you're someone who calms conflict or someone who keeps it burning - it's an uncomfortable question, but worth asking. If you notice you enjoy stirring things up, bring that before me honestly; peace-making is a far better legacy than being remembered as someone who always kept the fire going.

See Also: Proverbs 26:20 (the fire image this verse continues); Matthew 5:9 ('blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God').

26:22 *(KJV) The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.*
(B:E Project) Gossip goes down deep - it doesn't just stay on the surface, it wounds people right to their core.

Context: A standalone proverb repeating language identical to 18:8, emphasising just how deeply and lastingly gossip actually damages people, closing this short run of verses on talebearing.

Meaning: This verse, repeated word for word from 18:8, captures something true about gossip that's easy to underestimate: it doesn't just cause a moment of embarrassment, it lodges deep and lingers, shaping how people see themselves and each other for a long time. Gossip feels almost weightless to say but leaves a heavy, lasting mark on the person it's about.

Lesson: Before you repeat something about someone else, remember it will land far deeper than the throwaway moment it takes you to say it. Words travel light but wound heavy - guard your speech about others as carefully as you'd want your own reputation guarded.

See Also: Proverbs 18:8 (identical wording, showing how seriously the danger of gossip was taken); James 3:8 ('the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison').

26:23 *(KJV) Burning lips and a wicked heart are like a potsherd covered with silver dross.*
(B:E Project) Smooth, warm-sounding words covering up an evil heart are like a cheap clay pot coated with a layer of worthless silver-looking glaze - all shine on the outside, worthless underneath.

Context: Opens the closing sequence of the chapter (26:23-28) on hidden hatred and deceit disguised by pleasant speech.

Meaning: 'Silver dross' was the cheap, worthless residue left over from refining silver, sometimes used to coat cheap pottery to make it look valuable. This proverb exposes

flattering or emotionally warm speech that's covering up genuine malice underneath - the outside looks precious, but scratch the surface and it's worthless, even dangerous. It's a warning to pay attention to substance, not just the shine of someone's words.

Lesson: Don't be won over by how good someone sounds - watch what's underneath the words over time. I want you to be a person whose insides match your outside, where kindness in your speech actually reflects a genuinely kind heart, not a coating over something else.

See Also: Proverbs 26:24-25 (spells out this same deceit in more detail); Matthew 23:27 (Jesus comparing hypocrites to whitewashed tombs, beautiful outside, corrupt within).

26:24 *(KJV) He that hateth dissembleth with his lips, and layeth up deceit within him;*
(B:E Project) Someone who secretly hates another person disguises it with their words, while quietly storing up deceit inside themselves.

Context: Continues the sequence on hidden hatred (26:23-26), describing specifically how a hateful person operates - hiding their real feelings behind pleasant speech.

Meaning: This describes a genuinely unsettling pattern - someone who has decided to hate another person but is careful enough to hide it, saying all the right things on the surface while privately nursing resentment and planning deceit. It's a warning that surface pleasantness is not proof of a person's real feelings, and that some people are actively, deliberately concealing hostility.

Lesson: Deal with your own hurt and anger honestly rather than burying it under a mask of pleasantness - unresolved hatred stored up inside doesn't disappear, it festers and eventually shows itself. I'd rather you bring your real feelings honestly into the light than let them quietly poison you from within.

See Also: Proverbs 26:25 (continues describing this same deceptive pattern); 1 John 3:15 ('whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer').

26:25 *(KJV) When he speaketh fair, believe him not: for there are seven abominations in his heart.*
(B:E Project) When such a person speaks kindly to you, don't take it at face value - there's a whole list of evil intentions hidden inside them.

Context: Continues directly from 26:24, giving practical advice for how to respond to someone who's already been identified as hiding hatred behind flattering speech.

Meaning: 'Seven' here means completely full, a comprehensive collection, not a literal count, but an emphatic warning that the deception runs deep and thorough. This verse gives direct, practical advice: once you have real reason to suspect someone's hidden hostility, don't let their charming words override what you've already learned about their character. Discernment sometimes means not taking kind words at face value.

Lesson: Wisdom and love aren't opposites - you can genuinely care about someone while still being clear-eyed about a pattern of deceit you've seen in them. Don't confuse naivety with grace; real love sees people honestly, including their capacity for hidden harm, and responds wisely rather than blindly.

See Also: Proverbs 26:24 (describes the deceptive person this verse warns about); Matthew 10:16 ('be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves').

26:26 *(KJV) Whose hatred is covered by deceit, his wickedness shall be shewed before the whole congregation.*

(B:E Project) Even if someone manages to hide their hatred through deception for a while, their wickedness will eventually be exposed publicly, in front of everyone.

Context: Concludes the sequence on hidden hatred (26:23-26) with a promise: deception can't be maintained forever, and hidden wickedness eventually comes to light.

Meaning: This offers real hope and closure to the unsettling picture painted in the previous three verses - deceit might work for a while, but it isn't sustainable forever. Eventually, patterns of behaviour reveal themselves, truth comes out, and reputations built on hidden hostility collapse in full view of others. It's reassurance that you don't need to personally expose every hidden wrongdoer - time and truth tend to do that work themselves.

Lesson: You don't have to be the one to unmask every hidden liar or expose every hypocrite you meet - truth has a way of surfacing on its own timeline, and it's not your job to force that process. Focus on keeping your own heart honest, and trust that what's hidden doesn't stay hidden forever.

See Also: Luke 12:2 ('there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known'); Numbers 32:23 ('be sure your sin will find you out').

26:27 *(KJV) Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein: and he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him.*

(B:E Project) Whoever digs a trap for someone else will fall into it themselves, and whoever sets a heavy stone rolling towards someone will end up crushed by it themselves.

Context: A standalone proverb closing out the theme of malicious scheming, describing how harmful plots have a way of turning back on the person who set them.

Meaning: This is one of Proverbs' clearest statements of a kind of natural moral law - schemes designed to trap or harm other people have a tendency to backfire on their creator. It's not always instant or obvious, but there's a real pattern here: malice tends to be self-destructive in the end, because you have to become the kind of person who sets traps, and that character eventually costs you.

Lesson: Don't waste your energy scheming against someone who's wronged you - not necessarily because you won't get away with it, but because plotting harm reshapes you into someone smaller and more bitter than you were meant to be. Let go of the trap you're tempted to dig; walk away from it and let your own hands stay clean.

See Also: Psalm 7:15-16 ('he made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made... his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate'); Galatians 6:7 ('whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap').

26:28 *(KJV) A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth worketh ruin.*

(B:E Project) A lying tongue ends up hating the very people it's hurt, and flattering, insincere talk brings about ruin.

Context: Closes chapter 26 with a summary statement on the destructiveness of both outright lies and smooth flattery, tying together the chapter's threads on deceit, gossip and hidden malice.

Meaning: There's a psychological insight buried here - people often come to resent those they've wronged, because the victim's presence is a constant, uncomfortable reminder of the liar's own guilt, so contempt grows to justify the original lie. And flattery, which seems harmless or even kind on the surface, is grouped right alongside lying because it's built on the same dishonesty and leads to the same kind of ruin - manipulating people with words you don't mean.

Lesson: Be honest, even when it costs you something, because dishonesty doesn't stay contained - it grows into contempt for the very people it's harmed, and it eventually brings ruin on the relationship and on you. I'd rather you speak an uncomfortable truth in love than smooth things over with flattery or lies that quietly poison everything they touch.

See Also: Proverbs 26:1 (the chapter's opening verse - together they bookend its warnings on misplaced honour and unreliable speech); Psalm 12:2-3 ('they speak vanity every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak. .. the LORD shall cut off all flattering lips').

CHAPTER 27

Chapter Summary: Proverbs 27

Proverbs Chapter 27 offers a collection of practical wisdom, focusing on personal conduct, the nature of true friendship, and the importance of diligence. It warns against arrogance and boasting about the future, emphasising that tomorrow is uncertain. The chapter highlights the value of honest feedback from friends, contrasting it with deceptive flattery. It also explores the destructive power of anger and envy, and the endless nature of human desires. Finally, the text

- See Also:** Proverbs 27:6, the wounds of a friend are trustworthy; Leviticus 19:17, thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour; Galatians 6:1, restore a person gently but honestly.
- 27:6** *(KJV) Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.*
(B:E Project) A friend's honest criticism, even when it stings, can be trusted; an enemy's flattering kisses are fake.
- Context:** A standalone proverb pairing with 27:5, distinguishing genuine friendship (willing to hurt you briefly for your good) from false, self-serving flattery.
- Meaning:** This verse teaches you to judge relationships by their honesty, not their comfort. A friend who tells you something you don't want to hear is investing in you; someone who only ever flatters you is usually protecting their own interests.
- Lesson:** Learn to value the friend who's honest with you over the one who only ever tells you what you want to hear. Real love is willing to cause a little pain now to spare you a lot of pain later.
- See Also:** Proverbs 27:5; Psalm 141:5, let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; 2 Samuel 15:5, Absalom's deceptive flattering kiss.
- 27:7** *(KJV) The full soul loatheth an honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.*
(B:E Project) Someone who's already full turns up their nose at honey, but someone genuinely hungry finds even bitter food tastes sweet.
- Context:** A standalone proverb using an appetite image to make a broader point about how our circumstances shape what we value.
- Meaning:** Fullness — of food, of comfort, of privilege — can breed ingratitude and even boredom with good things. Genuine need, by contrast, makes us grateful for almost anything. The verse quietly warns that abundance can dull appreciation.
- Lesson:** Notice how easily comfort can make you take good things for granted. Try to hold onto the gratitude that comes naturally when you have less — that's a healthier way to live even when you have plenty.
- See Also:** Philippians 4:12, learning to be content whether abased or abounding; Deuteronomy 8:12-14, a warning against forgetting God once you're full and comfortable.
- 27:8** *(KJV) As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place.*
(B:E Project) A person who wanders away from where they belong is like a bird that's strayed from its nest — exposed and lost.
- Context:** A standalone proverb about rootedness, using a bird's nest as an image for home, community, or calling.

- Meaning:** Leaving your proper place — whether that's your family, your community, your commitments, or your sense of purpose — leaves you exposed in the same way a bird away from its nest is vulnerable. It's not against travel or change, but against careless drift.
- Lesson:** Stay rooted in the people and commitments that ground you. There's real wisdom in stability — not because change is bad, but because drifting away from what anchors you leaves you exposed in ways you won't notice until it's too late.
- See Also:** Psalm 84:3, even the sparrow finds a house; Proverbs 21:16, the man who wanders from understanding ends up in the company of the dead.
- 27:9** *(KJV) Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel.*
(B:E Project) Perfume and fragrant oil delight the senses — and so does a friend's sincere, heartfelt advice.
- Context:** A standalone proverb praising honest counsel from a genuine friend, part of the cluster of friendship sayings running through this chapter.
- Meaning:** Good advice from someone who genuinely cares about you is compared to something sensually pleasurable — it's not a burden or an intrusion, but a real gift that enriches your life.
- Lesson:** Cherish the people in your life who speak honestly and warmly into your decisions. That kind of counsel is rare and valuable — don't brush it off as unwelcome interference.
- See Also:** Proverbs 27:17, iron sharpens iron through friendship; Proverbs 27:6, the trustworthy wounds of a friend.
- 27:10** *(KJV) Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not; neither go into thy brother's house in the day of thy calamity: for better is a neighbour that is near than a brother far off.*
(B:E Project) Don't abandon your own friend or your family's longstanding friend, and don't run to a distant relative when trouble strikes — a nearby neighbour is more use to you than a brother far away.
- Context:** A standalone proverb valuing loyal, present, practical relationships over formal but distant family ties.
- Meaning:** In a genuine crisis, proximity and demonstrated loyalty matter more than the theoretical claim of blood relation. This verse encourages investing in relationships that will actually be there for you, not just the ones you assume will be.
- Lesson:** Nurture the friendships that show up for you in hard times — that's family in every way that matters. Don't take loyal people for granted just because they're not technically related to you.

- See Also:

Luke 10:29-37, the good Samaritan redefines who counts as a neighbour; Proverbs 18:24, there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother.
- 27:11

(KJV)

My son, be wise, and make my heart glad, that I may answer him that reproacheth me.

(B:E Project)

Son, be wise and make me glad, so that I'll have an answer for anyone who criticises me.

Context:

A direct father-to-son address, echoing the discourse style of chapters 1-9, in which a parent urges their child toward wisdom partly for the parent's own sake.

Meaning:

This is a parent's honest plea — a child's wise living is both a source of personal joy and a kind of defence against critics who'd judge the parent by how the child turns out.

Lesson:

How you live reflects on the people who raised and shaped you, whether you like it or not. Living well is partly a gift you give back to them, out of love and gratitude, not obligation.

See Also:

Proverbs 10:1, a wise son maketh a glad father; Proverbs 23:15-16, a father's heart rejoicing when his son speaks wisely.

27:12

(KJV)

A prudent man foreseeeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished.

(B:E Project)

A sensible person sees danger coming and gets out of the way; a naive person just keeps walking and pays the price.

Context:

A standalone proverb on foresight and prudence, repeating almost word for word the saying found in 22:3.

Meaning:

Wisdom includes the ability to anticipate risk and act on it, rather than blundering ahead heedlessly and only reacting once harm has already happened.

Lesson:

Pay attention to warning signs in your life — in relationships, work, health, choices — instead of pushing forward blindly out of stubbornness or pride. Caution isn't weakness; it's a form of care for yourself.

See Also:

Proverbs 22:3, the identical saying; Matthew 10:16, be wise as serpents.

27:13

(KJV)

Take his garment that is surety for a stranger, and take a pledge of him for a strange woman.

(B:E Project)

If someone puts up their coat as a guarantee for a stranger's debt, take it as collateral — same if it's for a reckless woman.

Context:

A standalone proverb (repeating 20:16) on the financial folly of co-signing debts for people you don't really know.

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Meaning:

This is practical financial wisdom — people who guarantee debts for strangers or act recklessly show poor judgement, and the collateral rule exists to protect both the careful and the reckless from disaster.

Lesson:

Be careful with financial promises you make on behalf of people you barely know, however generous it feels in the moment. Real generosity is thoughtful, not reckless.

See Also:

Proverbs 20:16, the identical proverb; Proverbs 22:26-27, a further warning against becoming surety for others' debts.

27:14

(KJV)

He that blesseth his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, it shall be counted a curse to him.

(B:E Project)

Loudly praising your friend at the crack of dawn will be taken as an insult, not a compliment.

Context:

A standalone proverb, a wry observation about how timing and manner change how even good intentions land.

Meaning:

Even genuinely kind actions — like praise — can backfire badly if done at the wrong time, too loudly, or too intensely. Tact matters as much as the content of what you say.

Lesson:

Read the room before you act, even when your intentions are good. Kindness that ignores someone's actual state — tired, overwhelmed, private — can land as intrusion rather than care.

See Also:

Proverbs 25:20, singing songs to a heavy heart is like vinegar on soda; Ecclesiastes 3:1,7, there is a time to keep silence and a time to speak.

