

Hello everyone,

PERCENT OF BIBLE COMPLETED: 34.7%

Weekly Readings will cover: Proverbs

Sunday: Proverbs 17

Monday: Proverbs 18

Tuesday: Proverbs 19

Wednesday: Proverbs 20

Thursday: Proverbs 21

Friday: Proverbs 22 & 23

Saturday: Proverbs 24

Current # of email addresses in the group: 617

Hello everyone! I hope your work week finished well and that you are benefiting now from the 7<sup>th</sup> day rest that God designed for us! This is the last week of the Proverbs attributed to Solomon. We will move away from Proverbs after this week before finishing the remaining Proverbs at a later time. I hope certain themes have stood out to you and that you have gleaned from the vast wealth of wisdom here. I know I have! Have a great study week!

Website archive location for audio files & PDFs:

<https://www.ucg.org/congregations/san-francisco-bay-area-ca/posts/audio-links-re-three-year-chronological-deep-dive-reading-program-circa-2022-2025-903711>

### **3-YEAR CHRONOLOGICAL STUDY: Week 58**

Read the following passages & the Daily Deep Dive on the daily reading.

Day 379 - SUNDAY: March 3<sup>rd</sup>

Proverbs 17

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: ***“34. Remarks on Behavior (Proverbs 17:2-8)***

"TYPE: RANDOM PROVERBS....Although these verses contain the hint of an inclusio [as 'wise' in verse 2 and 'prosper' in verse 8 are both translated from the Hebrew word *skal*, referring to wise perception and dealing leading to success] and repeat certain themes and terms [family

matters (verses 2, 6), divine judgment (verses 3, 5), the lips (verses 4, 7)], no specific pattern is apparent" (NAC).

Verse 2 shows that "ability and character can overcome the disadvantages of birth. At the same time, those born to advantage can forfeit their birthright through immorality and incompetence" (note on verse 2). We don't have to stay where we are in life. Through wisdom we can rise above our circumstances. Conversely, through foolish disgrace, we can lose what we have.

Verse 8 apparently says that a gift given to others is very valuable to the one giving it—as it leads him to success. This is not the same as Christ's general maxim that "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). The point in Proverbs 17:8 is not altruistic giving generally but a strategy of using gifts for gain. This could be a mere observation about the power of bribes (compare NIV), but it need not be so. While bribery to pervert justice is condemned (verse 23), other proverbs note that there is a proper social context for giving gifts to promote good relations and open doors (see Proverbs 18:16; Proverbs 19:6; Luke 16:9). It was proper in ancient times to come before kings with gifts—and perhaps more mundane occasions called for this as well. Also recall Jacob's giving of gifts to Esau to placate him and reconcile with him (Genesis 32:13-21).

### ***35. Four Conjoined Collections (Proverbs 17:9-26)***

"The proverbs of vv. 9-16 have many interconnections, but it is difficult to tell if any specific pattern is intended. It appears, however, that these verses divide into four *inclusio* or *chiasmus* collections (vv. 9-13, vv. 14-19, vv. 20-22, and vv. 23-26) on the basis of thematic parallels or catchwords. The connections among the proverbs are as follows:

“COLLECTION I

“A: Gracious forgiveness (v. 9)

“B: The irrationality of a fool (v. 10)

“C: Just punishment carried out (v. 11)

“B: The behavior of a fool (v. 12)

“A: Irrational retaliation (v. 13)

“COLLECTION II

“A: Quarrels (v. 14)

“C: Perversion of justice (v. 15)

“D: Poor use of money (v. 16)

“D: A friend in adversity (v. 17)

“D: Poor use of money (v. 18)

“A: Quarrels (v. 19)

“COLLECTION III

“E: Heart and tongue (v. 20)

“B: Foolish son (v. 21)

“E: Heart and spirit (v. 22)

“COLLECTION IV

“C: Perversion of justice (v. 23)

"B: The eyes of a fool (v. 24)

- "THE SOCIAL AND ANTISOCIAL. *Type: Chiasmus (Proverbs 17:9-13)*. This section describes those who are or are not sociable and easy to live with. The implied warning is that one should beware of antisocial, incorrigible, or vindictive behavior in oneself or others" (NAC).

Verse 9 on covering a transgression recalls Proverbs 10:12.

Verse 11, as *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* notes, shows that "those bent on rebellion will surely meet with severe retribution.... That retribution will be sent in the form of a ['cruel messenger']...(mal'ak 'akzari). This expression could refer to a pitiless messenger that the king would send; but it also could refer to storms, pestilence, or any misfortune that was God's messenger of retribution."

- "QUICK TO QUARREL. *Type: Inclusio (Proverbs 17:14-19)*. The boundaries of this text are set by the inclusio on quarreling in vv. 14, 19" (NAC).

Regarding verse 16, *The NIV Application Commentary* states: "The point of this satiric proverb is two-sided: It is folly to think one can buy wisdom since it is a gift of God and must be acquired through study (Proverbs 2:1-6), and even if wisdom could be bought, the fools lacks the sense (lit[erally], 'heart') to know what to do with it. The sharp juxtaposition of having money and lacking sense makes it clear that heart, both as 'desire' and 'mind' (NRSV), is the prerequisite for learning wisdom. Some see a dunce showing up at the door of a teacher with fee in hand, but evidence for this in Israel is lacking. Rather, we see a fool who does not know what to do with good things like money, responsibility, or even a proverb (:Proverbs 26:6-9)!" (note on Proverbs 17:16).

Speaking of both quarrelling and money, we may note that money can lie at the root of tension between friends, as verse 18 warns about. The caution about becoming surety for a friend, such as in cosigning a loan, recalls Proverbs 6:1-5 (and Proverbs 11:15 warned against becoming surety as well, there in the case of a stranger as well as generally). The proverb does not mean you should never help out a friend in this way if you are well off and the friend defaulting would not hurt you or the friendship. But you had better know what you're getting into. And odds are that this is generally an unwise course.

Verse 19 speaks of one who "exalts his gate" seeking or inviting destruction. The *Soncino Commentary* notes on verse 19 that "his gate" is literally "'his opening' which the Jewish commentators apply to the mouth (cf. Ps [119:]130), understanding the phrase as 'talking big, in loud and arrogant language.' Another explanation is: living in an ostentatious manner which attracts envious attention and can easily be the cause of ruin" (note on Proverbs 17:19).

- "HEART AND FAMILY. *Type: Inclusio (Proverbs 17:20-22)*" (NAC). The foolish and scoffing son of verse 21 is probably one with a deceitful heart and perverse tongue as in verse 20—a source of great sorrow to parents, in line with verse 25 and the opening proverb of Solomon's core collection (10:1).

Proverbs 17:22 shows, in contrast, that a happy heart is the key to a full and healthy life. We may observe, too, that this proverb indirectly speaks well of the use of medicine. For consider that it does not say that a merry heart does good like a medicine *poisons* you. Rather, it implies that a merry heart does good like a medicine does good. This is not to say that everything labeled medicine is good for you, but clearly the use of some medicines promotes the wellness of the body—as does staying happy.

- "JUSTICE AND FAMILY. *Type: Chiasmus (Proverbs 17:23-26)*.... Verse 25 would appear to have nothing to do with bribery and the miscarriage of justice [making it an exception to the other proverbs in this short section], but with v. 21 it provides a link to the previous text [see again the chart on the four conjoined collections here]. The 'foolish son grieves his father' verses in the contexts of vv. 20-22 and vv. 23-26 thus serve a didactic [teaching] purpose; they urge the reader (the implied 'son') not to become the evil man described in these verses [of all four conjoined collections] and thus not to grieve either his real father or the implied father behind the Book of Proverbs" (NAC).

### **36. *Appropriate Use of Words (17:27–18:4)***

"TYPE: INCLUSIO AND PARALLEL....Sometimes the Book of Proverbs seems to value nothing so much as appropriate words. This is because it views words as the index to the soul. By paying attention to what a person says (and indeed to how much he or she says), one can determine whether a person is wise or a fool. Words are the fruit that show the quality of the heart. A parallel structure (17:28–18:3) is imbedded in an inclusio (Proverbs 17:27; Proverbs 18:4). The structure of the whole is as follows:

"A: The wise person's restrained use of words (17:27)
"B: A silent fool appears wise (17:28)
"C: A schismatic person is irrational (18:1)
"B': A fool cannot remain silent (18:2)
"C': A base person is shameful (18:3)
"A': The wise person's words are profound (18:4)" (NAC).

