

Want
Wise TO BE

Want Wise

TO BE

APPLYING
THE WISDOM OF
SOLOMON
TO THE MODERN ISSUES WE ALL FACE

Jeff Smith

Pleasant Word

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Dedication

To Pastor Violet Kiteley, who got her hands
dirty with the misfits, the rejects, the
weirdoes, and the strange ones from the streets
of Oakland that most churches wouldn't touch with
a ten-foot-pole,

and helped them find eternal life,

of which I was one.

And to Betsy, a very wise woman.

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Introduction

Solomon was the king of the ancient kingdom of Israel 3000 years ago. He ruled from B.C. 1015 to 975, inheriting the throne from his father David. In an profound act of humility, as he prepared to accept the crown, Solomon asked the Almighty for wisdom to rule Israel. This is found in the Bible in 1 Kings 3:7–12.

- 7* And now, O Lord my God, you have made your servant king in the place of David my father; and I am only a young boy, with no knowledge of how to go out or come in.
- 8 And your servant has round him the people of your selection, a people so great that they may not be numbered, and no account of them may be given.
- 9* Give your servant, then, a wise heart for judging your people, able to see what is good and

what evil; for who is able to be the judge of this great people?

10 Now these words and Solomon's request were pleasing to the Lord.

11 And God said to him, Because your request is for this thing, and not for long life for yourself or for wealth or for the destruction of your haters, but for wisdom to be a judge of causes;

12* I have done as you said: I have given you a wise and far-seeing heart, so that there has never been your equal in the past, and never will there be any like you in the future.
(BBE)

For forty years until his death, Solomon ruled his kingdom with what would have to be described as uncanny wisdom. A small number of his many sayings and writings are found in the Bible, in the Book of Proverbs, from which this work is drawn, in his Song of Songs and in the Book of Ecclesiastes. The Book of Proverbs is his most practical of the three. Writing as if he were a father addressing a beloved son, he begins with "My son, I want you to be wise. I don't want you to be a fool." Some things really don't change in 3000 years. It is hoped that the reader will read the entire book of Proverbs and give great thought to its message.

Understanding the Book

Wisdom is the right use of what one knows. A student goes to school to learn that “in 1492 Columbus sailed the ocean blue.”

Wisdom shows how best to use that information. A person may not be as good a student as another, but with wisdom, they can take what little they know and use it in better ways than most other people.

Wisdom is the best use of scarce resources. None of us have enough knowledge, ability, talent, money, time or anything else to meet the demands of life. Therefore we need wisdom to use these limited resources wisely.

Wisdom can be practiced by anyone, anytime, no matter what their background, language, status, age, race, gender or culture. All can benefit from it.

Wisdom is the one subject that both parents and teenagers can agree on. Children and teenagers don't want to be fools and parents don't want their kids, or themselves to be fools either.

Wisdom offers to give "subtlety to the simple" (KJV Proverbs 1:4). This means it wants to make one shrewd, or crafty. For example, a naive person might have someone say to them, "I love you" and hear one obvious meaning when several, less obvious meanings are also possible. Knowing what those meanings are ahead of time, can save that person from harm.

The subjects discussed in this book are compelling. Some of these subjects include getting power and wealth, the power of simple listening, the right understanding of anger, the proper use of finances, the setting of goals, the proper fear of the Lord, how to find happiness in an unhappy world and many, many others.

The Proverbs themselves are profound in that they take great concepts and boil them down into simple, useful nuggets. They lend themselves to a daily, regular study for the busy person looking for clear, short answers to life's big problems. They respect the busy schedule we all keep. They are good for those with short attention spans.

The term "Proverbs" literally means to "compare." It attempts to explain by comparing one thing with another. A way that is wise is explained

by comparing it to its opposite, or a way that is foolish. Proverbs 14:30 compares the good effects of inner peace on one's body with the bad effects of being jealous by saying, "A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones." The Proverbs also compare similar things, repeating a thought in a slightly different way, as in 15:30, it compares "A cheerful look brings joy to the heart, and good news gives health to the bones."