27:15

(KJV)

A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike.

(B:E Project)

A nagging, quarrelsome person is like a leaky roof that won't stop dripping on a rainy day.

Context:

A standalone proverb echoing 19:13 and 21:9,19, describing the wearing, relentless misery of living with constant conflict.

Meaning:

This uses a vivid domestic image — drip, drip, drip — to convey how relentless quarrelling doesn't cause one big injury but a slow, exhausting erosion over time.

Lesson:

If you're the source of constant friction in a relationship or home, be honest with yourself about it. Peace starts with noticing your own patterns, not just enduring someone else's.

See Also:

Proverbs 19:13, the contentions of a wife are a continual dropping; Proverbs 21:9,19, better to live in a corner of the housetop than with a contentious woman.

27:16

(KJV)

Whosoever hideth her hideth the wind, and the ointment of his right hand, which bewrayeth itself.

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- (B:E Project)** Trying to restrain her is like trying to grab hold of the wind, or trying to hold oil in your fist — it just slips away.
- Context:** A standalone proverb continuing 27:15's image, about the impossibility of controlling a contentious personality by force.
- Meaning:** Force or suppression can't fix relentless quarrelling — it can't be contained by pressure, only changed through a genuine shift of heart, which no one else can force on another person.
- Lesson:** You can't control someone else's temperament by trying to cage or restrain it. Real change comes from within a person, so approach conflict with patience and hope rather than trying to force a fix.
- See Also:** Proverbs 27:15; Proverbs 25:23, the north wind driveth away rain, a similar weather image.
- 27:17** ***(KJV)** Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.*
(B:E Project) Iron sharpens iron — and in the same way, one person sharpens another through real friendship.
- Context:** A standalone proverb, one of the most famous in the book, on the formative power of close, honest friendship.
- Meaning:** Real friends make each other better through honest interaction, challenge, and encouragement — like two blades sharpening each other, not through flattery but through genuine engagement.
- Lesson:** Seek out friends who challenge you to grow, not just people who agree with everything you say. That friction, when it comes from love, is one of the greatest gifts a friendship can offer.
- See Also:** Proverbs 27:6, the trustworthy wounds of a friend; Hebrews 10:24-25, provoke one another to love and good works; Proverbs 13:20, walk with the wise and become wise.
- 27:18** ***(KJV)** Whoso keepeth the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof: so he that waiteth on his master shall be honoured.*
(B:E Project) Whoever tends a fig tree gets to eat its fruit; likewise, whoever serves their employer faithfully will be honoured.
- Context:** A standalone proverb applying an agricultural image to the theme of diligence and faithful service.
- Meaning:** Consistent, patient care produces reward in due time. Whether tending crops or serving well in a job, faithful, unglamorous effort eventually pays off.
- Lesson:** Don't despise the slow, unglamorous work you do every day. Faithfulness over time, even when no one's watching, is exactly what produces real, lasting reward.

- See Also:** Matthew 25:21, well done, good and faithful servant; Galatians 6:9, in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.
- 27:19** ***(KJV)** As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man.*
(B:E Project) Just as water reflects your face back at you, one person's heart reflects another's.
- Context:** A standalone proverb about human connection and self-recognition through relationships with others.
- Meaning:** We often see ourselves most clearly through how we relate to other people — our own character, biases, and heart are mirrored back to us in the way we interact with others.
- Lesson:** What irritates or moves you in other people often reveals something about your own heart. Use that as a mirror for growth and self-honesty, not just as a tool for judging others.
- See Also:** Matthew 7:3-5, the mote and the beam; James 1:23-24, a man who beholds his own face in a glass.
- 27:20** ***(KJV)** Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied.*
(B:E Project) The grave and the place of destruction are never full, and neither is human wanting ever satisfied.
- Context:** A standalone proverb on the bottomless nature of human appetite and ambition, echoing the theme found in 30:15-16.
- Meaning:** This compares insatiable human desire — for more possessions, status, or pleasure — to the endless capacity of death itself. Left unchecked, wanting has no natural limit.
- Lesson:** Chasing endless "more" will never actually fill you up — there's no finish line to reach that way. Contentment isn't something you arrive at by getting enough; it's a choice you make regardless of how much you have.
- See Also:** Ecclesiastes 1:8, the eye is not satisfied with seeing; Proverbs 30:15-16, things that are never satisfied; 1 Timothy 6:9-10, the love of money and the snare it creates.
- 27:21** ***(KJV)** As the fining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold; so is a man to his praise.*
(B:E Project) A crucible tests silver and a furnace tests gold — and a person is tested by how they handle being praised.
- Context:** A standalone proverb, echoing 17:3, teaching that how someone handles praise reveals their true character.
- Meaning:** Praise and flattery function as a test — how someone responds to being complimented (with humility or with inflated vanity) reveals what they're really made of.

- Lesson:** Pay attention to how praise affects you. If compliments make you arrogant or dismissive of others, that's worth noticing and working on — real character shows itself most clearly under flattery, not criticism.

See Also: Proverbs 17:3, the Lord trieth the hearts; Proverbs 27:2, let another praise thee, not your own mouth.
- 27:22** *(KJV) Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him.*
(B:E Project) Even if you pounded a fool in a grinding bowl like grain, you still couldn't beat the foolishness out of him.

Context: A standalone proverb using a vivid, hyperbolic image about how deeply ingrained stubborn folly can be.

Meaning: This isn't advocating violence — it's a striking image for how resistant some foolishness is to correction, even harsh correction. Real change of that kind of stubbornness doesn't come from external force alone.

Lesson: Real change of heart can't be forced from the outside, in yourself or in anyone else. Approach stubborn patterns with patience and honest conversation rather than assuming pressure alone will fix them.

See Also: Proverbs 26:11, a dog returns to its vomit — a similarly stark image of stuck patterns; Proverbs 17:10, a rebuke enters more into a wise man than a hundred stripes into a fool.
- 27:23** *(KJV) Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds.*
(B:E Project) Make sure you know exactly how your flocks and herds are doing — pay close, careful attention to them.

Context: Opens a short closing unit (27:23-27) on the wisdom of diligent, attentive stewardship of resources, using farming as the practical example.

Meaning: Wealth and resources — here, livestock — require active, ongoing attention, not passive assumption that things will simply keep going well on their own. Diligence is what sustains what you have.

Lesson: Stay attentive to what's actually in front of you — your work, your relationships, your responsibilities — rather than coasting on autopilot and assuming everything will look after itself.

See Also: Proverbs 27:24, riches don't last forever; Luke 16:10, faithful in little, faithful in much.
- 27:24** *(KJV) For riches are not for ever: and doth the crown endure to every generation?*
(B:E Project) Wealth doesn't last forever, and even a royal crown doesn't stay in one family generation after generation.

- Context:** Continues the 27:23-27 unit, giving the underlying reason for diligence: nothing, not even wealth or power, is guaranteed to endure.

Meaning: Since riches and status are inherently unstable and temporary, real security comes from ongoing diligent effort, not from resting on the assumption that past wealth will simply continue on its own.

Lesson: Don't build your sense of identity or security purely on money or status — both are more fragile than they look. Build instead on things like character and relationships, which don't erode the same way.

See Also: Matthew 6:19-20, treasures on earth versus treasures in heaven; Proverbs 23:5, riches make themselves wings and fly away.
- 27:25** *(KJV) The hay appeareth, and the tender grass sheweth itself, and herbs of the mountains are gathered.*
(B:E Project) When the hay is cut, new grass comes up, and the mountain herbs are gathered in.

Context: Continues the agricultural picture of 27:23-27, describing the natural cycle of seasons that a diligent farmer must work with.

Meaning: This describes the rhythm of the seasons that careful stewardship must track and cooperate with — wisdom includes working in step with natural timing rather than against it.

Lesson: Align your effort with the natural seasons of your own life instead of fighting against them. There's real wisdom in recognising what stage you're in and working with it, not forcing a different rhythm.

See Also: Ecclesiastes 3:1-2, a time for every purpose; Genesis 8:22, seedtime and harvest shall not cease.
- 27:26** *(KJV) The lambs are for thy clothing, and the goats are the price of the field.*
(B:E Project) The lambs will give you wool for clothes, and the goats will fetch enough money to buy land.

Context: Continues the closing unit on diligent stewardship (27:23-27), spelling out the tangible returns of careful flock management.

Meaning: This shows the concrete payoff of diligence — clothing and even the means to acquire property come directly from consistent, attentive work, not luck.

Lesson: Don't despise small, steady returns from patient work — they genuinely add up over time into real security, more reliably than any shortcut.

See Also: Proverbs 27:23, the call to diligent attention that starts this unit; Proverbs 12:11, he that tills his land shall be satisfied with bread.

27:27 *(KJV) And thou shalt have goats' milk enough for thy food, for the food of thy household, and for the maintenance for thy maidens.*
(B:E Project) You'll have enough goats' milk to feed yourself, your household, and even your servant girls.

Context: Closes the 27:23-27 unit and the chapter, on the note that diligent stewardship provides abundantly for a whole household, not just its owner.

Meaning: Diligence doesn't just benefit the individual — it creates provision and security for everyone under that person's care, including those who serve within the household.

Lesson: When you work diligently and manage well, think of it as provision for everyone under your care, not just yourself. Real generosity flows naturally out of good stewardship.

See Also: 1 Timothy 5:8, provide for one's own household; Proverbs 31:15,21, the capable woman who provides for her whole household.

CHAPTER 28

Chapter Summary: Proverbs 28

Proverbs Chapter 28 strongly contrasts the lives and outcomes of the righteous and the wicked. It emphasises how integrity, obedience to God's law, and wisdom lead to security, stability, and blessings, both for individuals and for a nation. Conversely, the chapter warns against the dangers of wickedness, oppression, greed, pride, and dishonest leadership, showing how these paths lead to fear, instability, and ruin. It encourages honesty, humility, generosity to the poor, and unwavering trust in the Lord as the foundation for a prosperous and meaningful life.

28:1 *(KJV) The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion.*
(B:E Project) The wicked run away even when nobody's chasing them, but the righteous are as confident as a lion.

Context: Opens chapter 28, a standalone proverb contrasting the guilty conscience of wrongdoers with the fearless confidence of the honest.

Meaning: Guilt breeds paranoia and fear even without any real threat present, while a clear conscience produces genuine, grounded courage that doesn't need to look over its shoulder.

Lesson: Live honestly, and you won't need to keep glancing behind you. Integrity itself is a form of fearlessness — it frees you from imagined threats and lets you walk through life with real confidence.

See Also: Leviticus 26:17,36, the sound of a shaken leaf shall chase the guilty; Psalm 27:1, the Lord is my light and salvation, whom shall I fear; 1 John 3:21, if our heart condemn us not, we have confidence toward God.

28:2 *(KJV) For the transgression of a land many are the princes thereof: but by a man of understanding and knowledge the state thereof shall be prolonged.*
(B:E Project) When a country is corrupt, it churns through rulers in chaos; but with a wise, knowledgeable leader, stability lasts.

Context: A standalone proverb on governance, part of a recurring cluster on leadership running through chapters 28-29.

Meaning: Political instability and rapid turnover of leadership is portrayed as a symptom of a nation's underlying moral corruption, while genuinely wise leadership produces lasting order and stability.

Lesson: Whatever you lead — a household, a team, or just your own life — build it on real understanding, not ego or short-term wins. That's what makes something stable enough to last.

See Also: Proverbs 29:2, the people rejoice under righteous rule; Proverbs 11:14, in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.

28:3 *(KJV) A poor man that oppresseth the poor is like a sweeping rain which leaveth no food.*
(B:E Project) A poor person who exploits other poor people is like a heavy rainstorm that wipes out the crops instead of feeding them.

Context: A standalone proverb on social justice, highlighting the particular ugliness of exploitation coming from someone who should understand poverty firsthand.

Meaning: Exploitation is especially destructive and hypocritical when it comes from someone who has experienced hardship themselves — instead of nourishing like rain should, it devastates like a flood.

Lesson: Don't let your own hardship become an excuse to exploit someone else who's struggling too. Treat people with less than you the way you'd want to be treated if the roles were reversed.

See Also: Proverbs 22:16, oppressing the poor to increase one's own riches; James 2:6, do not the rich oppress you.

28:4 *(KJV) They that forsake the law praise the wicked: but such as keep the law contend with them.*
(B:E Project) People who abandon what's right end up praising the wicked, while those who hold to what's right stand against them.

Context: A standalone proverb on moral consistency, contrasting two very different responses to wrongdoing depending on one's own values.

Meaning: Your own moral compass shapes how you respond to evil in others. Let go of your principles and you'll start finding wrongdoing admirable or excusable; keep them, and you'll resist it instead.

- Lesson:** Hold firmly to what you know is right, because a wavering moral compass makes it dangerously easy to start admiring or excusing the wrong things, especially in people you like.

See Also: Romans 1:32, not only doing wrong but taking pleasure in those who do it; Psalm 1:1, blessed is the one who doesn't walk in the counsel of the wicked.
- 28:5

(KJV) Evil men understand not judgment: but they that seek the LORD understand all things.

(B:E Project) Wicked people don't understand what's fair and right, but people who genuinely seek what's true understand it fully.
- Context:** A standalone proverb contrasting moral blindness in wrongdoers with the moral clarity that comes from a sincere search for truth and goodness.

Meaning: A life oriented toward what's ultimately true and good gives genuine moral discernment, while a self-serving life distorts a person's sense of justice, often without them even noticing.

Lesson: Keep genuinely searching for what's true and good, not just for what benefits you. That honest search is what sharpens your ability to tell right from wrong when it actually matters.

See Also: Proverbs 2:5-9, seeking wisdom brings understanding of righteousness and judgment; 1 Corinthians 2:14, the natural man receiveth not the things of God.
- 28:6

(KJV) Better is the poor that walketh in his uprightness, than he that is perverse in his ways, though he be rich.

(B:E Project) It's better to be poor and honest than rich and crooked.
- Context:** A standalone proverb, a classic "better than" saying valuing integrity above wealth.

Meaning: Integrity is worth more than wealth gained dishonestly — character outweighs financial status, however impressive that status might look from the outside.

Lesson: Don't measure your own worth, or anyone else's, by their bank balance. A clean conscience is worth infinitely more than any amount of dishonestly gained comfort.

See Also: Proverbs 19:1, better is the poor that walketh in his integrity; Proverbs 16:8, better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without right.
- 28:7

(KJV) Whoso keepeth the law is a wise son: but he that is a companion of riotous men shameth his father.

(B:E Project) A son who follows what's right is wise; one who runs with wild, reckless people brings shame on his father.

- Context:** A standalone proverb on the influence of company and discipline, echoing the father-son address style of chapters 1-9.

Meaning: The company you keep genuinely shapes your character, and by extension it reflects on the people who raised and cared for you.

Lesson: Choose your friends thoughtfully, because who you spend your time with quietly shapes who you become. Think about the person you actually want to be, not just who's fun to be around right now.