The value of being reserved in speech (Proverbs 17:27) is bolstered by the fact that "even an imbecile can appear intelligent if he can avoid putting his foot in his mouth, but this is all but impossible for a fool (17:28:18:2 [compare 15:2])" (note on 17:27–18:4)." [END]

Verse 1 – This verse in the NKJV at first seems to be comparing a house of “quietness” (being a good thing) to a house of strife (being a bad thing). The Hebrew translated “quietness” comes from a root meaning “security” (Strong’s) and contains the idea of “peace” and prosperity. It seems to me to be a better comparison of a house at “peace” versus a house with “strife” (a number of other translations choose to translate it that way).

Verse 9 – This scripture is worthy memorizing and meditating on where we may be guilty of “repeating matters” that we shouldn’t.

Verse 28 – One of my favorite proverbs, although, I would be wise to practice it more.

### Day 380 - MONDAY: March 4<sup>th</sup>

#### Proverbs 18

#### Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading program states: “In Proverbs 18:1, the person who “isolates” or, literally, “separates” himself is not here a quiet recluse or hermit. Rather, the latter part of the verse makes clear that this individual is one who “rages” at other people. The NIV translates the Hebrew term here as merely “defies,” but the literal sense is “breaks out,” the word also being used in Proverbs 17:14 and Proverbs 20:3 in the sense of engaging in quarreling. The person identified in Proverbs 18:1 is therefore contrary and schismatic, one who is divisive, setting himself against others and bringing strife. The proverb thus fits well with the next one in verse 2.

### **37. Further Comments on Listening to Evil Talk (Proverbs 18:5-8)**

"TYPE: CHIASTIC....The chiasmus in vv. 6-7 is obvious (lips, mouth, mouth, lips). Somewhat less conspicuously, v. 5 refers to heeding evil talk at the gate [where judicial decisions were made], and v. 8 describes the pleasures that malicious slander can give. This section appears to be a further commentary on 17:27–18:4. In official proceedings, whether they be court cases or community decisions, one obviously should not take the side of an evil person (v. 5). The odds of such happening are reduced by the fact that caustic and selfish people expose themselves by their words (vv. 6-7). On the other hand, many have a perverse attraction to malicious gossip (v. 8). This points to the need to be a judicious and thoughtful listener" (NAC). Verse 8 is repeated in Proverbs 26:22.

### **38. Security (Proverbs 18:9-12)**

"TYPE: THEMATIC....Several proverbs on personal security stand here together" (NAC).

### **39. Two Proverbs (Proverbs 18:13-14)**

TYPE: INDIVIDUAL PROVERBS. "These two proverbs have no direct relationship to each other. Interestingly, however, v. 13 looks back to 17:27–18:4 while v. 14 repeats the sentiment of Proverbs 17:22" (NAC). Proverbs 18:13 shows the importance of not being hasty or prejudiced in coming to conclusions—to wait until one has all the facts before making a judgment (see also verse 17).

"Verse 14 points out that one's attitude, for good or ill, is the single most important factor in confronting adversity" (note on verses 13-14).

### **40. Just Problem Resolution (Proverbs 18:15-19)**

TYPE: THEMATIC.

Verse 16 shows that gifts open doors (compare Proverbs 17:8; Proverbs 19:6). This could be a model of propriety, yet it may also be something for jurists considering a dispute to be on guard against (compare Proverbs 17:23).

Proverbs 18:17 adds to the wisdom of verse 13 in making the point that we must give all sides in a dispute a fair hearing.

In verse 18, disputes were sometimes settled through casting lots. In seemingly irresolvable disputes today people sometimes decide to "flip for it"—tossing a coin to determine an outcome through chance. Yet in ancient times, the casting of lots was often seen as an appeal not to blind chance but to divine judgment (Proverbs 16:33). Thus it was looked on as turning the matter over to God.

Proverbs 18:19 points out that reconciling with an offended brother, a close companion, is no easy matter—perhaps because of the level of perceived betrayal. Of course we should, if at all possible, avoid offense in the first place. But where offense has already occurred, we must be prepared for some great effort in restoring a positive relationship. This may also be a warning to jurists about the intractability of such disputes.

#### ***41. The Power of Words (Proverbs 18:20-21)***

"TYPE: THEMATIC, CATCHWORD" (NAC).

Verse 20 refers to productive speech benefiting its user. On the other hand, verse 21 warns that those who love to use the tongue will bear the result, whether good or ill. The key, then, is to speak carefully, as so many other proverbs show." [END]

Verse 2 – As we each grow in becoming sons and daughters of encouragement, may we learn to listen fully instead of waiting for our opportunity to speak. Only after fully listening can we evaluate whether we have anything of value to share.

Verse 8 – This is such a great word picture. We can often eat up “gossip” like we are eating delicious food. Gossiping and listening to gossip/slander is something we as Christians must work on. The Church of God is full of this evil behavior and hopefully we can all work to overcome eating this poisonous food.

Verse 13 – How many problems would be avoided if a situation was fully investigated and both sides fully considered. Rash decisions and answers lead to all sorts of problems. How do we each do in hearing a matter fully before we respond?

Verse 17 – Here again, how many times have we heard only one sides perspective and been in agreement with them, only later to hear there is another side that is vastly different and equally compelling. The truly wise hear both sides before forming thoughts and conclusions and even then, how much of each are actually fully true?

Verse 24 – Hopefully we all have friends in our lives that we know will be there for us no matter what. We can count on them! How about us? Are we there for our friends when they need us?

Day 381 - TUESDAY: March 5<sup>th</sup>

Proverbs 19

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading program states: “**42. Diverse Teachings (Proverbs 18:22–20:4)**”

"TYPE: THEMATIC, RANDOM REPETITION, INCLUSIO SERIES....The verses of this text do not readily organize into small, discrete units. At the same time, this is not simply a jumbled collection of unrelated proverbs. Within this section are many parallel or similar verses, and some of these serve as structural markers. Also, a number of proverbs are collected into groups that follow distinct themes, although the borders of these groups may not be clearly marked.

"First, Proverbs 18:22 and Proverbs 19:13-14, describing family life and repeating the assertion that a good wife is from the Lord, are an inclusio that marks off a section of verses. This does not mean that all intervening verses concern wife and family, but the opening and closing assertions that a good wife is a gift of Yahweh are significant.... Second, proverbs on laziness (Proverbs 19:15, Proverbs 19:24; Proverbs 20:4) demarcate two further sections. Once again, this does not mean that the intervening proverbs concern laziness. In addition, two pairs of similar proverbs in chiasmic order [when taken together] on forbearance and a king's wrath (Proverbs 19:11-12; Proverbs 20:2-3) close off the major sections.

"Three sections that for the most part adhere to common themes occur within these three divisions. There are (1) the inequities and abandonment suffered by the poor (Proverbs 18:23–19:10), (2) the disciplined life (Proverbs 19:16-23), and (3) the mocker (Proverbs 19:25–20:1). Thus the structure of the whole is illustrated below.

"Section A (18:22–19:14)
"A good wife (18:22)
"1. The poor (18:23–19:10)
"(Patience and royal anger {19:11-12}) [a-b]

“A bad family/a good wife (19:13-14)
“Section B (19:15–20:4)
“Laziness (19:15)
“2. Personal discipline (19:16-23)
“Laziness (19:24)
“3. The mocker (19:25–20:1)
“(Royal anger and patience {20:2-3}) [ <i>b-a</i> ]
“Laziness (20:4)

"In addition, many verses closely parallel each other either within or between the sections. Close parallels include Proverbs 19:1 and Proverbs 19:22; Proverbs 19:4 and Proverbs 19:7a,b; Proverbs 19:5 and Proverbs 19:9; Proverbs 19:8 and Proverbs 19:16. Also Proverbs 19:17, on kindness to the poor, appears to be a response to Proverbs 18:23–19:10. These interrelationships among the verses have two functions. First, they help to tie the whole text together; and second, by randomly repeating certain points, they reinforce the lessons in the reader's mind" (NAC).