Some proverbs seem obvious at first glance, but offer deep truth when thought about. For instance, 12:17 says "A truthful witness gives honest testimony, but a false witness tells lies." Here it just says the obvious. Truthful people tell the truth, liars tell lies. If someone else tells a lie, that person is clearly a liar. However what does it mean if I tell a lie? Does it mean that I am, or that I am about to become a . . . ? So it shows us that a virtue or flaw on the outside points to a similar one on the inside. It tells us not to be fooled, but to change what we do, so we don't become something we don't want to be.

The pursuit of wisdom is presented in terms of a romance. God expects us to "court" or "woo" wisdom, much as a young man might want to win the favor of a young lady. This woman may already like him, but she wants him to pursue her, to value her. In the same way, God calls us to pursue the wisdom He has already promised to give. It is an illustration that both genders can easily understand.

The Book of Proverbs presents the great truths of the Word of God, not so much in the terms of right and wrong, but in the sense of our doing something that is good for ourselves. It is in our own best interests, we are wise, if we do some things and avoid others. We will live longer and be happier if we follow what it says.

The book offers a “tell it like it is approach.” It describes practices such as bribery, without endorsing that practice as being right.

The Book tells us that God blesses upright people. The Christian view of being righteous is different from all other views on this subject. Christian scripture asks us to accept that the death of Jesus paid for our sins. Because of Jesus, we can become righteous by first admitting our sins, then asking God for forgiveness and allowing His Spirit to enter our lives. With our sins forgiven and our debts paid, God then calls us righteous. We then trust Him to help us to become the people He can bless. We can't be good enough by ourselves.

In a world that seeks to undermine parents, parents will find a particular ally in this book. It speaks well of mom and dad and it allows them to bring in their own experiences to support the godly principles described here; experiences that a child will usually lack. It challenges children to honor and respect their parents and others in authority in a way that our culture does not. This is especially

helpful to single parents who must carry an extra burden in giving guidance to their children.

The book encourages discussion and teaching as the prime way of molding and shaping a child's character. While it does support the use of the "rod" or spanking, its main thrust is in teaching and appealing to a child's sense of reason. The relationship here is a warm one.

It is the one book in the Bible that one can in good conscience say it is not entirely true. The Book of Proverbs stress the *principles* of achieving long lives and happiness. If we look at life long and hard enough, we will find those who seem to violate it's principles and still do fine. For example, we can sometimes find lazy people who are rich, even though the book warns that laziness will make us poor. But we must base our life on the principles found here and not on the rare exceptions.

It stresses preventing problems through discussion and understanding, rather than having to learn from our own mistakes.

This is the one book of the Bible where God often speaks through the voice of a woman. He does this to show that He is no respecter of persons and that a wise person accepts wisdom from many sources. While the book was written during a time when women were little more than beasts of burden, it presents a very positive overall view of women as being easily under valued, but as worthy of true equality.

When the Queen of Sheba came to Solomon's kingdom, to see if the stories she had heard were true, she said this. "Happy *are* thy men, happy *are* these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, *and* that hear thy wisdom" (1Kings 10:8 KJV). She said these people get along with each other, they are happy doing it and the kingdom is running very well. If one ever has to run an organization or group, this is a good book to start to learn how.

Wisdom is the second step in a two-step process. We must first make ourselves right with the Lord, and then seek to be wise with other people. Once the first step is taken, the second step is easier to figure out.

How This Study Was Written

When my wife and I were raising our children, our eight year old son linked up with one of the neighborhood liars and became rather good at it after awhile. When I finally told him to stop lying he, in all honesty asked me, why? I couldn't think of a good way to explain it but I remembered my interest in Solomon's work because he talked about these issues so plainly. So we set up a nightly time together, while he was getting ready to go to sleep and I was amazed at how well it went. If life seemed like a huge, multiple-choice test, it felt like someone had just handed us the answer-sheet ahead of time. When we tried to discuss a verse, I had to bring up stories of my life growing up as examples of the point Solomon was trying to make. These were things I don't think I would ever have shared otherwise and it was fun for both of us

to know how I learned some of life's lessons. Also, in his eyes, I think I really started to look very smart. It took about 4 months to do the whole book and he never turned me down when I asked him if he wanted to talk about it tonight.

I then took my two younger daughters through it when they hit that age. This prompted some explaining since the book is obviously written to men. But the explanation, described below, was simple. It seemed especially important to bring out that God speaks here through the voice of a woman as an example of His not favoring one kind of person over another. Bingo, the same thing happened. We made our relationship better, I prevented bad things from happening and planted the ideas for some good ones.