See Also: Proverbs 13:20, walk with the wise and be wise; 1 Corinthians 15:33, evil communications corrupt good manners.
- 28:8

(KJV) He that by usury and unjust gain increaseth his substance, he shall gather it for him that will pity the poor.

(B:E Project) Whoever grows rich through exploitative interest and unfair profit is really just stockpiling wealth for someone else who will use it to help the poor.
- Context:** A standalone proverb on the ultimate futility of exploitative wealth, echoing a broader biblical concern about usury and unjust gain.

Meaning: Unjust wealth doesn't stay with the person who gained it unjustly forever — this proverb insists that, in the long run, it ends up serving purposes its original owner never intended.

Lesson: Build what you have honestly. Wealth gained by exploiting others has no real staying power, but what's built with integrity actually lasts and means something.

See Also: Exodus 22:25, no usury to the poor; Job 27:16-17, the wicked prepares clothing, but the just shall wear it; Ecclesiastes 2:26.
- 28:9

(KJV) He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.

(B:E Project) If someone refuses to listen to what's right, even their prayers become offensive.
- Context:** A standalone proverb linking ethical living to the sincerity of prayer or worship.

Meaning: You can't ignore doing what's right and expect religious practice to compensate for it. Sincerity requires consistency between how you actually live and how you present yourself in prayer.

Lesson: Don't treat prayer or spiritual practice as separate from how you treat people. Real connection with what's beyond you shows up in daily life, not just in words spoken in a quiet moment.

See Also: Isaiah 1:15, I will hide mine eyes from you, your hands are full of blood; Matthew 5:23-24, leave your gift at the altar and be reconciled first.

28:10 *(KJV) Whoso causeth the righteous to go astray in an evil way, he shall fall himself into his own pit: but the upright shall have good things in possession.*
(B:E Project) Whoever leads a good person into wrongdoing will fall into their own trap, but honest people end up with good things.

Context: A standalone proverb on the boomerang effect of trying to corrupt or mislead others.
Meaning: Attempting to lead someone else astray tends to backfire on the schemer, while genuine integrity brings its own real, lasting reward.
Lesson: Be very careful about nudging someone else toward wrongdoing, even subtly or jokingly. You're setting a trap that has a habit of catching the one who set it too.
See Also: Proverbs 26:27, whoever digs a pit shall fall into it; Matthew 18:6-7, woe to the one through whom temptation comes.

28:11 *(KJV) The rich man is wise in his own conceit; but the poor that hath understanding searcheth him out.*
(B:E Project) A rich man thinks he's wise just because he's rich, but a poor person with real understanding can see straight through him.

Context: A standalone proverb contrasting the false confidence that wealth creates with genuine discernment, which has nothing to do with money.
Meaning: Wealth can create a false sense of superiority or wisdom, but real understanding isn't determined by economic status — someone poorer can see through that illusion clearly.
Lesson: Don't confuse having money with being wise, and don't assume someone with less than you has less insight. Real understanding has nothing to do with your bank balance.
See Also: James 2:5, God chose the poor of this world to be rich in faith; Proverbs 26:12, a man wise in his own eyes.

28:12 *(KJV) When righteous men do rejoice, there is great glory: but when the wicked rise, a man is hidden.*
(B:E Project) When good people are thriving, there's great celebration, but when the wicked take power, people go into hiding.

Context: A standalone proverb on the visible social effect of who holds power, echoing 28:28 and 29:2.
Meaning: The moral character of those in power or influence shapes the whole surrounding atmosphere — flourishing and openness under good leadership, fear and withdrawal under corrupt leadership.

Lesson: The character of anyone with power or influence shapes how safe people around them feel. Use whatever influence you have — big or small — to make people feel safer, never smaller.
See Also: Proverbs 28:28, when the wicked rise, men hide themselves; Proverbs 29:2, the people rejoice under righteous rule.

28:13 *(KJV) He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.*
(B:E Project) Hiding your wrongdoing won't work out well for you, but admitting it and turning away from it brings mercy.

Context: A standalone proverb, one of the clearest statements in Proverbs on confession and genuine change of direction.
Meaning: Concealment and denial keep you stuck and eventually catch up with you; honest acknowledgement paired with real change opens the door to mercy that hiding never can.
Lesson: I will never turn away someone who honestly admits where they've gone wrong. Hiding your mistakes traps you in them, but bringing them into the light and actually changing course sets you free.
See Also: 1 John 1:9, if we confess our sins, he is faithful to forgive; Psalm 32:3-5, David's honest confession; Luke 15:18-20, the prodigal son's return.

28:14 *(KJV) Happy is the man that feareth alway: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief.*
(B:E Project) Happy is the person who stays humble and cautious; whoever hardens their heart falls into trouble.

Context: A standalone proverb contrasting ongoing humility and moral seriousness with stubborn, hardened resistance to correction.
Meaning: A healthy, ongoing sense of humility keeps a person grounded and safe, while a stubborn, unteachable heart eventually leads to real downfall.
Lesson: Stay soft-hearted and teachable rather than letting pride or stubbornness harden you over time. That openness to correction is exactly what keeps you safe from your own worst mistakes.
See Also: Hebrews 3:13, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin; Proverbs 29:1, the person who hardens their neck after repeated correction.

28:15 *(KJV) As a roaring lion, and a ranging bear; so is a wicked ruler over the poor people.*
(B:E Project) A wicked ruler over poor, powerless people is as dangerous as a roaring lion or a prowling bear.

- Context:** A standalone proverb on abusive leadership, part of the governance cluster running through chapters 28-29.

Meaning: Power without integrity, especially exercised over vulnerable people, turns predatory and terrifying instead of protective — the very thing leadership should never become.

Lesson: If you have any authority over people who are vulnerable — at work, at home, anywhere — use it to protect them, never to prey on them. That's the true measure of real leadership.

See Also: Ezekiel 34:2-4, shepherds who feed themselves instead of the flock; Proverbs 28:16, a ruler who lacks understanding becomes an oppressor.
- 28:16** *(KJV) The prince that wanteth understanding is also a great oppressor: but he that hateth covetousness shall prolong his days.*

(B:E Project) A ruler who lacks understanding ends up oppressing people, but someone who rejects greed will live a long, good life.

Context: A standalone proverb continuing the leadership theme, linking a ruler's lack of wisdom to oppression, and rejection of greed to a long life.

Meaning: Oppressive rule often comes as much from ignorance and short-sightedness as from pure malice, while genuinely rejecting greed brings a more stable, lasting kind of life.

Lesson: Reject the pull of greed in your own life and any leadership you hold, whatever scale that's on. That single, ongoing choice does more for your long-term wellbeing than almost anything else you could do.

See Also: 1 Timothy 6:10, the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil; Proverbs 28:8, unjust gain that doesn't stay with its owner.
- 28:17** *(KJV) A man that doeth violence to the blood of any person shall flee to the pit; let no man stay him.*

(B:E Project) Someone guilty of murder will run toward their own downfall — don't try to stop them.

Context: A standalone proverb on the inescapable consequence of severe guilt, part of the general collection.

Meaning: Severe guilt, like bloodshed, carries its own momentum toward ruin that others shouldn't shield the guilty party from. Justice, this proverb insists, has to be allowed to run its course.

Lesson: Real justice matters. Protecting someone from the consequences of serious harm they've caused isn't love — it's enabling. Consequences, faced honestly, are often part of how genuine change happens.

- See Also:** Genesis 9:6, whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; Numbers 35:31-33, no ransom for the life of a murderer.
- 28:18** *(KJV) Whoso walketh uprightly shall be saved: but he that is perverse in his ways shall fall at once.*

(B:E Project) Whoever lives honestly will be kept safe; whoever lives crookedly will suddenly collapse.

Context: A standalone proverb contrasting the lasting security of integrity with the sudden downfall of dishonesty.

Meaning: Consistent, honest living provides real, lasting security, while a corrupt path might appear to work for a while but tends to collapse suddenly and without warning.

Lesson: Integrity isn't flashy or exciting, but it's what actually holds up under real pressure. Build your life on it rather than on shortcuts that look clever in the moment.

See Also: Proverbs 10:9, he that walketh uprightly walketh surely; Matthew 7:24-27, the house built on rock versus the one built on sand.
- 28:19** *(KJV) He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread: but he that followeth after vain persons shall have poverty enough.*

(B:E Project) Someone who works their land will have plenty of food, but someone who chases empty pursuits will have plenty of poverty.

Context: A standalone proverb, echoing 12:11, contrasting steady diligence with chasing worthless distractions.

Meaning: Consistent, practical effort produces real provision over time, while wasting time and energy on frivolous or empty pursuits produces exactly the lack you'd expect.

Lesson: Notice what you're actually spending your time and energy on. Effort poured into what genuinely matters produces real fruit, while chasing distractions leaves you with nothing to show for it.

See Also: Proverbs 12:11, he that tills his land shall be satisfied with bread; Proverbs 14:23, in all labour there is profit.
- 28:20** *(KJV) A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent.*

(B:E Project) A trustworthy person will be richly blessed, but someone in a rush to get rich won't stay honest.

Context: A standalone proverb contrasting steady, reliable faithfulness with the corrupting rush to get wealthy quickly.

- Meaning:** Get-rich-quick drives usually involve cutting ethical corners somewhere along the way, while steady faithfulness over time produces genuine, lasting blessing rather than a fragile windfall.

Lesson: Be suspicious of any shortcut promising fast wealth — it usually costs you something in integrity that's worth far more than the money. Faithfulness, sustained over years, is the real prize.

See Also: Proverbs 28:22, the same warning about hasty riches from a different angle; 1 Timothy 6:9, those who want to be rich fall into temptation.
- 28:21** *(KJV) To have respect of persons is not good: for for a piece of bread that man will transgress.*

(B:E Project) Playing favourites is wrong — some people will do wrong for something as small as a piece of bread.

Context: A standalone proverb warning against partiality and favouritism, noting the surprisingly small price at which some people will compromise their integrity.

Meaning: Favouritism — bias based on status, wealth, or bribery — is condemned even when what's offered is trivially small, because it reveals just how easily justice can be quietly corrupted.

Lesson: Treat everyone with the same fairness regardless of what they can do for you. Don't let even small incentives, however minor they seem, bend your judgement about what's right.

See Also: Leviticus 19:15, do not respect the person of the poor nor honour the person of the mighty; James 2:1-4, warning against favouritism in the church.
- 28:22** *(KJV) He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him.*

(B:E Project) Someone desperate to get rich fast has a greedy, envious streak, and doesn't realise poverty could be heading straight for them.

Context: A standalone proverb continuing 28:20's theme, warning specifically about the blindness that comes with greed-driven urgency.

Meaning: An obsessive drive for quick wealth — literally an "evil eye," a grasping, envious disposition — blinds a person to the very real risk of losing everything in the process.

Lesson: Greedy urgency clouds your judgement more than you realise. Slow down and think honestly about the risks before chasing a quick financial win — the rush itself is often the warning sign.

See Also: Proverbs 28:20, faithfulness versus haste to be rich; 1 Timothy 6:9-10, the snare of wanting to be rich.

- 28:23** *(KJV) He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue.*

(B:E Project) Someone who honestly corrects another person will, in the end, be appreciated more than someone who just flatters them.

Context: A standalone proverb, echoing 27:5-6, on the long-term value of honesty over short-term flattery.

Meaning: Honest correction, though uncomfortable at first, tends to earn lasting respect over time, while flattery feels good briefly but is ultimately hollow and untrusted.

Lesson: Don't be afraid to be honest with people you care about, even when it's uncomfortable right now. Genuine honesty earns a kind of trust that flattery could never buy.

See Also: Proverbs 27:5-6, open rebuke is better than secret love; Psalm 141:5, let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness.
- 28:24** *(KJV) Whoso robbeth his father or his mother, and saith, It is no transgression; the same is the companion of a destroyer.*

(B:E Project) Someone who steals from their own parents and says "that's not really wrong" is no better than a vandal or a criminal.

Context: A standalone proverb condemning both the act of robbing one's parents and the self-justifying denial that so often accompanies it.

Meaning: Minimising wrongdoing against those closest to you — family — is treated as just as morally serious as outright destructive crime; denial doesn't lessen the wrong, whatever excuse is offered.

Lesson: Don't excuse how you treat your own family just because it feels smaller or more private than "real" wrongdoing out in the world. Honesty and honour at home matter every bit as much as they do anywhere else.

See Also: Exodus 20:12, honour thy father and thy mother; Matthew 15:4-6, Jesus condemns using religious excuses to neglect one's parents.
- 28:25** *(KJV) He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife: but he that putheth his trust in the LORD shall be made fat.*

(B:E Project) A proud, arrogant person stirs up conflict, but someone who trusts in God will be well provided for.

Context: A standalone proverb contrasting pride, which breeds conflict, with trust and humility, which bring flourishing — a recurring theme across chapters 28-29.

Meaning: Pride is inherently combative because it insists on always having its own way, while trust and humility open the door to genuine peace and provision instead of constant friction.

- Lesson:** Notice how much of the conflict in your life traces back to pride — to needing to be right, or in control, or seen a certain way. Trust more, hold on less, and you'll find far more peace than you expect.

See Also: Proverbs 13:10, only by pride cometh contention; Proverbs 16:18, pride goes before a fall; Psalm 37:5, trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass.
- 28:26** *(KJV) He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered.*
(B:E Project) Trusting only your own judgement makes you a fool, but living wisely keeps you safe.

Context: A standalone proverb warning against pure self-reliant overconfidence, in contrast to seeking wisdom and counsel outside yourself.

Meaning: Relying solely on your own instincts, without outside wisdom, counsel, or humility, is genuinely foolish and risky; real safety comes from a more open, teachable approach to life.

Lesson: Don't assume you always know best. Stay open to counsel, correction, and wisdom that comes from outside your own head — that's where real safety and growth actually come from.

See Also: Proverbs 3:5-7, trust in the Lord, lean not on your own understanding; Proverbs 12:15, the way of a fool is right in his own eyes.
- 28:27** *(KJV) He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse.*
(B:E Project) Whoever gives to the poor will never be in need, but whoever deliberately ignores them will be cursed many times over.

Context: A standalone proverb on generosity toward those in need, one of Proverbs' strongest and most recurring themes.

Meaning: Generosity toward those in need paradoxically leads to genuine sufficiency, while deliberately turning a blind eye to need brings real harm back onto the one who looks away.

Lesson: Give generously to those who have less than you — not as a transaction to get something back, but because it's simply who you're meant to be. Real generosity never actually leaves you poorer in the ways that matter.

See Also: Proverbs 19:17, he that has pity on the poor lends unto the Lord; Matthew 25:35-40, whatever you did for the least of these; 2 Corinthians 9:6-7.
- 28:28** *(KJV) When the wicked rise, men hide themselves: but when they perish, the righteous increase.*

- (B:E Project)** When wicked people gain power, everyone hides; but when the wicked fall, good people flourish.