Most scholars agree that the first colon of Proverbs 18:24 is mistranslated in the King James and New King James Versions. While it is true that a key to friendship is being friendly, this is evidently not what the proverb says. Indeed, how would this contrast with the loyalty of a true friend in the second colon? On the phrase "must himself be friendly," the NKJV gives the following marginal note: "Masoretic Text reads *may come to ruin*." Several modern translations render the verse accordingly. The New American Bible has "Some friends bring ruin upon us." *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* notes on the phrase: "The

Hebrew *lehith ro'ea'* is difficult. It means 'for being crushed' or 'to be shattered' but not 'to show oneself friendly' (cf. KJV). The idea may be that there are friends to one's undoing....If a person has friends who are unreliable, he may still come to ruin, especially if these nominal friends use him. The second line is clearer: 'there is a friend {*'oheb*} who sticks closer than a brother.' This indeed is a rare treasure!" Indeed, Proverbs 19:4 highlights the fickle nature of fair-weather friends. And verse 7 shows that even brothers may abandon a person in adversity. Thus the need for a true, loyal friend who is closer than a brother. The epitome of such a friend is Jesus Christ.

Proverbs 19:2 says that uninformed rashness leads to error or sin.

Verses 5 and 9 about judgment on a false witness share the same first colon, while the second cola are similar (see also Proverbs 21:28).

Verses 16-23 of Proverbs 19 "all revolve around the theme of the disciplined and prudent life" (NAC, note on verses 16-23). "This section has been structured as follows:

"A: Adherence to God's way is life (19:16)
"B: Give to the poor (19:17)
"C: Discipline your son (19:18...)
"C': Allow the intemperate to pay the price (19:19...)
"D: Submit to instruction (19:20...)
"D': Acknowledge providence (19:21...)
"B': Better poor but honest (19:22)

“A’: Fear of Yahweh (19:23)” (footnote on verses 16-23)

As noted earlier in regard to Proverbs 14:31, Proverbs 19:17 says that how we treat others in need is essentially how we treat God (again, compare Matthew 25:31-46). And He will reward our kindness.

Proverbs 19:23 expresses the value of the "fear of the LORD," on which all other instruction is to be based (Proverbs 1:7; Proverbs 9:10). *The Nelson Study Bible* says the following about the word "fear" here: "(Heb[rew] *yir'ah*) (Proverbs 9:10; Proverbs 16:6; Proverbs 19:23) Strong's #3374: This Hebrew word signifies awe in regarding what is unknown or potentially dangerous. Sometimes it refers to fear or terror inspired by danger or one's enemies (Psalm 56:4). More often, it means 'reverence,' particularly for God (Proverbs 19:23). The use of this word does not imply that one needs to be afraid of God, but it does demand the appropriate recognition and respect for God's fearsome qualities, such as His righteous wrath (see Psalm 5:4-7). The fear of God—that is, the proper respect of God—compels us to abandon our evil ways (Proverbs 16:6) and teaches us wisdom (Proverbs 9:10). Perhaps somewhat ironically, fear of God leads to confidence in this life, for if we have submitted to the Almighty we do not have to fear any other power in this world....because the Almighty is our Protector (see Proverbs 14:26-27; Hebrew 13:6)" ("WordFocus: Fear," sidebar on Proverbs 19:23).

The verse here says that the person who fears God "will not be visited with evil." Of course, Job feared God and was visited with evil, as Satan directly attacked him. So what are we to make of this? We should understand the proverb as a general principle over the course of life. Things generally go well for the people of God, but He at times allows major trials to come on them. Yet even in these circumstances, God only allows things to go so far with the intent of shaping and molding His people for an eternal place in His Kingdom. He never ceases to

exercise care and protection. Moreover, visitation with evil or calamity here could imply being overthrown by catastrophic circumstances. And no matter what calamity befalls those who fear God, they will not be overcome by it but will persevere with God's aid. He will cause it to work out for good in the long run (Romans 8:28)." [END]

Verse 13 – There are people, husbands and wives included, who are never happy or satisfied and constantly complain and bring strife. It's also worth considering, if I have a spouse, parent, etc...who is constantly complaining, is there something I'm not doing and taking responsibility for that I should? Someone can be nagging us because we aren't being responsible.

Verse 15 – John Gill states: "Slothful persons are generally sleepy, and are very desirous of sleep, and indulge themselves in it; they spend their time, day and night, in sleep and drowsiness; and are quite careless and unconcerned about either their temporal or eternal good"

Day 382 – WEDNESDAY: March 6<sup>th</sup>

Proverbs 20

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading program states: "As noted in our introduction to the book of Proverbs, chapter 20 contains some principles also found in the Egyptian "Instructions of Anii"—such as avoiding drunkenness and the company of brawlers. In its note on Proverbs 20:1, the *Zondervan NIV Study Bible* says that "those who overindulge become mockers and brawlers (see Hosea 7:5...). Proverbs associates drunkenness with poverty (see Proverbs 23:20-21...), strife (Proverbs 23:29-30) and injustice (Proverbs 31:4-5)."

**43. Various Proverbs (Proverbs 20:5–21:8)**

"The proverbs of this section for the most part focus on the theme of discriminating between people of good character and people of evil character....the verses of Proverbs 20:5 and Proverbs 21:8 can be read as an envelope. The former articulates the importance of discernment in dealing with people....The latter gives the simplest, most basic guideline in character discernment: the evil are twisted, but the good are upright. By itself Proverbs 21:8 seems like a pointless tautology [i.e., a needless repetition]; but when read as the conclusion to the series of proverbs begun in Proverbs 20:5, it is an apt closure to the whole. Like Jesus' teaching that a tree is judged by its fruit, this text ends by saying that people can be evaluated by their conduct (Matthew 7:17-19; Proverbs 12:33; Luke 6:43-44). Several smaller collections are found in this larger unit...."

- "DISCERNMENT AND INTEGRITY. *Type: A-B Envelope, Thematic (Proverbs 20:5-12)*. This section begins by telling how difficult it is to discern a person's inner [thoughts and] motives and ends by asserting that the ears and eyes, the means of discernment, are made by God. Thus God alone has perfect insight into human character, and he cannot be deceived" (NAC).

Verse 8 in the NKJV says that a king sitting as judge "scatters all evil with his eyes." The NIV better renders this "winnows out all evil with his eyes." Compare the first colon of verse 26: "A wise king sifts [or 'winnows,' NIV] out the wicked." The New Living Translation paraphrases verse 8 this way: "When a king judges, he carefully weighs all the evidence, distinguishing the bad from the good."

Verse 9 is a reminder that none of us are perfect, that we have all sinned and that, since we cannot cleanse our own hearts, all of us need mercy. This perspective will keep us humble in regard to our own character and is important to remember in making judgments about others.

As in Proverbs 11:1, Proverbs 20:10 and Proverbs 20:23 both show God's loathing of crooked weights and measures for the purpose of cheating others. There may also be a further figurative meaning here in that God hates any kind of self-serving false pretense.

- "VARIOUS PROVERBS [ON MORAL CHARACTER]. *Type: Individual Proverbs (Proverbs 20:13-21)*. Individual proverbs are various moral proverbs that of themselves do not tie to any particular topic. In this context, however, they may describe aspects of character for which one should be on the alert.... to determine where someone's character, be it his own or someone else's, will lead" (NAC).

Verse 13 does not mean that we should derive no enjoyment from taking a needed nap or getting a good night's sleep. Rather, loving sleep here refers to excess—sleeping too much as part of habitual laziness (compare Proverbs 6:6-11). Avoiding the personal productivity necessary to making a living and properly managing one's affairs can lead to poverty. On a higher level, avoidance of spiritual responsibilities because of laziness and sleeping the day away will lead to spiritual impoverishment—and even ultimate destruction if not turned around.

Regarding Proverbs 20:16, the Israelites were not to hold overnight as collateral the outer garment of a debtor who might need it to keep warm (Exodus 22:25-27)—the law prohibiting creditor's from depriving poor debtors of their belongings needed for survival. In the ironic tone of this proverb, a situation is described in which a lender had better go ahead and hold a debtor's garment—where someone has foolishly "fallen into financial trouble by putting up security for a stranger—especially if he did it for an alluring woman. The message is that one should be wary of dealing with people who lack sound judgment" (*New American Commentary*, note on Proverbs 20:16). This proverb does not contravene the intent with which the law was given, as the law was not meant to protect foolish, impulsive venturers or schemers that might

take advantage of lenders. Also the proverb says nothing about the predicament in which the loss of collateral would place the debtor in this case. All factors must be weighed in such dealings.

Verse 17 speaks of deceitful gain as initially sweet but afterward rather unpleasant and hard to swallow. "The Scriptures do not say that there is no pleasure in sinning, only that the reward doesn't last (Proverbs 9:17-18)" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on Proverbs 20:17). Hebrews 11:25 mentions the "passing pleasures of sin." On the other hand, choosing God's way may sometimes be difficult and perhaps even unpleasant for the moment, but it yields lasting happiness in the end.