The writing of this study began when I started to put verses from Proverbs in our church bulletin with my comments several years ago. I called it "The Wisdom Corner" and wanted to take these concise verses and add a clear, simple comment that wouldn't take up much space. One of the problems with a study of Solomon's work is that if we see how different people translate a verse from the Hebrew, into English, it often will seem to have different meanings for each verse, depending on which translation is chosen. This is true, even though good things can be learned from any version of what he wrote. But by lining up 10–11 translations of the same verse, plus going into various commentaries,

it is possible to get the larger meaning. So I have tried to show this larger meaning in the comments I have written. I have also tried to use simple English in my comments and avoid any words with three or more syllables.

Also, since a lot of these verses have an obvious meaning, it was not my aim to interpret these verses, but to apply them. This accounts for the fact that you might read a verse and come up with some different ideas for it than the one I have. Scripture has one meaning, but many uses. I have done this for several years now, and have enjoyed it immensely. This study includes the comments on 100 verses and passages.

My e-mail is included and I would love to hear from you if you have any comments. My e-mail address is: "thewise@charter.net" my website is: "wannabewise.com"

Jeff Smith, November 2004

Setting Up A Nightly Devotion

I generally invited my kids by saying something like this, “Wisdom is the right use of what little we know and what little we have. Others may be smarter or have more things than us, but if we use what we have wisely, we will do better than someone who has more but doesn’t use it very well.” I may then tell them that as we talk about the Proverbs, we will be talking about how to have friends, how to use our money in the right way, what to do about anger and other issues I know they will be interested in.

Begin with chapter 10, especially if the child is preadolescent.

Explore the larger passages when the attention span is longer.

Keep the devotional time short 5–10 minutes max unless they are hooked and they want to go on, Keep the the number of proverbs few.

Allow them to be “jumping off” points that allow the child to explore the meaning on their own or just explore the issues it raises. We don’t have to get a verse completely right to make progress. We just have to get them to discuss it.

Keep them asking for more.

Kids will ask what a verse means. Draw from your own life’s experiences when possible. The kids will enjoy it and and frankly, this will make parents look very smart to them.

Emphasize what the book says; this will make a person wise. In a competitive world, these verses give them a tremendous edge.

Keep discussions as “lecture free” as possible. Keep them upbeat, positive.

Examples of verses to discuss: Prov 20: 16, 23 :1–2, 24: 30–34

I like the King James version the best. The other versions seem weak and sentimental by comparison.

Some of the more memorable moments went like this:

25:28 He that *hath* no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls (KJV).

25:28 He whose spirit is uncontrolled is like an unwallled town which has been broken into (BBE).

Imagine the Phillistines marching along, pillaging and burning cities as they go. Just before noon they see this one city and it has no walls! “We can take this city and still have time for lunch,” they say, “but who in his right mind would build a city without walls? Anyone can take over that one.” The person who has no self-control will be controlled by someone or something else. This is a great verse to talk to kids about the dangers of addictions. If there is no self-discipline, there is no defense.

Here’s another one. This occurred when I was talking to one of my daughters when she was 13 years old:

23:1 When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee:

2 And put a knife to thy throat, if thou *be* a man given to appetite.

3 Be not desirous of his dainties: for they *are* deceitful meat. (KJV)

I ask, “So do you know what that means?”

“No” she says.

“Well, I think it means that if you are a young person, be on your guard when powerful people suddenly want to do you favors. If someone like this has you out at a restaurant, and you can’t refuse to eat,

order from the middle of the menu while trying to find out what they are after. There may be an obligation in that meal that you don't know about yet."

She says, "But I don't have anything anyone would want."

"Sweetheart," says I, ". . . let's talk about dating."

Here's a one that went well when the kids were around 8 or 9 years old:

Pr 22:3 A prudent *man* foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished (KJV).

"Whazzat mean?"

"Well, I think it means that a wise person tries to plan ahead and foresee any danger before it comes up and hits them on the nose."

The beauty of that verse is in it's being so short. This only took a few minutes just before bedtime and yet it was a great thing to say.