Context: Closes chapter 28, echoing 28:12, on the visible social impact of who holds power in a community.

Meaning: This reinforces that the moral character of those in power directly shapes public wellbeing — fear and withdrawal under corrupt power, genuine flourishing when it eventually falls.

Lesson: When injustice seems to be winning, don't lose hope — it never lasts. The people committed to what's right keep rising again and again, even after setbacks.

See Also: Proverbs 28:12, righteous rejoicing versus the wicked rising; Psalm 37:35-36, the wicked in great power, yet they passed away.

CHAPTER 29

Chapter Summary: Proverbs 29

- Proverbs Chapter 29 offers practical lessons on leadership, self-control, and the importance of accepting good advice. It begins with a clear warning that anyone who stubbornly ignores correction will suddenly face ruin without any second chances. The chapter contrasts wise, fair rulers—who bring joy, stability, and justice to their people— with corrupt, wicked leaders who cause widespread misery and encourage dishonesty. It also highlights the value of self-discipline, noting that foolish people let their tempers flare instantly while wise individuals quietly hold their anger in check. Finally, the chapter teaches that having a healthy vision of God's ways keeps a community thriving, warning that letting the fear of others trap you is dangerous, whereas placing your trust firmly in the Lord brings safety and honour.*
- 29:1** *(KJV) He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.*
(B:E Project) Someone who's been corrected again and again but still stubbornly refuses to change will be suddenly broken beyond repair.

Context: Opens chapter 29, a standalone proverb warning about the danger of persistent, hardened resistance to correction.

Meaning: Repeated refusal to learn from feedback or correction eventually leads to a collapse that can't be undone — there's a breaking point to stubbornness that this verse warns is coming.

Lesson: When people you trust correct you more than once about the same thing, that's genuinely worth listening to, however uncomfortable it feels. Don't let pride harden into something that can no longer be fixed.

See Also: Proverbs 28:14, happy is the person who stays humble and cautious; Proverbs 1:24-27, the consequences of repeatedly refusing wisdom's call; Hebrews 3:15, harden not your hearts.

29:2 *(KJV) When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn.*
(B:E Project) When good people are in charge, everyone's glad; when wicked people rule, everyone suffers.

Context: A standalone proverb on governance, echoing 28:12,28 and continuing into 29:16 — a recurring emphasis in these chapters.
Meaning: The moral quality of leadership directly and visibly shapes the wellbeing of everyone under it — this point is made repeatedly and deliberately across chapters 28-29.
Lesson: If you have influence over other people, even in small everyday ways, use it to bring relief and joy, not fear. That's the real test of whether your leadership is good.
See Also: Proverbs 28:12,28, similar contrasts between righteous and wicked rule; Proverbs 29:16, when the wicked multiply, wrongdoing increases.

29:3 *(KJV) Whoso loveth wisdom rejoiceth his father: but he that keepeth company with harlots spendeth his substance.*
(B:E Project) Someone who loves wisdom makes his father happy; someone who spends his time with prostitutes wastes everything he has.

Context: A standalone proverb echoing the father-son address style, contrasting wise living with reckless self-destruction.
Meaning: Pursuing wisdom brings genuine honour to the people who care about you, while reckless indulgence — here, sexual and financial — destroys what's been built and hurts more people than just the one indulging.
Lesson: The choices you make with your time, body, and money ripple out to the people who love you. Choose paths that build something, rather than ones that quietly waste what you already have.
See Also: Proverbs 5:9-10, giving your resources away to strangers; Luke 15:13, the prodigal son who wasted his inheritance on reckless living.

29:4 *(KJV) The king by judgment establisheth the land: but he that receiveth gifts overthroweth it.*
(B:E Project) A ruler who governs fairly makes a country stable; one who takes bribes wrecks it.

Context: A standalone proverb on governance, specifically condemning bribery as destabilising to a whole nation.
Meaning: Fair, impartial justice is the very foundation of a stable society, while corruption — accepting bribes — actively tears that foundation apart, no matter how small it starts.

Lesson: Fairness and incorruptibility, wherever you hold any authority however small, are what actually hold relationships and communities together. Don't let anything buy your judgement.
See Also: Proverbs 15:27, he that hateth gifts shall live; Exodus 23:8, a gift blinds even the wise.

29:5 *(KJV) A man that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a net for his feet.*
(B:E Project) Someone who flatters their neighbour is really laying a trap for them.

Context: A standalone proverb warning that flattery, though it looks kind on the surface, is actually manipulative and dangerous.
Meaning: Flattery isn't harmless niceness — it's often used to manipulate, disarm, or set someone up for something else, so this verse teaches us to recognise it as a subtle kind of trap.
Lesson: Be wary of people who only ever tell you what you want to hear, and be careful not to use flattery yourself just to get what you want from someone else.
See Also: Proverbs 26:28, a flattering mouth worketh ruin; Psalm 12:2-3, they speak with flattering lips and a double heart.

29:6 *(KJV) In the transgression of an evil man there is a snare: but the righteous doth sing and rejoice.*
(B:E Project) An evil person's own wrongdoing traps them, but a righteous person lives with genuine joy.

Context: A standalone proverb contrasting the self-entangling nature of wrongdoing with the freedom and joy that comes with integrity.
Meaning: Wrongdoing tends to entangle and trap the person doing it, closing in on them over time, while a life of integrity produces real, unburdened joy that doesn't have to hide from anything.
Lesson: A life aligned with what's good genuinely feels lighter and freer over time. Wrongdoing might look like freedom in the moment, but it quietly closes in on you the longer it goes on.
See Also: Proverbs 5:22, his own sins shall trap the wicked; Galatians 6:7-8, whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

29:7 *(KJV) The righteous considereth the cause of the poor: but the wicked regardeth not to know it.*
(B:E Project) A good person cares about the situation of the poor; a wicked person doesn't even want to know about it.

Context: A standalone proverb on social justice, part of a recurring concern for the poor that runs throughout Proverbs.

Meaning: Genuine righteousness includes active concern for the disadvantaged, while wickedness is marked by deliberate indifference — not even wanting to look closely enough to understand.

Lesson: Actively pay attention to people struggling around you, rather than looking away because it's easier not to know. Caring enough to actually notice is where real compassion starts.

See Also: Matthew 25:35-40, whatever you did for the least of these; Proverbs 21:13, whoso stops his ears at the cry of the poor; Isaiah 1:17.

29:8 *(KJV) Scornful men bring a city into a snare: but wise men turn away wrath.*
(B:E Project) Mockers can throw a whole city into chaos, but wise people calm things down and defuse anger.

Context: A standalone proverb on the social impact of attitude, contrasting scornful troublemakers with wise peacemakers.

Meaning: Contempt and mockery can inflame conflict on a wide scale very quickly, while wisdom actively works to de-escalate tension and calm a volatile situation.

Lesson: Be a calming presence rather than someone who stirs things up with mockery or contempt. Choosing to defuse conflict rather than fuel it is a form of real strength.

See Also: Matthew 5:9, blessed are the peacemakers; Proverbs 15:1, a soft answer turneth away wrath.

29:9 *(KJV) If a wise man contendeth with a foolish man, whether he rage or laugh, there is no rest.*
(B:E Project) If a wise person argues with a fool, whether the fool gets angry or just laughs it off, nothing gets resolved.

Context: A standalone proverb on the futility of arguing with someone who isn't willing to engage seriously.

Meaning: Arguing with someone who isn't operating in good faith — whether they respond with rage or mockery — never actually produces a real resolution, however right your case is.

Lesson: You don't have to win every argument or convince every person. Sometimes real wisdom is recognising when to walk away from a fight that was never going to end well, and letting it go with peace instead of frustration.

See Also: Proverbs 26:4, answer not a fool according to his folly; Matthew 7:6, don't cast your pearls before those who will only trample them.

29:10 *(KJV) The bloodthirsty hate the upright: but the just seek his soul.*

(B:E Project) Violent people hate someone who's honest, but the just care for their wellbeing.

Context: A standalone proverb contrasting the hostility violent people show toward integrity with the protective care the righteous show toward life.

Meaning: Honesty and integrity can provoke real hostility from those who thrive on violence or corruption, while genuinely just people actively seek to protect and preserve life rather than harm it.

Lesson: Don't be surprised if living honestly draws hostility from people who benefit from dishonesty. Keep protecting and valuing life anyway — that's the mark of genuine justice, whatever the cost.

See Also: John 15:18-19, if the world hates you, know it hated me before you; 1 John 3:12-13, Cain hated Abel because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous.

29:11 *(KJV) A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards.*
(B:E Project) A fool blurts out everything they're thinking; a wise person holds back and waits.

Context: A standalone proverb on self-control of speech, one of Proverbs' major recurring themes.

Meaning: Unfiltered venting of every passing thought is foolish; wisdom includes restraint — knowing when to hold your tongue and speak later, more carefully, once emotions have settled.

Lesson: You don't have to say everything you're thinking the moment you think it. Pausing before you speak is often the wisest, most loving thing you can do, both for yourself and for the person listening.

See Also: Proverbs 17:27-28, he that hath knowledge spareth his words; James 1:19, be swift to hear, slow to speak.

29:12 *(KJV) If a ruler hearken to lies, all his servants are wicked.*
(B:E Project) If a leader listens to lies, everyone working for them will end up corrupt too.

Context: A standalone proverb on the trickle-down effect a leader's character and judgement has on everyone under them.

Meaning: A leader who tolerates or rewards dishonesty creates an environment where corruption naturally spreads through the whole organisation or group, whether or not that was ever intended.

Lesson: If you have any position of influence, what you tolerate quietly sets the tone for everyone around you. Reward honesty, not flattery or convenient lies.

See Also: Proverbs 29:2, righteous versus wicked rule; Ecclesiastes 10:5-7, an error that proceeds from a ruler.

29:13 *(KJV) The poor and the deceitful man meet together: the LORD lighteneth both their eyes.*
(B:E Project) The poor person and the person who exploits others cross paths, and it's the same God who gives sight to both.

Context: A standalone proverb, echoing 22:2, affirming the equal dignity and shared origin of people at very different ends of the moral and social scale.

Meaning: Despite vast differences in circumstance or moral standing, everyone shares a common origin and worth — a levelling truth that should humble both the exploiter and the exploited alike.

Lesson: Remember that everyone, however different their situation is from yours, shares the same fundamental worth. Let that shape how you treat people at every level of society, not just the ones who are easy to respect.

See Also: Proverbs 22:2, the rich and poor meet together: the Lord is the maker of them all; Acts 17:26, God hath made of one blood all nations.

29:14 *(KJV) The king that faithfully judgeth the poor, his throne shall be established for ever.*
(B:E Project) A ruler who deals fairly with the poor will have a lasting, stable reign.

Context: A standalone proverb on governance, reinforcing that justice toward the vulnerable is what actually secures lasting leadership.

Meaning: A leader's real legitimacy and longevity are tied to how they treat the most vulnerable people, not the most powerful ones — justice for the poor is portrayed as a genuine foundation for stability.

Lesson: How you treat the people with the least power around you says more about your real character than how you treat the powerful. Build your life on that kind of justice, and it will actually last.

See Also: Psalm 72:2,4,12-13, the king's righteous judgment of the poor and needy; Proverbs 29:4, judgment establishes the land.

29:15 *(KJV) The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.*
(B:E Project) Discipline and honest correction produce wisdom in a child; a child left to do whatever they want brings shame on their mother.

Context: A standalone proverb on parenting, part of a small cluster (29:15,17) on the importance of loving discipline in raising children.

Meaning: Loving discipline and correction are portrayed as essential to a child's healthy development; neglecting that guidance has consequences that fall on the parent too, not just the child.

Lesson: Real love for a child includes boundaries and honest correction, not just permissiveness. Guiding someone well, even when it's hard in the moment, is an act of genuine care, not control.

See Also: Proverbs 29:17, correct thy son and he shall give thee rest; Proverbs 22:6, train up a child in the way he should go; Hebrews 12:11, chastening yields fruit later.

29:16 *(KJV) When the wicked are multiplied, transgression increaseth: but the righteous shall see their fall.*
(B:E Project) When wicked people increase, wrongdoing increases with them, but good people will live to see them fall.

Context: A standalone proverb on governance and social conditions, echoing 29:2's concern about who holds influence.

Meaning: A society's moral condition reflects who holds influence within it, but wickedness's dominance is never portrayed as permanent — it eventually collapses, however entrenched it seems.

Lesson: Don't despair when wrongdoing seems to be spreading around you. It carries the seeds of its own downfall — staying true to what's right through that time is what matters most.

See Also: Proverbs 29:2, the people rejoice under righteous rule; Psalm 37:1-2,9-10, fret not because of evildoers, for they shall be cut off.

29:17 *(KJV) Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul.*
(B:E Project) Discipline your son, and he'll bring you peace and real joy.

Context: A standalone proverb continuing 29:15's parenting theme, framed as direct address in the style of chapters 1-9.

Meaning: Consistent, loving correction of children pays off in the long run with a relationship marked by genuine peace and deep satisfaction, not lingering resentment.

Lesson: The effort you put into guiding someone well, even when it's difficult in the moment, tends to return as real peace and joy in the relationship later. It's worth the discomfort now.

See Also: Proverbs 29:15, the rod and reproof give wisdom; Proverbs 23:24-25, the father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice.

29:18 *(KJV) Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.*
(B:E Project) Without a guiding vision, people lose their way and fall apart; but whoever holds to what's right is genuinely happy.

Context: A standalone proverb, one of the most quoted in the whole book, on the necessity of purpose and guidance for a community or a life.

Meaning: People, and whole communities, need a clear sense of purpose and moral direction, or they drift into chaos; grounding your life in solid principles is what actually brings genuine happiness.

Lesson: Live with a clear sense of purpose and values, because drifting without direction leaves you, and the people around you, lost. Anchor yourself in what you genuinely know to be good.

See Also: Habakkuk 2:2-3, write the vision, make it plain; Hosea 4:6, my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.

29:19 *(KJV) A servant will not be corrected by words: for though he understand he will not answer.*
(B:E Project) You can't correct some people just by talking to them — even if they understand, they won't respond or change.

Context: A standalone proverb, an observation on stubborn resistance to verbal correction, using the specific historical example of a servant but expressing a general principle.

Meaning: Words alone don't change everyone. Some people understand exactly what's being said but choose not to act on it, which points to the need for firmer boundaries rather than endless conversation.

Lesson: If gentle words aren't getting through to someone, or to yourself, don't assume more talking is the answer. Sometimes real change needs firmer boundaries or consequences, not just another conversation.

See Also: Proverbs 29:1, the person who hardens their neck after repeated correction; Proverbs 17:10, a rebuke enters more into a wise man than a hundred stripes into a fool.

29:20 *(KJV) Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? there is more hope of a fool than of him.*
(B:E Project) Do you see someone who speaks without thinking first? There's more hope for an outright fool than for them.

Context: A standalone proverb, one of several in Proverbs on the danger of hasty, unfiltered speech.