- "DEALING WITH THE KING AND WITH THE LORD. *Type: Thematic (Proverbs 20:22–21:3)*. These verses concern dealings with the two arbiters of justice, namely, the king and Yahweh. Proverbs 20:22-25, Proverbs 20:27 and Proverbs 21:2-3 concern Yahweh, while Proverbs 20:26, Proverbs 20:28, and Proverbs 20:30 concern the king. Proverbs 21:1 draws the two together and asserts the superior power of Yahweh over the king; only Proverbs 20:29 does not clearly fit in this context" (*NAC*).

Verse 22 says that it is not our place to get even or dole out vigilante justice. *The Nelson Study Bible* comments: "Because of our limited understanding and imperfection, we are not qualified to *recompense evil*. Instead we must commit our cause to God, whose vengeance is certain and perfectly just. God says, 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay' (see Matthew 5:38-39; Romans 12:17, Romans 12:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:15; 1 Peter 3:9)" (note on Proverbs 20:22).

Verse 24 (like Proverbs 16:9) shows that God is ultimately in control of directing what happens in a person's life. The second colon asks, "How then can a man understand his own way?" In an overall sense he can't—so he must rely on God and God's instructions for wisdom and

direction. "The juxtaposition of human plans and intentions with God's sovereign action in human affairs is not meant to discourage planning or activity but rather to guide it. The wise do well to seek counsel about this plan (Proverbs 20:18), listening instead of making rash or hurtful statements (Proverbs 20:19-20)" (*NIV Application Commentary*, note on verse 24). Of course, in our planning we must make allowance for God unexpectedly redirecting circumstances (see James 4:13-16).

Proverbs 20:25 warns against rash vows, calling to mind the costly mistake of Jephthah (see Judges 11:30-40). If we do make a vow to God, even a rash one—that is, a legitimate vow that does not contradict His law in other respects—then we are duty-bound to follow through (compare also Ecclesiastes 5:1-7).

Proverbs 20:27 in the New King James Version says, "The spirit of a man is the lamp of the LORD, /searching all the inner depths of his heart." The ending phrase here, as the NKJV margin notes, is "literally *the rooms of the belly*"—as either the figurative seat of human emotion or representing the inner, hidden person. The NIV here has "inmost being." The same phrase is used in verse 30. On the opening colon of verse 27, the NIV rearranges the translation to another that is possible: "The lamp of the LORD searches the spirit of a man." If this is correct, the Lord's lamp here would connote "perhaps his eyes (cf. Proverbs 5:21; Proverbs 15:3...) or word (see Proverbs 6:23 [Psalm 119:105]...cf. Hebrews 4:12-13)" (*Zondervan NIV Study Bible*, note on Proverbs 20:27). On the other hand, *The Bible Reader's Companion* says that the NKJV translation, as footnoted in the NIV, is the preferred rendering, so that the human spirit is God's lamp: "The rabbis understood this to mean that God's image so shines in the human spirit that man is set apart from the animals. It's this reflection of God which endows us with human abilities and witnesses to His existence through each of our unique capacities" (note on verse 27). Or perhaps the meaning is simply that God is able to look into the human spirit which, though dark and

mysterious to human beings, is as bright as a lamp to God—revealing everything about the person.” [END]

Verse 1 – Adam Clarke states regarding “strong drink”: any strong fermented liquor, whether of the vine, date, or palm species. Over drinking, as personified here, can lead a person to behave in ways they shouldn’t. Alcohol can be a blessing when used appropriately, and a curse when consumed beyond moderation.

Verse 3 – We’ve likely all been in a situation that started to heat up. I like how this verse talks about the honor in someone seeing the situation and bringing it to a stop.

Day 383 - THURSDAY: March 7<sup>th</sup>

Proverbs 21

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading program states: “Proverbs 21:1 shows God's sovereignty even over rulers. The river illustration is not entirely clear. Some suggest the following meaning: that just as people sometimes redirect rivers through dams and irrigation canals, so can God redirect the thoughts and actions of kings to accomplish His purposes. Of course the latter is not so difficult for God as the former is for human beings. Another possible meaning is that just as God had the power to lay out the courses of all the world's rivers, so He is easily able to direct the course of a king.

- "THE DEVICES AND THE DECLINE OF THE WICKED. *Type: Thematic (Proverbs 21:4-8)*. These five verses focus upon the losses incurred by those who live wrongfully" (NAC).

The Jewish *Soncino Commentary* regards the plowing of the wicked in verse 4 metaphorically as their schemings.

#### **44. Final Outcomes and Judgments (Proverbs 21:9-19)**

TYPE: INCLUSIO. "Proverbs about consequences and judgments are collected between the frame of similar proverbs on the 'quarrelsome wife'" (*NIV Application Commentary*, note on verses 9-19). Verse 9, repeated in Proverbs 25:24, mentions dwelling in a corner of a housetop. A roof of that time was flat. The reference is either to sleeping out in the open or in a small makeshift room set up there (see 2 Kings 4:10). Taken together, the frame verses (i.e., Proverbs 21:9, Proverbs 21:19) illustrate that it's better for a man to dwell all alone in discomfort than to live with a contentious wife.

- *"Lessons from the Merciless (Proverbs 21:10-13)....* These verses concern merciless behavior, and vv. 11-12 describe how one can learn a lesson by observing the punishment that befalls the evil. These four verses thus form a chiasmus [of *a-b-b-a*]" (*NAC*).

- *"Reconciliation and Justice (Proverbs 21:14-15)."* Verse 14 should not be understood as sanctioning bribery to subvert justice. Some see the verse as merely observing, without moral comment, a practice that works. But what would be the purpose of that here? Others take the verse as counseling the appropriateness of gifts in some cases to appease an offended party (compare Proverbs 17:8). Yet what of the fact that the gift is "in secret"? The idea could perhaps be to allow the offended party to save face and not be embarrassed by the public knowing he is accepting a gift. Some see the meaning as privately settling a litigation issue out of court. It may have been to deter misreading Proverbs 21:14 as condoning bribery undermining the justice system that verse 15 was placed immediately after it—contrasting the end results of justice and lawlessness.

- *"Rewards for Doing Wrong (Proverbs 21:16-18)....* These three proverbs all follow the theme of the ultimate fate of those who do

wrong" (NAC)—in contrast to the rewards for doing right in the next section (verses 20-22).

Verse 17 does not mean that it is wrong to enjoy pleasure and luxuries. The point is that those who set their hearts on these things to the point of overindulging and expending resources in pursuit of them will store up no wealth. They will end up with less of what they want. Compare verse 20, which shows that the wise have luxuries, evidently as a result of diligence and restraint, in contrast to fools who squander what they have.

Verse 18 says that the wicked will be a ransom for the righteous. This could simply mean that the lives of the wicked will be given up to destruction in exchange for the peaceful and happy existence of the righteous thereafter. Put another way, the ultimate destruction of the wicked will release the righteous from evil's tyranny over their lives.

#### ***45. Rewards for Doing Right (Proverbs 21:20-22)***

"TYPE: THEMATIC....These verses closely correspond to vv. 16-18" (NAC)—contrasting with them.

#### ***46. A Mouth in and out of Control (Proverbs 21:23-24)***

"TYPE: THEMATIC" (NAC).

#### ***47. The Sluggard's Craving (Proverbs 21:25-26)***

"TYPE: CATCHWORD, THEMATIC" (NAC). It's interesting that many who covet things are too lazy to work for those things.

#### ***48. Trying to Fool God (Proverbs 21:27)***

"TYPE: INDIVIDUAL PROVERB" (NAC). The first colon here is the same as in Proverbs 15:8.

#### **49: *The False Witness (Proverbs 21:28-29)***

"TYPE: THEMATIC .... These two verses should be read together" (NAC). The first colon of verse 28 recalls Proverbs 19, verses 5 and 9. The translation of the second colon of Proverbs 21:28 is disputed. Some see it as giving credence to the false witness earning punishment (compare NIV, although the Hebrew text is altered in this translation). Others understand a person listening well to a false witness so as to counter with cross-examination. Still others read the verse to say that though a false witness perishes, those who hear his lies will pass them on even long afterward—that is, a liar's lies persist after he is gone. Yet another way to read the verse is as follows: "A false witness shall perish, / But the man who hears [i.e., heeds] *this* [i.e., the law or proverb, not *him*] will speak without end." Verse 29 seems to parallel this, though a direct parallel is not essential to the thematic relationship between the two verses here. Where the NKJV in verse 29 says the wicked "hardens his face," the NIV says "puts up a bold front." This may mark a bald-faced liar giving testimony. He firmly sets his face, but the righteous person who will not give false testimony firmly sets *his way*—which, as the previous verse implies, will last forever.