When one of our children became somewhat challenged in the area of actually getting out of bed in the morning, it was good to know that before it was an issue, we had discussed this verse:

6:10 *Yet* a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep:

11 So shall thy poverty come as one that
travelleth, and thy want as an armed man
(KJV).

Applying The Book of Proverbs to Girls/Women

In 1 Corinthians 14:34, Paul is quoted as saying “Let the women keep silent in the church.” However, a look at the Greek will help us to soften these mis-used words. There are several Greek words that Paul could have chosen when he wanted to tell the women to keep silent. *Legein* means to deliver an ordered discourse, *Eipien* means to speak in ordinary conversation and *Lalein* means to chatter, babble, prattle, gabble or talk in an undertone (Thayer). The Greek word he used for “keep silent” in this verse is “*Laleo*.” It seems that Paul wanted the chatter to cease. He wasn’t trying to keep women from teaching or speaking to the church body.

This is also the same feeling expressed in Gal 3:28 that says, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus (KJV).” The

old barriers that had their place in the old covenant were now removed in the new covenant. Thus the women could now be taught with the men, as long as they observed the normal rules of the class.

The courtship of the Young man with Lady Wisdom is an allegory that both genders can easily understand. All of us are found in the Young Man who needs to become wise. Wisdom laments that while she is seeking after the Young Man, that it is he who should be seeking her.

Scripture asks all those to seek wisdom, not to ignore the good things that women do. This explains the book's closing on the subject of the virtuous woman, because fools, both male and female, easily fail to applaud this gender.

How the Book Is Organized

The Title. 1:1–6

The Central Theme: 1:7

The Introduction:

Gang Activity (1:10–19)

Lady Wisdom. (1:20–23)

The Consequences of Foolishness. (1:24–33)

Evil Men and Evil Women. (2:12–19)

How to Lead a Long and Happy Life, as Opposed
to a Short and Miserable One. (Chap 3)

The Importance of Advice from Our Parents.
(Chap 4)

The Father Urges the Son to Love Lady Wis-
dom

The Dangers of Promiscuity, Both Physical and Spiritual. (Chap 5)

Be Wise In Our Business Dealings. (Chap 6)

Adultery Can Lead to Poverty.

The World's Worst Romantic Story, or How to Fall In Love So you Can Really Mess Up Our Life. (Chap 7)

The Cry of Lady Wisdom. The Second Person of the God-Head. (Chap 8)

The Rewards of Wisdom (Chap 9)

Body of Miscellaneous Proverbs. (Chap 10–24)

The Lost Proverbs (Chap 25–29)

Sayings of King Agur (Chap 30)

Sayings of King Lemuel (Chap 31:1–9)

The Virtuous Woman. (Prov 31:10)

Contrast this with women mentioned in Ecclesiastes 7:26. He admits had played the very fool that he had warned others against.

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All references to the Bible are taken from the King James Version (KJV) and from the Bible In Basic English (BBE). Both are in the public domain. Several references are referred to in the body of the text. Adam Clarke's Commentary was most helpful as was

John Gill's "An Exposition of the Old and New Testament" and Matthew Henry's "An Exposition of the Old and New Testament." The lexicons that helped with the word studies are noted as follows. "Strong's" refers to Strong's Exhaustive Concordance. "BDB" stands for Brown, Driver, Briggs, Gesenius - Hebrew Aramaic English Lexicon. "Thayer" refers to Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon.

Much of the research for this book was done using the very excellent computer program, "The Online Bible" by Ken Hamel.

Comments on 130 verses in the Book of Proverbs

Proverbs 1:1 The wise sayings of Solomon, the son of David, king of Israel (BBE).

This is the intro to the wisdom scriptures. King Solomon, the wisest man in the world, sits down and tells us how he runs his kingdom. He shares how to get people to listen, to show respect, to want to follow our lead.

1:2 To have knowledge of wise teaching; to be clear about the words of reason: (BBE)

Wisdom is the right use of what we know and what we have. We all feel that we don't have not enough time, money, smarts, talent or whatever to meet life's demands. But if we are wise, we make better use of what we

have than someone who is foolish. Often we can do better than those who have more of these good things than we do.

This is the aim of Solomon's book.

- 1:3 To be trained in the ways of wisdom, in righteousness and judging truly and straight behavior: (BBE)

The wisdom scriptures can help us to avoid problems. Some of life's most confusing problems are laid out for the reader before they face them in real life. The tone is warm and friendly. It suggests Solomon wanted to spare us from learning these lessons the hard way. It asks the reader to be his or her best self.