Meaning: Careless, impulsive speech is portrayed as even more hopeless than plain foolishness, because it shows a total absence of self-awareness or restraint.

Lesson: Slow down before you speak, especially when emotions are running high. That pause is often the difference between wisdom and something you'll regret saying.

See Also: Proverbs 29:11, a fool blurts out everything, a wise man holds back; James 1:19, swift to hear, slow to speak; Proverbs 18:13, answering before listening is folly and shame.

29:21 *(KJV) He that delicately bringeth up his servant from a child shall have him become his son at the length.*
(B:E Project) Someone who pampers their servant from childhood will end up with that servant thinking he deserves to be treated like a son.

Context: A standalone proverb, a somewhat obscure saying likely warning against over-indulgence creating unhealthy entitlement.

Meaning: Raising someone — a child or a dependent — with excessive indulgence and no proper boundaries tends to produce presumption and entitlement rather than the gratitude that healthy limits foster.

Lesson: Genuine kindness to people you're responsible for includes healthy limits, not just giving them everything they want. Indulgence without boundaries doesn't actually serve someone well in the long run.

See Also: Proverbs 29:15, discipline and reproof give wisdom; Proverbs 19:10, delight is not fitting for a fool.

29:22 *(KJV) An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression.*
(B:E Project) An angry person stirs up conflict, and a hot-tempered person sins constantly.

Context: A standalone proverb, part of Proverbs' extensive teaching on managing anger.

Meaning: Uncontrolled anger doesn't stay contained — it generates ongoing conflict and repeated wrongdoing, feeding on itself and spreading outward to everyone nearby.

Lesson: Notice the pattern anger creates in your life. If you're often quick to anger, you're likely creating far more conflict and harm than you realise — learn to cool down before you act, not after.

See Also: Proverbs 15:18, a wrathful man stirreth up strife; Ephesians 4:31, put away all anger and wrath.

29:23 *(KJV) A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit.*
(B:E Project) A person's pride will bring them down, but honour lifts up someone who's humble.

Context: A standalone proverb, echoing 16:18, on the reversal between pride and humility.

Meaning: Pride is self-defeating in the long run, while genuine humility is what actually earns lasting honour and respect, even though it can feel counterintuitive in the moment.

Lesson: The more you let go of needing to be seen as important, the more genuine respect tends to come your way naturally. Humility isn't weakness — it's what actually endures.

See Also: Proverbs 16:18, pride goeth before a fall; Matthew 23:12, whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; James 4:6,10, God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.

29:24 (KJV) *Whoso is partner with a thief hateth his own soul: he heareth cursing, and bewrayeth it not.*
(B:E Project) Whoever teams up with a thief is really harming himself — he hears the public oath demanding testimony and stays silent anyway.

Context: A standalone proverb warning against complicity in wrongdoing, referencing the ancient legal practice of a public curse or oath compelling witnesses to come forward.

Meaning: Being complicit in someone else's wrongdoing, through silence or partnership, harms your own integrity and wellbeing, even if you never actually committed the act yourself.

Lesson: Staying silent to protect someone doing wrong makes you complicit, and it costs you something real inside. Have the courage to speak the truth even when it's uncomfortable for people close to you.

See Also: Leviticus 5:1, if he does not utter what he knows, he bears his own guilt; Ephesians 5:11, have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.

29:25 (KJV) *The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putheth his trust in the LORD shall be safe.*
(B:E Project) Being afraid of what people think traps you, but trusting in God keeps you safe.

Context: A standalone proverb on the danger of living for others' approval versus grounding your security somewhere deeper.

Meaning: Living primarily out of fear of others' opinions or judgement is portrayed as a trap that quietly controls your choices; deeper trust and security is what frees you from that trap.

Lesson: Don't let fear of what people think run your life — that fear is a cage, even when it's an invisible one. Root your security somewhere deeper, and you'll find the freedom to act rightly even when it's unpopular.

See Also: Galatians 1:10, do I seek to please men? then I would not be a servant of Christ; John 12:42-43, feared the Pharisees more than they valued truth; Psalm 118:6, the Lord is on my side, I will not fear.

29:26 (KJV) *Many seek the ruler's favour; but every man's judgment cometh from the LORD.*
(B:E Project) Lots of people chase a ruler's approval, but real justice ultimately comes from God, not from any human authority.

Context: A standalone proverb reminding the reader that ultimate justice and vindication don't depend on currying favour with powerful people.

Meaning: Seeking human approval or favour, especially from those in power, is common enough, but this verse insists it's ultimately unnecessary — true justice rests on a higher authority than any human ruler's whims.

Lesson: You don't need to chase the approval of powerful people to be treated fairly in the end. Real justice runs deeper than human favour, so live rightly rather than politically, and trust that to matter.

See Also: Psalm 75:6-7, promotion cometh neither from the east nor the west, but from God; Romans 12:19, vengeance is mine, saith the Lord.

29:27 (KJV) *An unjust man is an abomination to the just: and he that is upright in the way is abomination to the wicked.*
(B:E Project) A dishonest person disgusts those who are honest, and an honest person disgusts those who are dishonest.

Context: Closes chapter 29, and this long section of standalone proverbs, with a summary statement on the fundamental, mutual incompatibility between righteousness and wickedness.

Meaning: Honesty and dishonesty are fundamentally opposed value systems, so it's natural and even expected that each side finds the other genuinely repulsive — a fitting close to this whole extended contrast between the righteous and the wicked.

Lesson: Don't be surprised or discouraged if living honestly puts you at odds with people who operate dishonestly. That tension is real and won't always resolve neatly, but keep choosing integrity anyway, because it's who you're meant to be.

See Also: Amos 5:10, they hate him that rebuketh in the gate; John 3:19-20, men loved darkness rather than light; 1 John 3:12-13, why the world's hostility to righteousness shouldn't surprise you.

CHAPTER 30

Chapter Summary: Proverbs 30

Chapter 30 presents a collection of wise sayings, primarily from a person named Agur. He begins by humbly expressing his own limited wisdom and understanding compared to God's infinite knowledge. Agur then offers a unique prayer, asking God for a balanced life—neither extreme wealth nor extreme poverty—to avoid being tempted to deny God or resort to stealing. The chapter continues with a series of warnings against disrespect and exploitation, describing different types of wicked individuals. Agur then explores things in the world that are never satisfied, as well as things he finds mysterious and hard to comprehend. He lists various situations that can cause social unrest and then highlights four small but remarkably intelligent creatures, followed by four majestic beings that move with impressive dignity. The chapter concludes with practical advice about controlling pride and anger, using everyday examples to show how provoking wrath inevitably leads to conflict.

30:1 *(KJV)* The words of Agur the son of Jakeh, even the prophecy: the man spake unto Ithiel, even unto Ithiel and Ucal,
(B:E Project) This is the record of Agur, son of Jakeh - a solemn message he delivered, spoken to Ithiel and Ucal.

Context: This opens the final major section of Proverbs, a separate collection attributed to an otherwise unknown sage named Agur, distinct in tone from Solomon's confident two-line sayings - it reads more like a personal, probing reflection.

Meaning: Naming a new, obscure author signals a shift in mood: what follows is less "here's the rule" and more "here's what I've wrestled with." It's a reminder that wisdom doesn't only come from kings and celebrities - sometimes the most honest insight comes from someone we've never heard of.

Lesson: You don't need a famous name for your words to matter to me. I listen to the quiet, unknown voices just as closely as the loud ones - what matters is whether what you say is true and humble.

See Also: Ecclesiastes 1:1 (another wisdom book opening by naming its unusual author, "the Preacher"); 1 Corinthians 1:27 (God choosing the lowly and unknown to shame the wise).

30:2 *(KJV)* Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man.
(B:E Project) Honestly, I'm more like an animal than a man - I don't have the ordinary understanding people are supposed to have.

Context: Agur opens with a startling confession of his own ignorance, an unusual move in a book otherwise full of confident instruction - it sets up the questions that follow in verse 4.

Meaning: This is intellectual humility on display. Before Agur says anything else, he admits he doesn't have it all figured out. In a culture that rewards people who sound certain, this is oddly refreshing - real wisdom often starts with admitting the limits of what you know.

Lesson: The people I trust most aren't the ones who claim to know everything - they're the ones honest enough to say 'I don't fully understand this.' That kind of honesty opens a door I can walk through; false certainty just shuts it.

See Also: Job 42:3 (Job admitting he spoke of things too wonderful for him); 1 Corinthians 8:2 (whoever thinks they know something doesn't yet know as they ought).

30:3 *(KJV)* I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy.
(B:E Project) I never learned wisdom properly, and I don't have insight into the holy.

Context: The second half of Agur's opening confession, continuing directly from verse 2's admission of ignorance.

Meaning: Agur doubles down on his humility, admitting he lacks not just general understanding but specifically the deeper, sacred knowledge others might claim to have. It's an honest starting point rather than a false performance of expertise before teaching anything at all.

Lesson: I'd rather you came to me admitting what you don't know than pretending you've mastered things you haven't. Genuine seeking always starts further back than people like to admit - and that's exactly where I meet you.

See Also: Proverbs 30:2 (the first half of this same confession); Isaiah 55:8-9 (God's ways higher than our ways).

30:4 *(KJV)* Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell?
(B:E Project) Who has ever gone up to heaven and come back down? Who has scooped up the wind in their bare hands? Who has tied up the sea in a cloth? Who set the boundaries of the whole earth? What's his name - and what's his son's name, if you can tell me?

Context: A rapid string of impossible, rhetorical questions - Agur's way of showing that no human has ever done what only a Creator could do, pressing the reader towards awe rather than easy answers.

Meaning: These are questions with only one honest answer: nobody. Agur is pointing at something bigger than human reach - the forces that hold the world together aren't things any person invented or controls. It's a call to humility in the face of how little we actually command, even now with all our technology.

- Lesson:** When you feel like you have to control everything, remember - you didn't set the boundaries of the ocean or invent the wind. You're not meant to carry that weight. Let yourself be small in the right way; it's not weakness, it's honesty.

See Also: Job 38:4-11 (God's own questions to Job about the sea and the foundations of the earth); John 3:13 (no one has ascended to heaven except the one who came from it).
- 30:5

(KJV) Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him.

(B:E Project) Everything God says is flawless, completely reliable - he's like a shield protecting everyone who takes refuge in him.

Context: After the unanswerable questions of verse 4, Agur pivots to an affirmation: even if we can't grasp everything about God, his word can still be trusted.

Meaning: This addresses a real fear - if we can't fully understand something, can we trust it? Agur's answer is yes: trustworthiness isn't the same as full comprehension. You don't need to understand every mechanism of a parachute to trust it'll open; the proof is in its track record of holding.

Lesson: You don't have to understand everything about me before you can trust me. Trust isn't about having all the answers - it's about leaning on something solid when you need protection, and finding it holds.

See Also: Psalm 18:30 (the word of the LORD is tried, he is a shield); 2 Samuel 22:31 (nearly identical language).
- 30:6

(KJV) Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.

(B:E Project) Don't add anything to his words - or he'll call you out for it, and you'll be exposed as a liar.

Context: A direct follow-on warning to verse 5 - if God's words are pure and complete, tampering with them is a serious distortion, not a small tweak.

Meaning: This is about intellectual honesty with sacred or foundational texts - and really, with truth in general. It's tempting to "improve" on something authoritative by bolting on your own opinions and passing them off as part of the original. Agur says: don't. Misrepresenting a source, even with good intentions, is a form of lying.

Lesson: Represent what's true as it actually is - don't dress it up, don't add rules I never gave, don't put words in my mouth to control other people. Integrity means letting the truth stand on its own.

See Also: Deuteronomy 4:2 (do not add to or take from these words); Revelation 22:18-19 (a similar warning at the very end of the Bible).
- 30:7

(KJV) Two things have I required of thee; deny me them not before I die:

(B:E Project) There are two things I'm asking you for - please don't refuse me before I die:

- Context:** Agur turns from general reflection to a short, personal prayer - two specific, humble requests he wants granted in his lifetime.

Meaning: This is one of the few places in Proverbs where the wise man prays for himself rather than instructing others. It models something valuable: knowing exactly what you actually need, rather than a vague wish-list, and asking for it plainly.

Lesson: It's alright to ask me directly for what you need - not in vague, grand terms, but specifically. I'd rather you tell me exactly what's weighing on you than pretend you don't need anything.

See Also: Matthew 7:7 (ask, and it shall be given you); Matthew 6:9-13 (the Lord's Prayer, another short, specific list of requests).
- 30:8

(KJV) Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me:

(B:E Project) Keep falsehood and lies far away from me. Don't make me poor, and don't make me rich either - just give me the food I need each day.

Context: The content of Agur's two-part prayer: honesty in his character, and a deliberately moderate, "just enough" level of provision - part of the wisdom tradition's suspicion of both poverty and excess wealth.

Meaning: This is remarkably countercultural, then and now. Most people pray to get rich or at least to be safe from poverty forever. Agur asks for the middle ground on purpose, because he's about to explain exactly what both extremes do to a person's character. It's contentment as a considered, deliberate request, not a fallback.

Lesson: I taught my followers to pray for daily bread, not for a stockpile - not because wanting security is wrong, but because chasing 'more' never actually satisfies, and having too little can break you too. Ask for enough, and trust that enough is genuinely enough.

See Also: Matthew 6:11 (give us this day our daily bread); 1 Timothy 6:8 (having food and covering, let us be content).
- 30:9

(KJV) Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.

(B:E Project) Because if I have too much, I might get comfortable and deny you, saying, 'Who even is the LORD?' And if I'm too poor, I might steal, and dishonour God's name by doing it.

Context: Agur explains why he asked for the middle path in verse 8 - both extremes carry real spiritual danger, not just practical hardship.

Meaning: This is sharp psychological insight: wealth breeds self-sufficient forgetfulness, while desperate poverty can push someone into actions that betray their own values.

Neither is really about the money itself - it's about what each extreme does to character and integrity under pressure.

Lesson: I know how easily comfort turns into forgetting what matters, and how easily desperation turns into compromise. I'm not asking you to fear either poverty or wealth - I'm asking you to stay awake to what either one does to your heart.

See Also: Deuteronomy 8:12-14 (warning that after eating and being satisfied, the heart may become proud and forget God); Luke 12:15 (life doesn't consist in the abundance of possessions).

30:10 *(KJV) Accuse not a servant unto his master, lest he curse thee, and thou be found guilty.*
(B:E Project) Don't badmouth a servant to their employer - they might curse you for it, and you'll end up the guilty one.

Context: A standalone proverb, back to the book's usual style of a single self-contained observation, warning against using your voice to get someone with less power into trouble.

Meaning: This is about not abusing whatever social advantage you have - speaking against someone weaker, behind their back, to the person who controls their livelihood. It backfires morally even if it "works" practically: you become the one in the wrong, guilty of exploiting the imbalance of power.

Lesson: Watch how you use your voice against people with less power than you - an employee, anyone who can't easily defend themselves to the person in charge of them. I notice when the strong go after the vulnerable, even in small ways.