#### **50: *Counterwisdom (Proverbs 21:30-31)***

"TYPE: THEMATIC." The book of Proverbs normally uses the term "wisdom" in a positive sense—as based on the fear of the Lord. "Here, however, it speaks of a kind of human 'wisdom' that seeks understanding without first submitting to Yahweh and declares that such efforts are futile. Verse 31 gives a concrete example, from a military setting of what v. 30 describes abstractly" (NAC). Human preparation, for war in this case, is important but carries only so far

(compare Proverbs 20:18). We must not place ultimate trust in such preparation. For the outcome of circumstances is in God's hands. Note elsewhere God's cautions against trusting in horses, representing military strength (Psalm 20:7; Psalm 33:17; Hosea 1:7)." [END]

Verse 2 – I've seen evil things that go against God's word done by men I have loved and respected. We all tend to be able to justify and believe our actions are right, even when they are wrong. Our conscience must be fine tuned to God's Word constantly and ask God to reveal where we are blind.

Verse 26 – John Gill states "not gives to the slothful, which does not restrain his desire, as Aben Ezra interprets it; but to the poor and necessitous, to proper objects; a good man will work with his hands, that he may have a sufficiency for himself and his family, and may have something to give to others that are in want; and "he spares not", or withholds not his hands, neither from working nor from giving."

Day 384 - FRIDAY: March 8<sup>th</sup>

Proverbs 22 & 23

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading program states: "**51. A Good Name (Proverbs 22:1)**

"TYPE: INDIVIDUAL PROVERB" (NAC).

**52. Wealth, Poverty and a Prudent Life (Proverbs 22:2-5)**

"TYPE: PARALLEL. The structure of this text is as follows:

"A: Rich and poor are equal before Yahweh (v. 2)
"B: Prudence and folly in the face of danger (v. 3)

“A’: Riches come from fear for Yahweh (v. 4)

“B’: Prudence and folly in the face of danger (v. 5)...

"On the surface vv. 3, 5 both simply state that the wise see and avoid trouble but the ignorant or headstrong plunge into it. In the context of vv. 2, 4, however, this text asserts that the failure to spot danger arises precisely from the arrogance of refusal to submit to God" (NAC).

The point of verse 2 is expressed similarly in Proverbs 29:13. And Proverb 22:3 is repeated in Proverbs 27:12.

Proverbs 22:4 says that the path to the good life—here expressed as "riches and honor and life" (compare "life, righteousness and honor" in Proverbs 21:21)—is through the fear of God. True riches, of course, does not primarily mean material wealth in the here and now. For some it may include that, and in any case God does provide for the physical comforts of His servants. Ultimately all of God's people will be blessed with co-ownership of the entire universe.

### ***53. Various Proverbs (Proverbs 22:6-16)***

"TYPE: INCLUSIO....Verse 6 and 15 (on disciplining children) in parallel with vv. 7 and 16 (on wealth and poverty) form an inclusio for this text of various proverbs.

• "*Discipline for Children (Proverbs 22:6, 15)*" (NAC). The following is from the sidebar titled "[Proverbs and Proper Training](#)" in our free booklet [Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension](#):

"One verse we should consider in dealing with our children is Proverbs 22:6. It appears in the New King James Version as: 'Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.'

We can draw an obvious, direct conclusion from this translation—that proper training will pay off in the long run. This is certainly valid.

"It is normal for most children to grow up with, and ultimately adopt, values and standards similar to their parents'—that is, if the parents do a reasonable job of bringing them up. Sometimes, especially when their children are teenagers, parents feel as if they're not getting through. They may wonder whether all their efforts are wasted. But experience shows that if they stick with a good game plan, they will eventually realize the desired results.

"Some Bible scholars offer an alternate explanation for the intent of this verse—that 'the way he should go' refers to each child's ability and potential. The root word for 'way,' they note, also has to do with the inclination of a tree, which can break if one tries to rebend it. They also note that the original Hebrew wording refers to '*his way*'—the child's way—rather than '*the way* [he should go].'

"With this in mind some would translate the verse, 'Train up a child according to his bent, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.' In other words, wise parents should recognize the aptitudes and interests of each child and train him to best use his abilities to reach his potential.

"Whether this is the intended meaning, it represents another valid approach. Parents should enable their children to develop their natural talents and abilities. Too often a father or mother will attempt to force children to do the same things they do or to be what they are.

"Sometimes parents want to live vicariously through their children as they push them to achieve what they wanted to do but couldn't. We need to recognize our children's distinct God-given abilities, then work to help them fulfill their potential

"Still others understand the latter translation to mean that if we train up a child in his own way—that is, through continually allowing him to do whatever he wants and to always get his own way—that he will be stuck in that wrong way of thinking and living for the rest of his life. The verse would then be a warning to parents against coddling and failing to discipline. This concept, too, is certainly valid" (p. 25).

The latter idea corresponds well to verse 15 (compare Proverbs 29:15). Yet as explained in our introduction, verses sanctioning the rod of correction do not mean to say that a parent should employ corporal punishment as a primary means of discipline.

- "*Reaping What You Sow (Proverbs 22:8-9)*" (NAC). This important principle, the negative side of which is given in verse 8, is expressed similarly elsewhere in Scripture (Hosea 8:7; Galatians 6:7-8; compare Job 4:8, where this true principle was misapplied to Job). On the positive side, Proverbs 22:9 in this context corresponds to 2 Corinthians 9:6-11.

- "*Words and What Comes of Them (Proverbs 22:10-14)*....Five character types here represent five ways speech can be used. The mocker engenders quarrels (v. 10), the pure impresses even a king (v. 11), the liar [or faithless person speaking contrary to true knowledge] is undone by God (v. 12), the shiftless produces only a stream of improbable excuses (v. 13), and the prostitute [or immoral woman] uses language for seduction and entrapment (v. 14)" (NAC)—the latter harkening back to warnings in the prologue of Proverbs, where an immoral woman also represents folly in a more general sense (compare Proverbs 2:16; Proverbs 9:13-18; see also Proverbs 23:27-28).

The mocker or scoffer (Proverbs 22:10) creates an uncomfortable environment for everyone around him and is also a bad influence on others. If he will not reform, expulsion from the community—a

congregation, club or workplace in a modern context—is the recommended course. This will bring peace to the rest of the group, serve as a warning to others against such behavior, and possibly help the offender himself to realize the magnitude of his problem resulting in repentance.

Verse 11 implies that deception and flattery get one only so far in achieving a position of trust. Eventually such a person will be revealed for what he is. A decent, honest person will be trusted for his record of integrity. Haman and Mordecai in the book of Esther exemplify this well.

Verse 13, similarly expressed in Proverbs 26:13, gives some comic relief, illustrating, as noted above, how lazy people invent excuses to avoid doing whatever needs to be done.

- "*Creditor and Debtor (Proverbs 22:7, Proverbs 22:16)*" (NAC). Verse 7 observes that debt can be a form of slavery. In fact, failure to repay debt in ancient Israel could obligate a person to suffer indentured servitude. This is part of the reason other verses caution against becoming surety for others. Verse 7 may bear on the meaning of verse 16. This last proverb in Solomon's major collection concerns social justice (as does the first proverb in the next section, verses 22-23), but the exact wording of verse 16 is disputed. Some versions, including the New King James, show an oppressor of the poor for self-enrichment *and* one who gives to the rich *both* coming to poverty. Oppressors will indeed come to poverty in the end (compare verses 22-23). Yet other translations take coming to poverty in verse 16 as referring to only the one giving to the rich.

In the latter vein, some see in verse 16 an abusive creditor-debtor relationship in this paraphrased sense: *The rich oppress the poor* [through such means as entangling them in high-interest loans] *to*

*make themselves even richer, / while the poor who are stuck making loan payments to the rich are made even poorer.* This interpretation offers a sensible explanation of "giving" to the rich, the reason for which otherwise seems unclear. Some have suggested a futile attempt to buy the favor of the rich, but who would do this to the point of impoverishment? "Giving" here makes more sense as a matter of obligation—and this fits debt repayment. Such wisdom is not meant to totally rule out loans. There is an appropriate context for lending and borrowing if the lending is fair and the borrower is well able to repay, given reasonable consideration of the future. Yet no such arrangement should be entered into lightly.