- 1:4 To make the simple-minded sharp, (BBE)

The wisdom scriptures presents it's great truths, in a way that allows readers to choose what is best for them. It is in your best interest to be wise. Some choices are wise; others are foolish. Lives will improve if these things are done and will be unhappy and hard if they are not.

1.4 . . . and to give the young man knowledge, and serious purpose: (BBE)

The study of wisdom is the one subject that both young and old, children and parents can agree on. Kids don't want to be fools and parents don't want their kids to be fools either. It's a good place to start talking.

1:5 A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; (KJV)

Wise people are the best listeners. One would think that if a person is smart somehow, that they would talk a lot, but that is not true. It is the wise person who listens and keeps on learning. The foolish one already knows enough and demands to be heard. The Cherokee have a saying: "Listen, or your words will make you deaf."

1:6 To get the sense of wise sayings and secrets, and of the words of the wise and their dark sayings (BBE).

One way to understand wisdom is that these are the principles that the reader can base a good life on. If followed, they improve people's lives. They are reliable. We can read about lazy people who are rich and

bad people who don't seem to get punished, but major decisions can't be based on those kinds of things.

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

How can anyone love a God that they are afraid of? Shouldn't we remove this word "fear" and instead use the word "respect?" Ok, we can do that. We should "respect" the Lord enough to want to stop doing evil things. Or maybe fear isn't such a bad word after all.

1:8 My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother. 1:9 For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck. (KJV)

This verse shows what a gift good parents are, and asks children to value them.

Those who are trying to be good parents, will find a real ally in Solomon's book. Wisdom says that dads and moms will tell their child things that will both prosper their life and make it a thing of beauty. The book is very helpful to single parents who might

want a second voice, besides their own, to advise their kids.

1:10 My son, if sinners would take you out of the right way, do not go with them.

11 If they say, Come with us; let us make designs against the good, waiting secretly for the upright, without cause; 13 Goods of great price will be ours, our houses will be full of wealth; (BBE)

We are warned of the dangers of peer pressure, whether those peers are a gang of thugs or a large business. More can be done with a group of peers, but there is more pressure from those peers to do what they say. So we choose with great care those people we allow to pressure us and those things we allow to entice us. We think about the results of our actions, knowing God requires us to love our neighbors as ourselves.

1:15 My son, do not go with them; keep your feet from their ways: (BBE)

There are many people on the sidelines of society, and of life itself, who want in. They are poor or are hurting and everyone else seems to be having

a good time but them. It is tempting to place our hopes on friendships or other people. But study the wisdom scriptures and be braced for a shock. Most of our friends, enemies, the in-crowd, the out-crowd, the people we admire, the ones we don't, are heading at different speeds and by different paths, to the same tragic, final destiny. Don't go with them.

1:18 And they lay (in) wait for their own blood; they lurk privily for their own lives (KJV).

This verse speaks of groups that are on a destructive path. They offer friendship, wealth, and power over other people, but will just as likely destroy their members as they destroys their victims. When asked to make a firing squad, they eventually just form a circle. Many choices or paths in this world lead to this kind of destruction.

1:20 Wisdom is crying out in the street; her voice is loud in the open places; (BBE)

Wise people know that it goes against our nature to hear good advice; that we must make ourselves listen to

the voice that really does speak very loudly. While the book was written in ancient times to teach young men, those lessons are sometimes expressed through the voice of a woman. This is to show that He (God) does not favor one kind of person over the other. The wise person hears wise advice, even when it comes from someone we would not expect to hear it from.

1:21

Her words are sounding in the meeting-places, and in the doorways of the town: 22 How long, you simple ones, will foolish things be dear to you? and pride a delight to the haters of authority? how long will the foolish go on hating knowledge? (BBE)

Some parts of scripture tell us to have a childlike faith. Here “simple” means being childish or living without having become wise. Wisdom wishes that foolish people give up their foolishness and seek her. That is the only way we can have a wise and understanding heart. She is like a wise woman in love with a foolish man, who can only bless him after he has chosen to chase her.

1:31 Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way and be filled with their own devices (KJV).

We are punished more by our sins than for them. All of us need to fear these words, "I did this to myself. I have no one else to blame but me."