See Also: James 4:11 (speak not evil one of another); Proverbs 22:22-23 (rob not the poor, for the LORD will plead their cause).

30:11 *(KJV) There is a generation that curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother.*
(B:E Project) There's a whole kind of person out there who curses their father and doesn't even bless their mother.

Context: First in a set of four connected "there is a generation..." sayings describing types of corrupt people - here, contempt for parents.

Meaning: "Generation" here means a type or class of people, not just an age group. This verse names a basic breakdown: disrespect and even hostility towards the people who raised you. In a book that repeatedly ties honouring parents to a well-ordered life, this is presented as a warning sign of deeper moral rot.

Lesson: However complicated your relationship with your parents is, contempt corrodes you more than it corrodes them. I'm not asking you to pretend everything was fine - I'm asking you not to let bitterness curdle into cursing the people who gave you life.

See Also: Exodus 20:12 (honour thy father and thy mother); Proverbs 20:20 (whoever curses father or mother, their lamp will be put out in darkness).

30:12 *(KJV) There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.*
(B:E Project) There's a kind of person who thinks they're completely clean in their own eyes - yet they've never actually washed off their own filth.

Context: Second in the "there is a generation" set - this time targeting self-righteousness, people convinced of their own purity while still morally compromised.

Meaning: This is about self-deception - the gap between how spotless we think we are and how we actually behave. It's easy to feel innocent simply because we've never seriously examined ourselves. The verse is a warning against confusing self-image with reality.

Lesson: I'm less interested in whether you feel innocent and much more interested in whether you're honest with yourself. Real change starts the moment you stop insisting you're already clean and actually let yourself be searched.

See Also: 1 John 1:8 (if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves); Luke 18:11-14 (the Pharisee who thanks God he isn't like other men, contrasted with the humble tax collector).

30:13 *(KJV) There is a generation, O how lofty are their eyes! and their eyelids are lifted up.*
(B:E Project) There's a kind of person - oh, how superior their look is! How they hold their head up and look down on everyone.

Context: Third in the "there is a generation" set - this one describes pure arrogance, a visible, physical posture of contempt for others.

Meaning: Agur zooms in on body language: raised eyes, lifted eyelids - the physical tell of someone who has decided they're above everyone else. Pride here isn't abstract; it's written on the face, in how someone literally looks at other people.

Lesson: You can usually tell how someone regards others just by how they look at them. I want you looking at people the way you'd want to be looked at yourself - not down, not measuring them against you, just eye to eye.

See Also: Proverbs 6:16-17 (a proud look is among the things the LORD hates); Isaiah 2:11 (the lofty looks of man shall be humbled).

30:14 *(KJV) There is a generation, whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men.*
(B:E Project) There's a kind of person whose teeth are like swords, whose jaws are like knives - devouring the poor right off the earth, and the needy from among people.

Context: Fourth and most severe in the "there is a generation" set - moving from private arrogance to active, predatory exploitation of the vulnerable.

Meaning: This is violent imagery for a very unglamorous crime: people who consume the poor for their own gain - exploitative wages, predatory lending, land-grabbing,

anything that "eats" someone weaker to feed the strong. It names greed dressed up as legitimate business as a kind of predation.

Lesson: When your gain depends on someone else's ruin - a wage too low to live on, a debt trap, a deal you know is unfair - that's not success, that's devouring. I stand with whoever's being eaten, not with the one holding the knife.

See Also: Amos 8:4 (those who swallow up the needy); James 5:4 (wages kept back by fraud crying out against the employer).

30:15 *(KJV) The horseleach hath two daughters, crying, Give, give. There are three things that are never satisfied, yea, four things say not, It is enough:*
(B:E Project) The leech has two daughters, both crying 'Give me more, give me more!' There are three things that are never satisfied - actually four that never say 'that's enough':

Context: Opens one of the book's classic numerical "three things... yea, four" sayings - a poetic device Agur uses to group observations about the natural world, here on the theme of insatiable appetite.

Meaning: The leech image is deliberately unglamorous - something that just keeps sucking, never full. It sets up a list, finished in verse 16, of things that by their very nature can never be satisfied, as a mirror for human greed, which behaves the same way.

Lesson: Greed isn't a character flaw that shows up occasionally - left unchecked, it behaves like a leech, always demanding one more thing. I want to free you from that hunger, not by giving you more, but by teaching you to actually feel full with what you have.

See Also: Ecclesiastes 5:10 (whoever loves money never has enough); Habakkuk 2:5 (a proud man is never satisfied, like death).

30:16 *(KJV) The grave; and the barren womb; the earth that is not filled with water; and the fire that saith not, It is enough.*
(B:E Project) The grave; a womb that can't have children; land that never gets enough rain; and fire - none of these ever say, 'That's enough.'

Context: Completes the numerical saying begun in verse 15 - four vivid, natural examples of things with an endless, structural appetite.

Meaning: Death, unfulfilled longing, drought, and fire are all things that consume without limit by their very design - they're not being greedy, that's just what they are. The comparison is unsettling: is human greed also just "what it is," or can we, unlike fire, actually choose to stop wanting more?

Lesson: Fire can't choose to stop burning - but you can choose to stop grasping. That's the difference between you and the things on this list: you have the freedom to say 'enough,' and that freedom is where real contentment begins.

See Also: Proverbs 27:20 (hell and destruction are never full, neither are the eyes of man); 1 John 2:16 (the lust of the eyes, not of the Father).

30:17 *(KJV) The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.*
(B:E Project) The eye that mocks a father and looks down on obeying a mother - ravens from the valley will peck it out, and young eagles will eat it.

Context: A standalone proverb, vivid and violent, returning to the theme of contempt for parents already raised in verse 11 and the "generation" sayings - here framed as an unavoidable natural consequence.

Meaning: This is graphic imagery for a real-world pattern: contempt for the people who raised and protect you tends to leave you exposed, picked apart by the world in ways loving family would have shielded you from. It's less a literal threat and more a warning about what happens when you cut yourself off from the people meant to have your back.

Lesson: Family isn't perfect, and I know some of you have real reasons for pain there - but scorn as a permanent posture leaves you exposed to things a family bond would have protected you from. Where reconciliation is possible, it's worth more than you think.

See Also: Proverbs 30:11 (the earlier saying on cursing father and mother); Exodus 21:17 (the seriousness with which the ancient law treated cursing one's parents).

30:18 *(KJV) There be three things which are too wonderful for me, yea, four which I know not:*
(B:E Project) There are three things too amazing for me to explain - actually four I just don't understand:

Context: Opens a second "three things... yea, four" numerical saying, this time about wonder rather than warning - things Agur finds genuinely mysterious rather than morally troubling.

Meaning: This sets up a shift in tone: not everything Agur lists is a danger to avoid. Some things are simply beautiful mysteries, worth marvelling at rather than solving. It's permission to not have to explain everything - some things you just watch in wonder.

Lesson: Not every mystery needs solving. Some things - how love finds its way between two people, how a bird holds itself in the air - are meant to be marvelled at, not figured out. Let yourself be amazed without needing all the answers.

See Also: Job 42:3 (things too wonderful for Job to know); Psalm 139:6 (such knowledge is too wonderful for me).

30:19 *(KJV) The way of an eagle in the air; the way of a serpent upon a rock; the way of a ship in the midst of the sea; and the way of a man with a maid.*

(B:E Project) The way an eagle moves through the sky; the way a snake moves over a rock; the way a ship moves through the sea; and the way a man and a woman come together.

Context: Completes the numerical list from verse 18 - four things whose "way" or manner defies simple explanation, culminating in human attraction and courtship, which sets up verse 20's contrast.

Meaning: Each image involves something moving without leaving an obvious trace - you can't track the eagle's path in the air, the snake's path on stone, or the ship's wake once it's passed. The final item, romantic attraction, is grouped with these as something equally mysterious and hard to pin down, even though it's utterly ordinary.

Lesson: Attraction, love, chemistry between two people - it's one of the most natural things in the world, and still nobody can fully explain how or why it happens. I don't ask you to explain it; I ask you to handle something so mysterious and powerful with real care.

See Also: Song of Solomon 8:6-7 (love as a mysterious, powerful force); Genesis 2:24 (a man and woman becoming one).

30:20 ***(KJV)** Such is the way of an adulterous woman; she eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness.*
(B:E Project) That's exactly how an unfaithful woman behaves: she has sex, wipes her mouth clean, and says, 'I haven't done anything wrong.'

Context: A pointed application immediately following the wonder-list of verses 18-19 - here the "mysterious way" of attraction curdles into betrayal covered by denial, a standalone but connected warning about self-deceiving infidelity.

Meaning: The image of wiping the mouth, as after eating, makes betrayal sound as casual as a snack - and worse, followed immediately by flat denial. It's a warning about how easily people rationalise wrongdoing to themselves, treating something that damages trust as if it left no trace at all.

Lesson: The danger isn't only doing wrong - it's doing wrong and telling yourself it doesn't count. I'd rather you came to me honestly, ashamed and searching, than clean and denying. Honesty about what you've done is always the door back to healing.

See Also: Proverbs 5:1-6 (extended warning about the adulterous woman); Genesis 39:9 (Joseph refusing to "sin against God").

30:21 ***(KJV)** For three things the earth is disquieted, and for four which it cannot bear:*
(B:E Project) Under three things the earth trembles - actually four it just can't bear:

Context: Opens a third numerical "three... yea, four" saying, this time about social order being turned upside down - situations so jarring they're pictured as shaking the very ground.

Meaning: This introduces a list about role reversal and social upheaval - not necessarily unjust in every case, but destabilising and uncomfortable in the ancient social imagination, where sudden shifts in status without the character to match them caused real disruption.

Lesson: Sudden power can be as dangerous as sudden poverty if the character underneath hasn't caught up. I care less about your position changing than about your heart being ready for whatever position you're in.

See Also: Proverbs 19:10 (delight is not fitting for a fool - a similar theme of things "out of place"); Ecclesiastes 10:5-7 (servants on horses, princes walking).

30:22 ***(KJV)** For a servant when he reigneth; and a fool when he is filled with meat;*
(B:E Project) When a slave suddenly becomes king; and when a fool has all the food he could want;

Context: First two examples in the "earth cannot bear" list - sudden, unearned power and sudden, unchecked abundance, both given to people without the character to handle them well.

Meaning: It's not that former slaves or once-hungry people are inherently dangerous as rulers - it's that a huge, sudden shift in power or plenty, without the wisdom or humility to match it, tends to go badly. Character needs time to grow into new circumstances; when it doesn't get that time, things fracture.

Lesson: However much or little you have, I care about the shape of your heart underneath it. Sudden power or sudden plenty will test you - so build your character now, quietly, so you're ready whenever your circumstances change.

See Also: Ecclesiastes 10:16-17 (woe to the land whose king is a child); Proverbs 28:3 (a poor man who oppresses the poor).

30:23 ***(KJV)** For an odious woman when she is married; and an handmaid that is heir to her mistress.*
(B:E Project) When a woman nobody can stand finally gets married; and when a servant-girl inherits everything from her mistress.

Context: Completes the "earth cannot bear" list - two more sudden, jarring reversals of expected social standing, disruptive to the social fabric of the time.

Meaning: These examples reflect the ancient social order's particular anxieties about status and inheritance, but the underlying principle still lands today: abrupt, unprepared-for changes in standing tend to unsettle everything around them, precisely because nobody, including the person themselves, is ready for it.

Lesson: Change your circumstances gradually if you can, and be gentle with yourself and others when change comes suddenly instead. Whatever shift you're facing, I'm more interested in how you carry it than in how fast it came.

See Also: Proverbs 30:21-22 (the opening and preceding items of this same numerical saying).

30:24 *(KJV) There be four things which are little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise:*
(B:E Project) There are four things on this earth that are small - but they're remarkably wise:

Context: Opens a fourth numerical saying, shifting tone again from warning to admiration - small creatures whose behaviour models genuine wisdom.

Meaning: This flips the usual assumption that wisdom belongs to the powerful and impressive. Agur is about to point to ants, hyraxes, locusts and spiders - creatures nobody would call mighty - as sources of real instruction. Size and status aren't the measure of wisdom; behaviour is.

Lesson: You don't need to be big, important or powerful to live wisely. Watch the small, unnoticed things around you - there's more to learn from quiet, consistent behaviour than from anything loud or impressive.

See Also: Proverbs 6:6-8 (go to the ant, thou sluggard - the same creature, same lesson, from the earlier chapters); 1 Corinthians 1:27 (God choosing weak things to shame the strong).

30:25 *(KJV) The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer;*
(B:E Project) Ants aren't a strong species, yet they store up their food in summer.

Context: First example in the "small but wise" list - the ant, praised for planning ahead despite having no obvious strength.

Meaning: Ants succeed through foresight and consistency, not power - they prepare during the season of plenty for the season of need. It's a direct challenge to anyone tempted to coast now and figure out the hard times later.

Lesson: Strength isn't what gets you through hard seasons - preparation is. Use the good times to build up what you'll need later, not because I want you anxious about the future, but because a little foresight now saves a lot of suffering later.

See Also: Proverbs 6:6-8 (nearly identical teaching about the ant); Genesis 41:34-36 (Joseph storing grain during years of plenty).

30:26 *(KJV) The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks;*
(B:E Project) Rock hyraxes are a feeble bunch, yet they make their homes in the rocks.

Context: Second example in the "small but wise" list - a small, physically weak animal, often translated "coney" or hyrax, praised for choosing a secure, well-suited home.

Meaning: The hyrax doesn't try to out-muscle its environment - it plays to its strengths, tucking itself into the rocks where it's safe. The wisdom here is about knowing your limits

and choosing your environment wisely rather than trying to dominate through force you don't have.

Lesson: You don't have to be the strongest to be secure - you just need to build your life on the right foundation. Find what's solid, and root yourself there, instead of exhausting yourself trying to be tougher than you are.

See Also: Matthew 7:24-25 (the wise man who built his house on the rock); Psalm 18:2 (the LORD as a rock and refuge).

30:27 *(KJV) The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands;*
(B:E Project) Locusts have no king, yet they all move out together in organised swarms.

Context: Third example in the "small but wise" list - locusts praised for effective cooperation without any central leader.

Meaning: This is an early observation about self-organising teamwork - no single locust is in charge, yet together they move with striking order and purpose. It challenges the idea that you always need a hierarchy or a boss to get anything meaningful done; sometimes shared purpose is enough.

Lesson: You don't always need someone ranked above you telling you what to do - you need a shared purpose and people willing to move together. That kind of unity, chosen rather than forced, is its own kind of strength.

See Also: Acts 2:44-45 (the early church holding everything in common, moving together without a single earthly ruler); Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (two are better than one).

30:28 *(KJV) The spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings' palaces.*
(B:E Project) A spider you can catch with your hands - yet it's found even in kings' palaces.

Context: Fourth and final example in the "small but wise" list - a small, easily-caught creature that nonetheless makes it into the grandest places.