Proverbs 22:17 marks a clear change in the book. Instead of the one-verse units of the major Solomonic collection, we now have multiple-verse units. With a new section, we would expect a new title or subheading. And verse 17 appears to give us just that in referring to what follows as "the words of the wise"—a general distinction for collected wisdom. This section appears to continue until Proverbs 24:22, as Proverbs 24:23 denotes yet another section, possibly an appendix to this section, with the words "These things also belong to the wise." Furthermore, this section of sayings from the wise (22:17–24:22)—mainly the first part (22:17–23:11)—bears some striking similarity to the Egyptian "Instruction of Amenemope." Amenemope, sometimes spelled Amen-em-opet, was a superintendent of agriculture and taxation writing to his youngest son on keys to success in life and in profession as a court official.

As noted in our introduction, it is not clear which writing came first, whether this section of Proverbs or the Egyptian work. In any case, one seems to have influenced the other. We will note some similarities along the way. In doing so, we should realize that the Egyptian wisdom text, mired in pagan references, is not inspired literature, as is the book of Proverbs. Nevertheless, the Egyptian text helps to demonstrate the

ancient provenance of the biblical book as well as the relationship between Israelite wisdom and that of the wider region, just as the Bible describes of Solomon (see 1 Kings 4:29-34).

The introductory call to attention in Proverbs 22:17-21 "is laid out with the exhortation to learn and pass on the teaching (v. 17), followed by three motivations: (1) there will be a pleasing store of wisdom (v. 18); (2) there will be a deeper trust in the Lord—a distinctively Israelite aspect of wisdom literature (v. 19); and (3) it will build reliability—he will grasp the truth (v. 20) and see himself as a special envoy to keep wisdom in his heart and on his lips (v. 21)" (*Expositor's Bible Commentary*, note on verses 17-21).

The latter point here is stated in verse 21 this way: "That I may make you know the certainty of the words of truth, that you may answer words of truth to those who send to you [or 'to him who sent you,' NIV]." Likewise the purpose of Amenemope is: "To know how to refute the accusation of [or 'to return an answer to'] the one who made it, and to send back a reply to the one who wrote [or 'to the one who sent you']; to set one straight on the paths of life" (intro., 1:5-7, William Simpson, editor, *The Literature of Ancient Egypt: An Anthology of Stories, Instructions, and Poetry*, 1973, p. 242). Within brackets here are alternate translations as footnoted in the cited source. (The complete "Instruction of Amenemope," same translation but without footnotes can be found [here](#).)

In verse 20, "excellent things" in the KJV and NKJV is apparently incorrect. The Hebrew word here, difficult because of the uniqueness of form, is *shlshwm* (consonants only), which some take to be a poetic or plural form of "three" (*shlsh*) or "third" (*shlyshy*). Most scholars, though, emend the text or consider the word another form of "thirty" (*shlshym* or *shlwshym*)—compare "thirty sayings" in the NIV. This is mainly because of the affinity of the text with Amenemope, which

consists of an introduction followed by 30 short chapters, coupled with the fact that Proverbs 22:17–24:22 can reasonably be divided into an introduction followed by 30 sayings. It should be noted, though, that it is also possible to divide the text into three sections—the first, resembling Amenemope in content (22:17–23:11), and two other sections marked by the use of "My son." Some claim that "third" is meant to introduce the third section of the book—following the prologue (Proverbs 1–9) and Solomon's major collection (10:1–22:16). Still, 30 seems reasonable. Note the following apparent divisions, which should not be considered definitive (others group them slightly differently). Most of the 30 subject titles are from *Expositor's*.

We start, then, with ten sayings about wealth and station (22:22–23:11).

***Saying 1: Treatment of the Poor (Proverbs 22:22-23)***. Personal prosperity must not come through the mistreatment of others. This first saying forms an inclusio with the 10th saying (Proverbs 23:10-11) in that both warn against plundering the poor with the threat that God will plead their cause, acting as their avenger. Amenemope makes numerous statements against dishonest gain and expresses special divine concern for treatment of the poor and downtrodden, saying, "Beware of stealing from a miserable [i.e., poor] man and of raging against the cripple [or the weak]" (chap. 2, 4:4-5) and "God loves him who cares for the poor, more than him who respects the wealthy" (chap. 28, 26:4-5).

***Saying 2: Dangerous Associations (Proverbs 22:24-25)***. Friendship with a hothead is a bad idea. This concept is found throughout the Instruction of Amenemope. Indeed, "the contrast between the intemperate, hot-headed man and the tranquil, truly silent man is one of the main themes in the text" (Simpson, p. 241). Note, for example,

"Do not fraternize with the hot-tempered man, nor approach him to converse" (chap. 9, 11:13-14).

**Saying 3: Rash Vows (Proverbs 22:26-27).** We mustn't be too quick to make deals—particularly when it comes to standing surety for others, as we've seen in other verses (compare Proverbs 6:1-5; Proverbs 11:15; Proverbs 17:18; Proverbs 20:16). We could lose everything—one's bed here meaning his last possession (such as today speaking of "the kitchen sink" or "the shirt off one's back"). There is no parallel to this in the Egyptian material.

**Saying 4: Respect for Property (Proverbs 22:28).** As *Expositor's* notes on this verse: "The sage warns against appropriating someone else's property (see also Amenemope, chap. 6, 7:12-13 ['Do not displace the surveyor's marker on the boundaries of arable land, nor alter the position of the measuring line. Do not be greedy for a plot of land']....(...see Deuteronomy 19:14; Deuteronomy 27:17...Hosea 5:10). The boundaries were sacred because God owned the land and had given it to the fathers as their inheritance; to extend one's land at another's expense was a major violation of covenant and oath. Of course, property disputes and wars ancient and modern arise because both sides can point to times when their ancestors owned the land." A specification of this point is made in the 10th saying (Proverbs 23:10-11).

**Saying 5: Benefits of Skill (Proverbs 22:29).** A person skilled in his work will be recognized and rewarded with advancement. Those who are the best at what they do will rise to the top—working even for rulers. Of course, as with other proverbs, this is a general principle. Other factors will bear on actual experience. The Instruction of Amenemope says: "As to a scribe who is experienced [skilled through practice] in his position, he will find himself worthy of being a courtier [i.e., one in attendance at a royal court]" (chap. 30, 27:16-17).

**Saying 6: Caution Before Rulers (Proverbs 23:1-3).** The previous saying spoke of promotion to standing before kings. The current saying gives a caution about being in such a position. Here a courtier at a banquet is told to keep his eyes on what's in front of him. This may literally mean not staring about the table or at the ruler with a view to feasting—though it could be a metaphor for keeping in mind what's really going on. "Put a knife to your throat" in this context means "curb your appetite" or "control yourself." The instruction here was perhaps a point of proper etiquette at court in ancient times, but the reason given goes beyond that. Deceptive food here probably implies more than the fact that too much rich food can make you ill. A ruler often draws a person in because he has ulterior motives. "The ruler's food may be 'deceptive'...it is not what it seems. So the warning is not to indulge in his impressive feast—the ruler wants something from you or is observing you....The Mishnah (*Aboth* 2:3) quotes Gamaliel as warning that a ruler only draws you into court for his purpose, but in your day of trouble he will not be there" (*Expositor's*, note on verses 1-3). *The New American Commentary* notes: "The rich do not give away their favors for free. They want something in return, and it is generally much more than what they have invested. One can lose one's own soul in the exchange."

As noted in our introduction, there is correspondence here to both the Egyptian Instruction of Ptah-hotep and Amenemope. Quoting from Ptah-hotep in Wilson's translation: "If you are one of the guests at the table of one who is greater than you, accept what he gives when it is set before you. Look at what is before you and do not pierce him / with much staring, for to annoy him is an abomination of the spirit. Do not speak to him until he calls, for no one knows what may be displeasing" (*maxim* 7, 6:13–7:3, p. 162). And from Amenemope, as translated by Trevor Longman, *How to Read Proverbs*: "Do not eat in the presence of an official and then set your mouth before (him). If you are sated pretend to chew. Content yourself with your saliva. Look at the bowl

that is before you, and let it serve your needs. An official is great in his office, as well as rich in drawings of water" (chap. 23, 23:13-20, p. 75).

The eighth saying (Proverbs 23:6-8) also speaks of avoiding delicacies in certain company.