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

It is sad to know what will happen to those who for now, appear to avoid reaping the the rewards of the foolish things they do. We should be concerned for them, but not jealous. Their wealth is a noose around their neck as they dance on a simple, trap door.

2:1 My son, if you will take my words to your heart, storing up my laws in your mind; 2 So that your ear gives attention to wisdom, and your heart is turned to knowledge; 3 Truly, if you are crying out for good sense, and your request is for knowledge; 4 If you are looking for her as for silver, and searching for her as for stored-up wealth; (BBE)

The search for wisdom is a romance and a treasure hunt at the same time. How does a person hope to find wisdom? The same way a young man hopes to win the favor of an pretty woman; by valuing her company, by being dedicated in her pursuit, by promising to make her your only love. She responds by slowly revealing her most secret treasures.

2:7 He has salvation stored up for the upright, he is a breastplate to those in whom there is no evil; (BBE)

It's good to know that God blesses good people. But thank God for His love, because none of us are all that good. He offers to make us upright though. We put our trust in Him; we rely on Him to forgive us and to make us righteous. Then these good things that apply to good people can apply to us too. Trust Him to make you the upright person you can't be without His help.

2:8 He keeps watch on the ways which are right, and takes care of those who have the fear of him. 9 Then you will have knowledge of righteousness and right acting, and upright behaviour, even of every good way (BBE).

We pursue wisdom to become self-reliant and strong enough to handle life's problems. It is odd that the first step in getting this strength is to rely on God, knowing that "He takes care of those who fear him." We must admit we are weak, foolish and in need of His help. Wisdom is, when you think about it, a gift of God to any foolish person, foolish enough to ask for it.

2:10 When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; (KJV)

For wisdom to enter a heart, it must change more than opinions. It must change passions. The unlearned soul gives up it's fight with learning and is now pleased to know. The path to being wise becomes a delight.

2:11 Wise purposes will be watching over you, and knowledge will keep you (BBE).

The Hebrew word for "wise purposes" means to have a wise and clever plan. Wise people learn to protect themselves this way. Many face life's problems with battle plans that are clumsy or poorly thought out. Those

plans can also be cruel and self-serving. Some enter that conflict with no plan at all. But it is possible to have a plan that is clever, full of insight and is just, all at the same time. Wise people don't set foot into the arena of conflict without one.

2:12

Giving you salvation from the evil man, from those whose words are false; 2:13 Who give up the way of righteousness, to go by dark roads; 2:14 Who take pleasure in wrongdoing, and have joy in the evil designs of the sinner; (BBE)

It is common to believe that because the men and women are so different from each other that one is better or worse than another. Solomon argues that each do evil, or good for that matter, in distinctly male and female ways. Neither of these ways are better or worse than the other. He starts first with evil men, who think that someone starting out good, then going bad is a great idea. While some do wrong and regret it, an evil man enjoys it, in himself and in others. This pleasure in doing wrong is the tip-off to stay away.

2:16 To take you out of the power of the strange woman, who says smooth words with her tongue; 2:17 Who is false to the husband of her early years, and does not keep the agreement of her God in mind: 2:18 For her house is on the way down to death; her footsteps go down to the shades: (BBE)

While evil men tend to sin by bullying, evil women tend to sin by drawing one in with wiles and flattery. The Hebrew implies the paths to her trap slope gently and not abruptly. The sin is not brazen, but charming. God is not so much opposed as He is forgotten. These dangers may not be limited to just women of course, but they do pose unique problems. The answer is found in the next verse.

2:20 That thou mayest walk in the way of good men, and keep the paths of the righteous. 2:21 For the upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it. 2:22 But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it (KJV).

For the young person, finding one's way in life is a major problem. It is

amazing how many out there want to lead us, who are openly evil. Come under their spell and life may be interesting, but it will also be short. God has promised, not only remove them, but to root them out so that they never come back. In the meantime, the answer is for us to follow the paths of those few, good folks who have walked with God for awhile. They will still be standing when the dust finally settles.

3:1 My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments:
3:2 For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee (KJV).

Length of days with peace are better than a short life with turmoil. Some think God's law makes life dull or confining. But think about the story of Adam and Eve. The serpent asked Eve to focus on the one tree she couldn't have, and ignore the paradise God had given; a garden where everything was perfect and she didn't have to labor. So we can be tempted to think only about the few things God says we shouldn't do and miss the many things that are given for our

pleasure. Don't smoke, drink or cuss. So what's left? There's enough to fill a long and happy lifetime.