Meaning: The spider gets everywhere, not through strength but through persistence and adaptability - it can be picked up in an instant, and yet it's found in the most prestigious buildings around. It's a picture of how skill and quiet persistence can carry someone or something small into places far beyond what their size would suggest.

Lesson: You don't need power or status to end up in rooms that matter - persistence and skill, used quietly and consistently, will carry you further than you expect. Don't despise your small beginnings.

See Also: Zechariah 4:10 (do not despise the day of small things); Matthew 13:31-32 (the mustard seed, smallest of seeds, growing into a great tree).

30:29 *(KJV) There be three things which go well, yea, four are comely in going:*

(B:E Project) There are three things that move with real presence, actually four that carry themselves well:

Context: Opens the final numerical saying of the chapter - this time about bearing and stately movement, admired rather than warned against.

Meaning: Unlike the earlier lists on danger, mystery, and upheaval, this one is simply appreciative - Agur notices creatures and a person who each move through the world with unmistakable confidence and dignity. It sets up examples of what real, earned presence looks like.

Lesson: There's a kind of confidence that isn't arrogance - it's simply moving through life secure in who you are. I want that for you: not swagger, but the quiet dignity of someone who knows their worth.

See Also: Proverbs 30:13 (contrast with the earlier, ugly kind of "lofty" pride); Psalm 24:7-10 (the King of glory entering with dignity).

30:30 *(KJV) A lion which is strongest among beasts, and turneth not away for any;*
(B:E Project) A lion, strongest of all animals, who backs down from nothing;

Context: First example of stately movement - the lion, chosen for its unmatched physical courage and refusal to retreat.

Meaning: The lion's confidence is backed by real strength, not bluff - it doesn't need to posture because it genuinely has nothing to fear. It's an image of courage that comes from substance rather than performance.

Lesson: Real courage doesn't need to shout - it comes from knowing what you stand for so deeply that you simply don't flinch. Build that kind of strength in quiet, ordinary moments, and it'll hold when it counts.

See Also: Proverbs 28:1 (the righteous are as bold as a lion); Revelation 5:5 (the Lion of the tribe of Judah).

30:31 *(KJV) A greyhound; an he goat also; and a king, against whom there is no rising up.*
(B:E Project) A strutting rooster, or a he-goat, and a king whom no one dares rise up against.

Context: Completes the "carry themselves well" list - a proud-walking bird, a goat, and a king secure enough in his rule that no rebellion threatens him.

Meaning: These final examples move from the animal world to human leadership - a king so settled in his authority that no uprising can touch him. Combined with the lion, the picture is of confidence that's earned and stable, not performed or anxious - the opposite of a ruler who has to constantly watch his back.

Lesson: Security that's real doesn't need to defend itself all the time. If your standing with me, and your sense of who you are, is genuinely solid, you won't need to keep proving it to anyone.

See Also: Proverbs 16:12 (a throne is established by righteousness); 1 Kings 2:12 (Solomon's kingdom established firmly).

30:32 *(KJV) If thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thyself, or if thou hast thought evil, lay thine hand upon thy mouth.*
(B:E Project) If you've been foolish enough to think too highly of yourself, or you've been plotting something wrong - put your hand over your mouth.

Context: A closing personal instruction from Agur, addressing pride and scheming with a simple, physical command: stop talking.

Meaning: This is remarkably practical advice for self-control: when you catch yourself in arrogance or bad intent, the first and simplest fix is to just stop speaking. Silence buys time to reconsider before words, or the actions that follow them, do damage that can't be undone.

Lesson: When you notice pride or a bad plan rising in you, the kindest thing you can do - for yourself and everyone around you - is just pause and stay quiet a moment. That gap between the impulse and the words is where real self-control lives.

See Also: James 1:19 (swift to hear, slow to speak); Proverbs 17:28 (even a fool who keeps silent is thought wise).

30:33 *(KJV) Surely the churning of milk bringeth forth butter, and the wringing of the nose bringeth forth blood: so the forcing of wrath bringeth forth strife.*
(B:E Project) Just as churning milk produces butter, and twisting someone's nose makes it bleed, stirring up anger produces conflict.

Context: The chapter's closing proverb, using two vivid cause-and-effect images from everyday life to make a final point about anger - a fitting close after the previous verse's advice to stay silent.

Meaning: These aren't random comparisons - churning, twisting, and forcing are all deliberate, sustained actions, not accidents. The point is that strife rarely just happens; someone usually keeps working at it, pushing, provoking, refusing to let go, until conflict is "produced," the same way you'd deliberately churn butter.

Lesson: Most fights don't erupt from nowhere - somebody keeps stirring, keeps pushing, until it boils over. If you want peace, notice the moment you're the one doing the stirring, and choose to stop before conflict is what you've made.

See Also: Proverbs 15:1 (a soft answer turns away wrath); James 3:5-6 (the tongue as a small spark that sets a great fire).

CHAPTER 31

Chapter Summary: Proverbs 31

This chapter opens with King Lemuel sharing important advice he received from his mother. She warns him about the dangers of certain temptations, specifically advising against wasting his energy on destructive women and misusing alcohol, which could hinder his ability to lead justly. She emphasises that a king's duty is to defend the vulnerable and speak up for those who can't speak for themselves. The second, longer part of the chapter describes the characteristics of an outstanding wife and mother. This section highlights her diligence, resourcefulness, generosity, wisdom, and strong character, showing how her actions bring honour to herself and her family. Ultimately, it concludes that true praise comes not from outward appearance, but from a woman's inner strength and her respect for God.

31:1 *(KJV)* The words of king Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him.
(B:E Project) These are the words of King Lemuel - the wise teaching his mother gave him.

Context: Opens the final section of Proverbs, a collection of advice from an otherwise unknown king's mother, distinct from both Solomon's sayings and Agur's reflections - maternal wisdom addressed directly to a ruler.

Meaning: It's notable that the book's closing instruction comes from a mother, not a father or a sage - a reminder that wisdom in Proverbs isn't gendered or reserved for one kind of teacher. What follows carries the authority of someone who raised this king and has clearly thought hard about what would make or break him.

Lesson: I value the wisdom of mothers as much as any teacher's - the people who raised you and worried over you often see what you need to hear more clearly than anyone else. Don't be too proud to still be taught by them.

See Also: Proverbs 1:8 (forsake not the law of thy mother); 2 Timothy 1:5 (Timothy's faith traced through his mother and grandmother).

31:2 *(KJV)* What, my son? and what, the son of my womb? and what, the son of my vows?
(B:E Project) What can I tell you, my son - son I carried, son I made promises about?

Context: The mother's urgent, personal opening address to Lemuel, recalling that he was a child she prayed and made vows over, likely before or around his birth.

Meaning: The repeated "what, my son" conveys real emotional weight - this isn't abstract instruction but a mother speaking from deep investment, referencing vows she made long before he became king. It grounds the advice that follows in genuine love and long-held hope for who he'd become.

Lesson: Whatever hopes were spoken over you before you can even remember - by a parent, in a hard moment, in a prayer - those words carry more weight than you might

realise. I care about the story behind why someone loves you, not just the advice they give.

See Also: 1 Samuel 1:11 (Hannah's vow over Samuel before his birth); Luke 1:46-55 (Mary's response to what was spoken over her son).

31:3 *(KJV)* Give not thy strength unto women, nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings.
(B:E Project) Don't pour your strength into women, or your energy into whatever destroys kings.

Context: The mother's first specific warning to Lemuel - about the danger unchecked sexual or relational excess poses specifically to someone in power.

Meaning: This isn't a blanket statement against relationships, but a pointed warning about a ruler's particular vulnerability: power attracts excess, and excess has historically been what destroys kings and leaders, distracting them from their responsibilities and corrupting their judgement.

Lesson: The more influence you're given, the more carefully you need to guard what you pour your energy into - because power magnifies whatever you're already inclined towards, good or bad. Protect your integrity especially when you have the most to lose by not doing so.

See Also: 1 Kings 11:1-4 (Solomon's own downfall through excess in this exact area); Nehemiah 13:26 (Solomon cited as a warning to future leaders).

31:4 *(KJV)* It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink:
(B:E Project) It's not right for kings, Lemuel - not right for kings to drink wine, or for rulers to crave strong drink.

Context: The mother's second warning - about alcohol specifically for those who hold public responsibility to judge and lead others, distinguished from the different counsel given to sufferers in verses 6-7.

Meaning: This isn't a universal ban on alcohol, as verse 6 makes clear - it's specific to the responsibility of leadership. Someone whose decisions affect other people's lives needs a clear head; impaired judgement in a position of power doesn't just harm the leader, it harms everyone under their authority.

Lesson: The more people depend on your decisions, the more responsibility you have to stay clear-headed when it matters. This isn't about rules for their own sake - it's about not letting anything dull your judgement when other people's wellbeing rests on it.

See Also: Isaiah 5:22-23 (woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine, who acquit the guilty for a bribe); Leviticus 10:9 (priests warned not to drink wine before entering the tabernacle).

31:5 *(KJV)* Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted.

(B:E Project) Because if they drink, they might forget the law and twist justice for people who are already suffering.

Context: The mother explains the reasoning behind verse 4's warning - the real-world consequence of a leader's impaired judgement falls hardest on the vulnerable.

Meaning: This makes the stakes concrete: it's not really about the drink itself, it's about who gets hurt when a decision-maker isn't thinking clearly - specifically "the afflicted," people who already have the least power to protect themselves from a bad ruling. Leadership carries a duty of care that self-indulgence can quietly betray.

Lesson: When you have influence over other people's lives, staying sharp isn't just self-discipline - it's an act of love towards the people who can't afford your mistakes. I always notice who ends up paying the price when someone in power gets careless.

See Also: Proverbs 29:4 (a king establishes the land by justice); James 5:4 (the cries of the oppressed reaching God's ears).

31:6 ***(KJV)** Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts.*
(B:E Project) Give strong drink instead to someone who's dying, and wine to those who are crushed by grief.

Context: A contrasting instruction, redirecting the earlier warning - alcohol isn't condemned outright, but its use is reframed: an act of mercy towards the suffering rather than a tool of the powerful.

Meaning: This shows nuanced, situational wisdom rather than a blanket rule. The same substance dangerous in the hands of a decision-maker can be a small mercy offered to someone in genuine anguish. It's less about the object itself and more about power, responsibility, and who's affected by the choice.

Lesson: I care more about easing real suffering than about rigid rules applied the same way to everyone. Show mercy that actually fits the person in front of you - what helps one person can harm another, so pay attention to who's really there.

See Also: Matthew 27:34 (wine mixed with gall offered to Jesus on the cross, a similar act towards someone in anguish); Mark 15:23.

31:7 ***(KJV)** Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more.*
(B:E Project) Let them drink and forget their poverty, and remember their hardship no more.

Context: Completes the instruction from verse 6 - explaining the purpose of offering drink to the suffering: brief relief from an otherwise unbearable weight.

Meaning: This is compassionate rather than reckless - a recognition that some suffering is so heavy that even brief relief is a kindness, not a failure of character. Paired with the

earlier warning to leaders, the reader sees the difference: relief for the crushed is mercy; indulgence by the powerful is negligence.

Lesson: I don't judge someone for needing a moment of relief from real, crushing pain - that's compassion, not weakness. What I ask of you is to notice the difference between comforting the suffering and numbing yourself out of convenience while others depend on you.

See Also: Ecclesiastes 3:1-4 (a time to weep, a time to comfort); Romans 12:15 (weep with them that weep).

31:8 ***(KJV)** Open thy mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction.*
(B:E Project) Speak up for those who can't speak for themselves - for the cause of everyone who's about to be destroyed.

Context: The mother's next instruction shifts from personal conduct to public duty - using a king's authority actively on behalf of the powerless, not just avoiding personal excess.

Meaning: This flips from what not to do (indulge yourself) to what to actively do (use your voice for others). "The dumb" here means those without a voice or platform to defend themselves - the instruction is to become their advocate, using whatever authority you hold on their behalf rather than only for yourself.

Lesson: Power that only serves itself is wasted - I want you using whatever influence you have, however small, to speak for people who can't get a hearing on their own. That's not charity, that's justice done properly.

See Also: Proverbs 31:9 (the direct continuation of this instruction); Isaiah 1:17 (learn to do well, seek judgment, plead for the widow).

31:9 ***(KJV)** Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy.*
(B:E Project) Speak up, judge fairly, and defend the rights of the poor and those in need.

Context: Completes the instruction begun in verse 8 - a direct call for a ruler to actively pursue justice for the disadvantaged, closing the mother's advice before the poem about the capable woman begins.

Meaning: This closes the mother's teaching on a note of active justice rather than passive avoidance of wrongdoing. It's not enough for a leader to simply not be corrupt - real integrity in power means actively using your position to defend people who have no other defence.

Lesson: Don't just avoid doing harm - actively use whatever standing you have to defend people who have none. That's what I mean by righteousness: not staying clean by staying passive, but getting involved on behalf of those who need it.

- See Also:

Micah 6:8 (do justly, love mercy, walk humbly); Psalm 82:3-4 (defend the poor and fatherless, do justice to the afflicted and needy).
- 31:10

(KJV)

Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.

(B:E Project)

Who can find a truly capable woman? She's worth far more than precious jewels.

Context:

Opens the famous closing poem of Proverbs, an acrostic originally structured through the Hebrew alphabet, celebrating a resourceful, hard-working, wise wife, capping off the whole book's themes with a single sustained portrait of wisdom lived out.

Meaning:

The opening question implies such a woman is rare and hard to find - which makes the value placed on her all the more striking. Her worth is measured not by appearance but, as the following verses will show, by competence, generosity and character. It's a fitting close to a book obsessed with the difference between what's flashy and what's actually valuable.

Lesson:

I measure worth completely differently to how the world usually does - not by how someone looks or what they own, but by the quality of their character and what they do with their life. This whole poem is my kind of praise: for substance, not show.

See Also:

Proverbs 3:15 (wisdom herself is more precious than rubies); Ruth 3:11 (Ruth already known in her town as a woman of noble character).

31:11

(KJV)

The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil.

(B:E Project)

Her husband trusts her completely - he never has to worry about a shortage.

Context:

Second verse of the acrostic poem, describing the deep trust between the woman and her husband, rooted in her reliability and competence.

Meaning:

"No need of spoil" suggests he doesn't need to seek gain through risky or dishonest means, because her contribution to the household is so solid he lacks nothing. Trust here isn't blind faith - it's earned confidence built on a track record of her actually delivering.

Lesson:

Real trust between two people is built the same way, slowly, through consistency - showing up, delivering on what you say, being reliable when it's not exciting. That kind of trust is worth more than any grand romantic gesture.

See Also:

Proverbs 31:23 (her husband's own standing built partly on her reliability); 1 Corinthians 13:7 (love that always trusts).

31:12

(KJV)

She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.

(B:E Project)

She does him good, never harm, every single day of her life.

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Context:

Third verse - a simple statement of lifelong consistency and loyalty within the marriage, setting the tone before the poem details specific ways she does this.