***Saying 7: Fleeting Wealth (Proverbs 23:4-5).*** This saying about not striving too hard after wealth, because of its fleeting nature, is the closest in correspondence between the book of Proverbs and the Instruction of Amenemope, and perhaps best illustrates the influence of one work on the other. Note especially the end of this saying in Amenemope: "Do not set your heart on seeking riches....Do not exert yourself to seek out excess and your wealth will prosper for you [or 'your own property is good enough for you']; if riches come to you by theft they will not spend the night with you; as soon as day breaks they will not be in your household; although their places can be seen, they are not there. When the earth opens up its mouth, it levels him [or them] and swallows him [or them] up, and it drowns him [or them] in the deep; they have made for themselves a great hole which suits them [i.e., is as large as they are]. And they have sunk themselves in the tomb; or they have made themselves wings like geese, and they fly up to the sky" (chap. 7, 9:10–10:5). So very true—and thus it's foolish to be slave to this pursuit (see also Luke 12:20; 1 Timothy 6:7-10).

***Saying 8: Unpleasant Hospitality (Proverbs 23:6-8).*** These verses show the worthlessness of cultivating friendship with a stingy person. (The word for "miser" here literally means "one who has an evil eye"—in contrast to the generous person, literally "he who has a good eye," in Proverbs 22:9). In Proverbs 23:6 we see repeated the phrase from saying 6 (Proverbs 23:3) that we not desire such a person's delicacies. A stingy person offering you anything has nothing to do with kindness toward you. He clearly must be using you. Your attempts at friendship are therefore wasted effort. This specific lesson is not related in the

Egyptian literature. Some attempt to use the first colon of verse 7 as an example of "you are what you think," in the context of the power of positive thinking. Yet, as scholars acknowledge, the Hebrew here is difficult and probably should not be translated the way it is written in the King James and New King James Versions. In any case, there is nothing at all positive about the context here, as it concerns the deceitful intentions of the miser.

***Saying 9: Wisdom Wasted on a Fool (Proverbs 23:9).*** This verse is related to the former saying in the sense of telling a person something being wasted effort. The wording here does not mean we should never say anything in a fool's presence. It is a caution to be sparing. Why take time for a lengthy explanation when you know the person won't care what you say? As Jesus told us, we should not cast our pearls before swine (Matthew 7:6). In this "there is no specific connection to Egyptian literature, but the general concept was there that a fool rejected discipline and instruction, often scorning the teacher who tried to change him" (*Expositor's*, note on verse 9).

***Saying 10: Respect the Poor's Property (Proverbs 23:10-11).*** This is the closing frame of the inclusio opened in the first saying (Proverbs 22:22-23), warning against stealing from the lowly with the threat of God acting as their advocate, redeemer and avenger. In this case the mistreatment of the poor (here the fatherless) is perpetrated through removing ancient boundary markers to take possession of their fields. Saying 4 (Proverbs 22:28) explicitly concerns not removing such boundary markers. And regarding it we noted corresponding verses in Amenemope, as we do here again: "Do not displace the surveyor's marker on the boundaries of arable land, nor alter the position of the measuring line. Do not be greedy for a plot of land..." (chap. 6, 7:12-13). Moreover, Amenemope continues in the next line, "...nor overturn the boundaries of a widow" (7:14), tying in more closely with this 10th saying in Proverbs.

Continuing in the Egyptian text, consequences for taking over the fields of others are warned of immediately following: "To one who has done this on earth, pay attention, for he is a weak enemy; he is an enemy overturned inside himself; life is taken from his eye; his household is hostile to the community, his storerooms are toppled over, his property taken from his children, and to someone else his possessions given. Take care not to topple over the boundary marks of the arable land, not fearing that you will be brought to court; man propitiates God by the might of the Lord when he sets straight the boundaries of the arable land. Desire, then, to make yourself prosper, and take care for the Lord of All; do not trample on the furrow of someone else, their good order will be profitable for you" (8:1-16).

With the 10th saying of the wise the close correspondence with the Egyptian text ceases.

***Saying 11: Attend to Learning (Proverbs 23:12).*** Some see this verse as a call to attention to hear the instruction in the next verse or in this section, which is cast as parental instruction. Yet this imperative likely applies to instruction generally throughout one's whole life.

***Saying 12: Necessity of Discipline (Proverbs 23:13-14).*** As with other such verses, this one establishes the need for parental discipline but does not mandate the rod as a first recourse. Yet it does reassure parents that this can be an acceptable means of correction. The point ultimately is to save the child from wrong ways leading to death—the Hebrew word for "hell" in verse 14 being *sheol*, the grave. The Assyrian "Words of Ahiqar," written around 700 B.C. (in the time of King Hezekiah of Judah) as noted in our introduction, follows with similar instruction: "Spare not your son from the rod; otherwise, can you save him?" (quoted by Longman, p. 69).

**Saying 13: Wise and Joyful Speech (Proverbs 23:15-16).** Parents rejoice in their children's right words and conduct (see also verses 24-25). And pleasing parents is a good motivator for the young. The four lines in verses 15-16 are arranged in a chiasmic structure—the outer lines parallel and the inner lines parallel (*a-b-b-a*), so that a wise heart equates to speaking right things. As Jesus said, "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matthew 12:34).

**Saying 14: Fear the Lord (Proverbs 23:17-18).** A major concern of parents is their instruction being undermined by wayward peers or bad role models. So parents must, as in this verse, instruct their children in the fear of the Lord, which will keep them in the right way "all the day"—even when the parents aren't around. If in spite of the obstacles we develop this proper reverence for God, a wonderful future awaits us. Where the KJV has "end," the NKJV specifies "hereafter"—implying life in God's Kingdom. Other versions have "future," the translators arguing that Proverbs speaks of blessed life now, not in the hereafter. Perhaps both ideas are included—a great life in this age and on into the age to come.

**Saying 15: Poor Associations (Proverbs 23:19-21).** Drunkenness and gluttony are both condemned, representing the epitome of a lack of discipline. Wine and other alcoholic beverages in moderation are approved of in Scripture, but drunkenness is a sin—as is gluttony, though the former is certainly worse because of the impact it has on the brain and on others. Drunkards and gluttons are both bad influences and will most likely not cease to bring trouble and grief to associates, even those who disapprove of their behavior. If we are already friends with such people, we should try to help them to overcome their problem. But if they refuse or falsely repent again and again, particularly in the case of drunkards, it would be wiser to sever the friendship.

**Saying 16: Learn and Keep Truth (Proverbs 23:22-25).** Some take verse 22 as an independent verse on listening to parents, but the context here appears to continue until verse 25. Listening to parents corresponds to, in verse 23, striving for truth (including wisdom, instruction and understanding) and holding on to it. "Buy the truth, and do not sell it" is sometimes seen as a prohibition against selling religious books, even Bibles. But this is not the point of the verse. The meaning is that we are to expend all we must to gain true knowledge and, once gained, never sell it *away*—for any price. The New Century Version paraphrases this as "Learn the truth and never reject it." The Contemporary English Version renders the whole verse this way: "Invest in truth and wisdom, discipline and good sense, and don't part with them." Those who follow this counsel will bring great joy to parents—again given here as a motivator to do what's right (verses 24-25; compare verses 15-16).

**Saying 17: Shunning the Temptress (Proverbs 23:26-28).** Parental instruction continues here regarding sexual immorality. Compare similar warnings in the prologue of Proverbs (chapters 1–9) and Proverbs 22:14, where the harlot's mouth is called a "deep pit." Some commentators believe the third and last section of the Words of the Wise begins with this saying or the next one—regarding the last section as miscellaneous in content.

**Saying 18: Excessive Drinking (Proverbs 23:29-35).** Saying 15 (verses 19-21) warns against associating with drunkards and gluttons. This saying warns against being a drunkard oneself. *The New American Commentary* says on this unit: "This poem is a small masterpiece; it is surely the most effective combination lampoon and lament over the sorry state of the drunkard....The text describes with profound accuracy and bite the pathetic physical and emotional decline of those addicted to alcohol. Wine [in excess] (and in modern society, illicit drugs) brings physical pain and debilitation, exhausts one's resources, takes away

mental acuity, and yet leaves one craving for more of the same. 'Lingering over' alcohol (vv. 30-31) describes those who derive comfort and security in knowing that a glass of wine is at hand, ready to deaden the senses. In the end, however, it only leaves people more confused and in deeper pain than ever before (vv. 32-35a)." [END]

Proverbs 22:

Verse 13 – For some there is always a reason they can't do something, always ready with an excuse that keeps them from taking responsibility and moving forward.

Proverbs 23:

Verse 4 – How many people have attained great wealth and possessions only to lose their spouse and families in the process. God wants us to have right priorities and remain balanced.

