

## Day 384 - FRIDAY: March 8th

### Proverbs 22 & 23

#### Proverbs 22:1-29 NKJV

A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, Loving favor rather than silver and gold. The rich and the poor have this in common, The LORD is the maker of them all. A prudent man foresees evil and hides himself, But the simple pass on and are punished. By humility and the fear of the LORD Are riches and honor and life. Thorns and snares are in the way of the perverse; He who guards his soul will be far from them. Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it. The rich rules over the poor, And the borrower is servant to the lender. He who sows iniquity will reap sorrow, And the rod of his anger will fail. He who has a generous eye will be blessed, For he gives of his bread to the poor. Cast out the scoffer, and contention will leave; Yes, strife and reproach will cease. He who loves purity of heart And has grace on his lips, The king will be his friend. The eyes of the LORD preserve knowledge, But He overthrows the words of the faithless. The lazy man says, "There is a lion outside! I shall be slain in the streets!" The mouth of an immoral woman is a deep pit; He who is abhorred by the LORD will fall there. Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of correction will drive it far from him. He who oppresses the poor to increase his riches, And he who gives to the rich, will surely come to poverty. Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise, And apply your heart to my knowledge; For it is a pleasant thing if you keep them within you; Let them all be fixed upon your lips, So that your trust may be in the LORD; I have instructed you today, even you. Have I not written to you excellent things Of counsels and knowledge, 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? Do not rob the poor because he is poor, Nor oppress the

afflicted at the gate; For the LORD will plead their cause, And plunder the soul of those who plunder them. Make no friendship with an angry man, And with a furious man do not go, Lest you learn his ways And set a snare for your soul. Do not be one of those who shakes hands in a pledge, One of those who is surety for debts; If you have nothing with which to pay, Why should he take away your bed from under you? Do not remove the ancient landmark Which your fathers have set. Do you see a man who excels in his work? He will stand before kings; He will not stand before unknown men.

### Proverbs 23:1-35 NKJV

When you sit down to eat with a ruler, Consider carefully what is before you; And put a knife to your throat If you are a man given to appetite. Do not desire his delicacies, For they are deceptive food. Do not overwork to be rich; Because of your own understanding, cease! Will you set your eyes on that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings; They fly away like an eagle toward heaven. Do not eat the bread of a miser, Nor desire his delicacies; For as he thinks in his heart, so is he. "Eat and drink!" he says to you, But his heart is not with you. The morsel you have eaten, you will vomit up, And waste your pleasant words. Do not speak in the hearing of a fool, For he will despise the wisdom of your words. Do not remove the ancient landmark, Nor enter the fields of the fatherless; For their Redeemer is mighty; He will plead their cause against you. Apply your heart to instruction, And your ears to words of knowledge. Do not withhold correction from a child, For if you beat him with a rod, he will not die. You shall beat him with a rod, And deliver his soul from hell. My son, if your heart is wise, My heart will rejoice—indeed, I myself; Yes, my inmost being will rejoice When your lips speak right things. Do not let your heart envy sinners, But be zealous for the fear of the LORD all the day; For surely there is a hereafter, And your hope will not be cut off. Hear, my son, and be wise; And guide your heart in the way. Do not mix with winebibbers, Or with

gluttonous eaters of meat; For the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, And drowsiness will clothe a man with rags. Listen to your father who begot you, And do not despise your mother when she is old. Buy the truth, and do not sell it, Also wisdom and instruction and understanding. The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice, And he who begets a wise child will delight in him. Let your father and your mother be glad, And let her who bore you rejoice. My son, give me your heart, And let your eyes observe my ways. For a harlot is a deep pit, And a seductress is a narrow well. She also lies in wait as for a victim, And increases the unfaithful among men. Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaints? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who linger long at the wine, Those who go in search of mixed wine. Do not look on the wine when it is red, When it sparkles in the cup, When it swirls around smoothly; At the last it bites like a serpent, And stings like a viper. Your eyes will see strange things, And your heart will utter perverse things. Yes, you will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, Or like one who lies at the top of the mast, saying: "They have struck me, but I was not hurt; They have beaten me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake, that I may seek another drink?"

### **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.