Meaning:

This is about constancy over time, not one grand act of love but a sustained pattern across an entire life. It's easy to be good to someone occasionally; the poem praises something harder - unwavering faithfulness that doesn't wear off.

Lesson:

Anyone can be kind once. What I actually value is the quiet, daily choice to keep being good to the people you love, long after the excitement of a new relationship has faded. That consistency is love in its most durable form.

See Also:

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (love described through sustained action, not a single feeling); Ruth 1:16-17 (Ruth's lifelong loyalty to Naomi).

31:13

(KJV)

She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands.

(B:E Project)

She seeks out wool and flax, and gets to work with her hands, gladly.

Context:

Fourth verse - the poem begins detailing her practical, everyday work, starting with textile production, a core household economic activity of the time.

Meaning:

The emphasis on "willingly" matters - this isn't grudging labour but work she takes real initiative and satisfaction in. It's a picture of dignified, skilled, self-directed work rather than drudgery imposed from outside.

Lesson:

There's real dignity in ordinary work done well and done willingly - it doesn't have to be glamorous to matter. Find whatever your version of 'wool and flax' is, and do it with your whole heart rather than half-heartedly.

See Also:

Colossians 3:23 (whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord); Ecclesiastes 9:10 (whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might).

31:14

(KJV)

She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar.

(B:E Project)

She's like a merchant's trading ship, bringing in food from distant places.

Context:

Fifth verse - continuing the portrait of her resourcefulness, comparing her to international trade, sourcing provisions well beyond the immediate household.

Meaning:

This is a striking image of enterprise and reach - she's not passively waiting on what's locally available but actively seeking out the best resources from further afield. It portrays domestic management as genuinely entrepreneurial, not small or limited.

Lesson:

Don't assume the work of caring for your household or the people you love is small work - it takes real resourcefulness, planning, and initiative, and I see all of that, even when nobody's applauding it.

See Also:

Proverbs 31:24 (her further trading activity later in the poem); Matthew 13:45-46 (a merchant seeking fine pearls - same idea of enterprising search).

31:15

(KJV)

She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens.

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- (B:E Project)** She gets up while it's still dark, prepares food for her whole household, and gives her servant girls their share too.

Context: Sixth verse - her diligence extends to fair, attentive treatment of those under her authority, not just her immediate family.

Meaning: Rising before dawn shows discipline and commitment; giving "a portion to her maidens" shows fairness towards employees or servants, not just family - she's conscientious about the people who work under her too, not simply hardworking for her own household's benefit.

Lesson: How you treat the people who work for you or under your authority tells me more about your character than how you treat your equals. Fairness towards those with less power than you isn't optional generosity - it's basic justice.

See Also: Colossians 4:1 (masters, give your servants what is just and fair); Ephesians 6:9.
- 31:16** *(KJV) She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.*
(B:E Project) She looks over a field, decides to buy it, and plants a vineyard with money she's earned herself.

Context: Seventh verse - depicting her as an independent economic actor, making investment decisions and funding them with her own earnings.

Meaning: This is a portrait of financial agency: she evaluates opportunities, makes a considered purchase, and reinvests her own earned income into something productive and long-term. It's a notably active, capable economic role, not a passive or purely domestic one.

Lesson: Being wise with money isn't just about not wasting it - it's about thinking ahead, evaluating opportunities carefully, and investing what you've earned into something that grows. That kind of foresight is a form of wisdom I want for you.

See Also: Matthew 25:14-23 (the parable of the talents, about wisely investing what you've been given); Proverbs 24:27 (prepare your work, and afterwards build).
- 31:17** *(KJV) She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms.*
(B:E Project) She works with real energy, strengthening her arms for what needs doing.

Context: Eighth verse - emphasising her physical vigour and strength in her work, part of the poem's ongoing celebration of capability across multiple dimensions.

Meaning: This isn't about appearance but function - physical strength deliberately built up because her work demands it. It challenges any notion that competence and capability are somehow at odds with being seen as valuable or admirable.

- Lesson:** Take care of your body and your strength - not for how it looks, but because a strong, well-cared-for body lets you actually do the things you're called to do for the people who depend on you.

See Also: 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (the body as something to be honoured); Ecclesiastes 9:10 (do it with thy might).
- 31:18** *(KJV) She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night.*
(B:E Project) She can see that her business is doing well - and her lamp doesn't go out at night.

Context: Ninth verse - highlighting her business acumen and sustained diligence, working late into the night when needed.

Meaning: "Perceiveth" shows real judgement and self-awareness about how her efforts are actually paying off, not just blind busyness. The lamp burning at night suggests both hard work and a household kept secure and provided for around the clock.

Lesson: Pay attention to whether what you're doing is actually working, not just whether you're busy. Real wisdom checks its results honestly, and keeps going - steadily, not frantically - when the work still needs doing.

See Also: Luke 14:28 (counting the cost before building a tower); Proverbs 27:23 (know well the state of thy flocks).
- 31:19** *(KJV) She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff.*
(B:E Project) She puts her hands to the spindle, holding the distaff steady as she spins thread.

Context: Tenth verse - a close-up image of her hands-on skilled craft, spinning wool or flax into thread, a return to the textile work introduced in verse 13.

Meaning: This is a detailed, almost tender image of skilled manual work - the specific tools of spinning named directly. It grounds the whole poem's grand praise in something very ordinary and tactile: a woman's hands actually doing careful, repetitive, skilled work.

Lesson: The small, repetitive tasks nobody notices are still worth doing well. Mastery of ordinary skills, practised patiently, is just as valuable in my eyes as any grand achievement.

See Also: Exodus 35:25 (skilled women spinning materials for the tabernacle); Proverbs 31:13 (her earlier work with wool and flax).
- 31:20** *(KJV) She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.*
(B:E Project) She opens her hand to the poor, and reaches out to those in need.

- Context:** Eleventh verse - a turn from her productivity towards her generosity, showing that her hard-earned resources flow outward to others, not just inward to her household.

Meaning: This matters because it shows her diligence isn't self-serving - everything built in the previous verses is now shown feeding generosity towards people outside her own family. Capability and compassion are presented as going together, not competing.

Lesson: What you build with your effort and skill is never just for you - the measure of a well-lived life is how freely it opens towards people who have less. Generosity isn't separate from hard work; it's what hard work is for.

See Also: Acts 20:35 (it is more blessed to give than to receive); 2 Corinthians 9:6-7 (a cheerful giver).
- 31:21** *(KJV) She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet.*
(B:E Project) She isn't worried about the snow for her household, because they're all dressed in warm scarlet clothing.

Context: Twelfth verse - her foresight and provision shown through preparedness for harsh weather, her whole household well-equipped ahead of time.

Meaning: This shows the practical fruit of her earlier planning - because she prepared in advance, a hard season doesn't catch her family unprepared or afraid. Foresight, not luck, is what removes fear here.

Lesson: Peace of mind in hard times usually isn't luck - it's the result of preparation done earlier, when things were calmer. Do the quiet work now so that when the hard season comes, you're not caught out and afraid.

See Also: Proverbs 6:6-8 (the ant preparing food in summer); Matthew 25:1-13 (the wise virgins who kept oil ready).
- 31:22** *(KJV) She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple.*
(B:E Project) She makes her own quality bedcovers, and dresses herself in fine linen and purple.

Context: Thirteenth verse - noting the fruits of her labour reaching her own dignity and comfort too, not only her family's provision or others' needs.

Meaning: This balances the poem: her generosity and provision for others don't come at the cost of her own dignity - she also enjoys the quality of what she's built. It's a picture of self-respect that isn't selfish, earned through her own skill and effort.

Lesson: Caring for others doesn't mean neglecting yourself. You're allowed to enjoy the fruit of your own honest work - taking care of yourself isn't selfishness, it's part of a life lived in healthy balance.

- See Also:** 1 Timothy 6:17 (God richly gives us all things to enjoy); Ecclesiastes 5:19 (the gift of enjoying wealth gained by labour).

31:23 *(KJV) Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitheth among the elders of the land.*
(B:E Project) Her husband is well known and respected at the city gate, sitting among the elders of the land.

Context: Fourteenth verse - the poem briefly shifts focus to note her husband's public standing, implicitly built up in part through her competence at home.

Meaning: The gate was the ancient equivalent of the town hall or courthouse, where public business and justice were conducted. The suggestion is that her diligence at home frees and supports him to hold respected public standing - her private labour has public consequence, even though it goes uncredited by name there.

Lesson: Behind a lot of public success is unseen, unglamorous work someone else did to make it possible. I see that hidden labour clearly, even when the world only applauds the person standing in the spotlight.

See Also: Ruth 4:1-2 (business and legal matters conducted at the city gate); Proverbs 31:11 (her husband's trust, built on her reliability).
- 31:24** *(KJV) She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant.*
(B:E Project) She makes fine linen garments and sells them, and supplies merchants with sashes.

Context: Fifteenth verse - a return to her active commercial enterprise, now shown selling directly to traders, echoing verse 14's trading imagery.

Meaning: This confirms she runs an actual business with external customers, not just household production. It reinforces the poem's consistent picture of her as economically active and skilled, generating income through her own enterprise.

Lesson: Skill combined with initiative can become something that provides for far more than just yourself - don't be afraid to take what you're good at out into the world and let it generate real value.

See Also: Acts 16:14 (Lydia, a seller of purple, a successful businesswoman in the early church); Proverbs 31:16 (her earlier shrewd investment in a field).
- 31:25** *(KJV) Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come.*
(B:E Project) Strength and dignity are what she wears; she can face the future without fear.

Context: Sixteenth verse - a summary statement of her inner character, moving from her external activities to what underlies them: security and confidence about what's ahead.

Meaning: "Clothing" here is metaphorical - her real covering isn't fabric but inner strength and honour, built up through everything described so far. Because of that solid foundation, she doesn't dread the future; she can meet it with calm confidence rather than anxiety.

Lesson: The goal of building good character isn't just about today - it's so you can face tomorrow, and everything unknown about it, without being ruled by fear. That kind of security doesn't come from controlling the future; it comes from who you've become.

See Also: Proverbs 31:21 (the earlier picture of preparedness removing fear); Hebrews 13:6 (we may boldly say, the Lord is my helper, I will not fear).

31:26 *(KJV) She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.*
(B:E Project) When she speaks, it's with wisdom; and on her tongue is kind, gentle instruction.

Context: Seventeenth verse - her character shown through her speech: both intellectually sound and consistently kind, not one at the expense of the other.

Meaning: "The law of kindness" pairs wisdom with gentleness - she's not just correct or clever, but considerate in how she communicates it. It's a model that intelligence and kindness aren't opposites; the wisest speech is the kind that's also generous towards the listener.

Lesson: Being right isn't enough - how you say something matters just as much as whether it's true. I want your wisdom to always come wrapped in kindness, because truth delivered without gentleness rarely actually helps anyone.

See Also: Ephesians 4:15 (speaking the truth in love); Colossians 4:6 (let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt).

31:27 *(KJV) She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.*
(B:E Project) She keeps a close eye on how her household runs, and doesn't sit around eating food she hasn't earned.

Context: Eighteenth verse - a summary of her diligence and attentiveness, explicitly contrasted with idleness, right before the poem moves to how her family responds to her.

Meaning: "The bread of idleness" is a pointed phrase - she doesn't consume without contributing. Combined with "looketh well," it paints someone actively engaged and watchful over her whole domain, not coasting on others' effort or her own past achievements.

Lesson: Stay engaged with the responsibilities that are actually yours, rather than drifting through life on autopilot or living off what others have built. Attentiveness to your own life and the people in it is a quiet, daily form of love.

See Also: 2 Thessalonians 3:10 (if any would not work, neither should he eat); Proverbs 6:6-11 (the sluggard's warning, in direct contrast).

31:28 *(KJV) Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her.*
(B:E Project) Her children stand up and call her blessed; her husband too, and he praises her.

Context: Nineteenth verse - the poem's emotional turning point, where the family finally speaks, offering direct testimony to the woman described throughout.

Meaning: After eighteen verses of describing her actions from the outside, we finally hear from the people who know her best - and their verdict is unreserved praise. It's a reminder that the truest measure of a life well-lived often comes from the people closest to it, not from outside admiration.

Lesson: The praise that matters most isn't public applause - it's the honest testimony of the people who live closest to you, who've seen you at your most ordinary and still call you blessed. Live in a way that earns that kind of witness.

See Also: Proverbs 31:10-11 (the poem's opening question about her worth, now answered by her own family); Matthew 25:21 (well done, thou good and faithful servant).

31:29 *(KJV) Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.*
(B:E Project) Many women have done excellent things, but you surpass every one of them.

Context: Twentieth verse - continuing the family's praise, likely the husband's direct words, singling her out as exceptional even among other admirable women.

Meaning: This is specific, personal praise rather than generic flattery - an acknowledgement that while there are many good, capable people, this particular relationship and this particular person is considered uniquely valuable to him. It's love expressed as genuine, specific admiration.

Lesson: Comparison usually only breeds either pride or envy - but there's a good kind of praise too, where you genuinely delight in someone specific and tell them so directly. Don't hold back that kind of honest appreciation for the people you love.

See Also: Song of Solomon 2:2 (as the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters); Proverbs 31:10 (the poem's opening praise of her worth).

31:30 *(KJV) Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.*
(B:E Project) Charm can deceive, and beauty doesn't last - but a woman who has real reverence for God will be praised.

Context: Twenty-first verse, the poem's climactic statement of values, contrasting fleeting, surface qualities with the enduring quality that actually earns lasting praise.

Meaning: This is the poem's thesis statement, arriving near the end: everything admired throughout the poem - her competence, generosity, wisdom, diligence - flows from a deeper root, a genuine reverence towards something greater than herself, not physical appearance or charisma. It's a direct challenge to any culture, ancient or modern, that ranks people primarily by looks.

Lesson: I don't measure anyone by how they look or how charming they seem in a moment - those things fade or deceive. What lasts, what I actually praise, is a life oriented around something bigger than yourself, lived out faithfully in ordinary, daily ways.

See Also: 1 Samuel 16:7 (man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart); 1 Peter 3:3-4 (let your adornment be the hidden person of the heart).

31:31 *(KJV) Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.*
(B:E Project) Give her the reward she's earned with her own hands, and let her achievements speak for her in public.

Context: The poem's closing verse and the very end of the book of Proverbs, calling for the woman's own work to be openly credited and honoured rather than overlooked.

Meaning: This is a fitting final line for the entire book: after thirty-one chapters urging readers towards diligence, wisdom, generosity and integrity, Proverbs closes by insisting that when someone lives that way, their work deserves real, public recognition - not modesty that erases it, but honest credit given where it's due.

Lesson: When someone has genuinely earned something through their own effort and character, give credit where it's due - don't let quiet, faithful work go unnoticed just because it wasn't loud. Recognising others honestly is itself an act of love.

See Also: Matthew 25:21 (well done, good and faithful servant - the same principle of earned recognition); Galatians 6:7-9 (whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap).