Day 385 - SATURDAY: March 9<sup>th</sup>

Proverbs 24

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading program states: "**Saying 19: Evil Associations (Proverbs 24:1-2)**. Whereas saying 14 (Proverbs 23:17-18) invokes the future in discouraging the envy of sinners, this saying just says not to envy them or want to be with them because they are up to no good. The point is to see what they're really all about—and to not want any part of that. A benefit of moral learning is that one comes to hate and reject evil simply because it is evil.

**Saying 20: Reward of Wisdom (Proverbs 24:3-4)**. Verse 3 says that through wisdom a house is built. Some take this as a dwelling place or a household, a family. However, verse 4 says the rooms are filled with riches. While this could be a domestic abode, taken together the verses seem to speak of a treasure house. This may correspond to the conclusion of the first chapter of the Instruction of Amenemope: "If you

spend a lifetime with these things in your heart, you will find it good fortune; you will discover my words to be a treasure house of life, and your body will flourish upon earth" (3:17–4:2). In both cases, it is most likely that the treasures are metaphorical for wonderful understanding and rich blessings in life—especially in light of saying 7 about not setting one's eyes on material wealth (Proverbs 23:4-5). Of course, as in other proverbs, the blessings may include material increase. And ultimately, as noted elsewhere, all of God's people will jointly possess all things—the whole universe.

**Saying 21: Wisdom Over Strength (Proverbs 24:5-6).** True strength lies in wisdom rather than mere brute force. While the verse might seem to apply to rulers only, since only they would be waging war, "the majority of the thirty sayings are clearly addressed to someone who is not in high office. A metaphorical sense that one should engage life with discernment rather than by exercise of force is therefore likely" (NAC). Consider the Christian life as one of waging spiritual warfare. Here we have the third proverb advising a "multitude of counselors" (the first two being Proverbs 11:14 and Proverbs 15:22).

**Saying 22: Fools Contribute Nothing (Proverbs 24:7).** The NKJV and other versions show the fool here as not speaking up at the city gate, where community decisions were made—wisdom being beyond him (so that he is out of his element). However, other passages show fools having much to say all the time, no matter the setting. Do civil government meetings today proceed with fools keeping silent? *The New American Commentary* offers a slightly different translation of the verse: "Wisdom is too high for a fool; let his mouth stay shut at the gate." Either way, the point is that fools have nothing worthwhile to contribute. By contrast, the wise, though often reserved in speech, have a responsibility to contribute wisdom in critical situations.

**Saying 23: Disapproval of Evil Men (Proverbs 24:8-9).** Plotters and troublemakers will eventually be discovered and subject to public scorn.

**Saying 24: Test of Adversity (Proverbs 24:10).** The verse uses a play on words: "If you faint in the day of adversity [*sarah*], your strength is small [*sar*]." While trials can expose one's lack of mettle, the point of the proverb is to encourage people to muster courage to make it through the hard times (compare Jeremiah 12:5). God is ever there to see us through.

**Saying 25: Preservation of Life (Proverbs 24:11-12).** This saying makes clear the responsibility before God to do what we can to rescue those in mortal peril. On one level, as we have opportunity we must work to prevent murder in all its forms, including genocide and abortion. As Christians we do not take up arms in such causes—nor can we individually crusade around the earth to stop all unjust killing in this age. But, as God empowers us, we are to proclaim and teach His will in these matters and do what we can to stop such things from happening. If we lived in Nazi Germany during the Holocaust and knew what was going on, it would be our responsibility to hide and deliver neighboring Jews slated for the gas ovens. The passage also applies to helping those who are jeopardizing their own physical lives through vice or imprudence. On another level, the saying concerns those in spiritual peril, stumbling toward destruction. We are to warn this world of its fatal path (like watchmen, as in Ezekiel 33:1-11) and proclaim the way of salvation—and we must especially help spiritual brethren who are neglecting their salvation (compare Galatians 6:1-2).

**Saying 26: Good Future of Wisdom (Proverbs 24:13-14).** Honey is sweet and enjoyable, and so is wisdom and the life to which it leads. This way leads to a wonderful, profitable outcome with hope not cut off—wording also used in saying 14 (Proverbs 23:17-18).

***Saying 27: Treatment of the Righteous (Proverbs 24:15-***

***16)***. As *Expositor's* notes on this verse: "It would be futile and self-defeating to mistreat God's people, for they survive—the wicked do not! The warning is against attacking the righteous; to attack them is to attack God and his program, and that will fail (see Matthew 16:18). The consequence, and thus the motivation, is that if the righteous suffer misfortune any number of times (= 'seven times,' v. 16), they will rise again [seven being symbolic of completeness]; for virtue triumphs in the end.... Conversely, the wicked will not survive—without God they have no power to rise from misfortune. The point then is that ultimately the righteous will triumph and those who oppose them will stumble over their evil" (note on verses 15-16).

***Saying 28: Misfortune of an Enemy (Proverbs 24:17-18)***. This proverb warns against gloating over an enemy's downfall, with the threat that God will be unhappy with us and cease to afflict the enemy. We should not take this to mean that we should avoid gloating just to make sure God keeps afflicting the enemy—for that amounts to silently cheering on the affliction. The implied threat in God relenting from afflicting the enemy is that the enemy will return to troubling us. In the meantime, instead of gloating we should just be thankful for God's protection and leave all to His judgment—praying that God will use any affliction He brings on our enemies to lead them to change for the better.

***Saying 29: Envyng the Wicked (Proverbs 24:19-20)***. The words of verse 19 are nearly the same as King David's in Psalm 37:1. We must not fret over the wicked, or being envious of them (compare Proverbs 3:31; Proverbs 23:17-18; Proverbs 24:1-2), because they are doomed if they will not reform.

***Saying 30: Fear God and the King (Proverbs 24:21-22)***. In this last of the 30 sayings of the wise we are told to fear God and the king, a phrase the apostle Peter likely quoted from in 1 Peter 2:17. In the same

proverb we are instructed to not associate with "those given to change." The latter phrase probably means more than merely the fickle. Given the context, it is taken by some to mean revolutionists or "the rebellious" (NIV)—those who subvert society. They will be brought to ruin by both God and king.

TYPE: PARALLEL. Following the 30 Words of the Wise (22:16–24:22), Proverbs 24:23a marks a new section with a new title or subheading: "These things also belong to the wise." Some paraphrase this as Further Words of the Wise. "The structure of this text is as follows:

"A: On the law courts (vv. 23-26)
"B: On economic priorities (v. 27)
"A': On the law courts (vv. 28-29)
"B': On laziness (vv. 30-34)

"There is no intrinsic link between these two concepts; the parallel structure exists simply for organizational purposes" (NAC).

The wording of verse 26 perhaps sounds odd to us today: "He who gives a right answer kisses the lips." *The NIV Application Commentary* says: "The kiss in the ancient world communicated loyalty as well as affection. The honest answer comes from one who (lit[erally]) 'returns words that are right' (cf. Proverbs 22:21). Interpreters debate whether the legal context of Proverbs 24:23-25 determines the meaning. The main comparison is that of doing good for another with one's lips, a strong contrast to the deceitful lips of Proverbs 24:28. *The New American Commentary*, however, argues that the phrase translated "kisses the lips" should actually be "seals the lips" and renders the verse as: "He who gives a proper verdict silences {hostile} lips" (note and footnotes on Proverbs 24:23-26).

Verse 27 "does not address laziness in the direct terms that vv. 30-34 do, but it relates the principle that one should not provide for personal comfort until a means of income is established here. As such, it emphasizes a practical rule of producing before consuming, a rule the slothful do not accept. It is possible that 'building a house' refers not just to the building in which one lives but to the establishment of a family. If so, the guideline is even more appropriate: one should be able to provide for a family before starting one" (NAC). As *Expositor's* notes on this point, "Before entering marriage one should have a well-ordered life."

In verses 30-31, a short anecdote shows that lazy people are not properly attentive to their personal concerns. It causes one to recognize the truth of the proverbial maxim expressed here (verses 32-34; compare Proverbs 6:9-11)." [END]

Verse 21 – Regarding the line: “Do not associate with those given to change” the John Gill commentary states: “in political things; that are for new laws, new forms of government, a new ministry, and a new king; never easy with the government under which they are, but are continually entering into plots, conspiracies, and rebellions, who, instead of fearing God and the king, change the laws and commandments of God and the king, and therefore to be shunned.”

Verses 30 – 34 – This is another Proverb in a long list of Proverbs we’ve read about sowing and reaping. God intended the consequences of bad choices to lead us to make better choices.