3:3 Let not mercy and good faith go from you; let them be hanging round your neck, recorded on your heart (BBE).

3:3 Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart: (KJV)

What is the truth in any matter? Can we understand a problem without illusion? If so, we have seen the truth. God sees all things in the clear light of His holiness. He drops His standard of right and wrong for no one. But that is only one side of a balancing scale. The pharisees saw only that one part. To be truly Christ-like, we must balance what we see with mercy. Don't excuse evil, forgive it. There is a great difference between the two. Love people, and be kind to them, but be faithful to what the Word says. While not every issue in life is a matter of right and wrong, when it is, we must see it clearly and offer forgiveness when possible. We cannot offer ourselves mercy and others truth, nor be unduly harsh on ourselves and forgiving of others.

We must hold onto both mercy and truth.

3:5 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. 3:6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. (KJV)

In all thy ways, know Him.

During times of weakness, we find He sustains us. When we fail, he is the forgiver of our sins. In discord, we discover He reconciles. In turmoil, we find He brings great peace. During times of plenty, we understand Him as the giver of gifts often undeserved. In times of sorrow, we are supported by Him who is now our comforter. In times of great trial, we surrender to Him as a refiner of our faith. In all the things that would drive us from Him, the wise know that they are instead, only ways to better know Him.

3:7 Put no high value on your wisdom: let the fear of the Lord be before you, and keep yourself from evil: 3:8 This will give strength to your flesh, and new life to your bones. (BBE)

Some things that seem complicated are actually quite simple. It's when

we think we are smart that we get into trouble. Some, through great education and highly convoluted thinking, decide that sin is OK and righteousness is out of step with the times. To think otherwise is called “simplistic thinking.” Nonsense. If God says don’t do something, don’t do it. It doesn’t take intellect. It takes a healthy fear. Do things His way and you live longer.

3:9 Honor the LORD with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase: 3:10 So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine (KJV).

In the last verse we find fearing God produces health. In this verse, honoring God produces wealth. Of course it makes no sense to give away our best, the first ten percent of our income or our “first fruits” of what we receive. But to do so changes the giver. It makes a stingy person into a generous one, one that knows that all those things came from God anyway. Tithing, or giving away the tenth, creates a wealth of the heart that should come before other wealth. The riches of Solomon’s empire came

from honoring God with their substance on a national scale.

3:11 My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: 3:12 For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth (KJV).

“As many as I love I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore and repent.” (Rev 3:19) These verses tell us that trials are evidence of God’s love for us. Knowing that “walking through the fire” is part of God’s refining process and is proof of His care, we can take the hardest test in the right spirit, one of gratitude. Trials assure us that God thinks we are worthy of His time and effort.

3:13 Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding.

3:14 For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. (KJV)

Some are rich only in terms of money, but live lives that are in other ways poor and unhappy. This verse suggests that wisdom is “better” than

gold or silver. It doesn't say gold and silver are wrong, but that they are a small part of a much larger picture. Investing one's efforts and resources to become wise creates a happiness and a wealth of character that is much broader and much better, than just money.

3:15 She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. 3:16 Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honor. (KJV)

We live in a time that there are more gadgets and gizmos, more comforts, more "things" to be desired, than there were before. Plus there are the standard things that people desire; wealth, power, prestige and the like. So why is wisdom is still more desirable? It is because she has riches and honor in one hand and long life in the other. If we seek her instead of those things, she will lead us into all good, including long life and prosperity.

3:35 The wise shall inherit Glory, but shame shall be the promotion of fools. (KJV)

There is a famous story of a football player who ran the football in the wrong direction, towards his opponent's goal. His mistake made him infamous. We can do the same thing. Our shame can make us well known; it can promote us. Some do foolish things and hope it is not discovered. Others cultivate wisdom and cannot escape the words "Well done!"

4:1 Give ear, my sons, to the teaching of a father; give attention so that you may have knowledge (BBE).

Often in the teen years, young people are not as apt to listen to the advice of their parents. But wise young people know that there are no other people on the earth that are as bound to their well being as they are. Even when they disagree with their parents, they will weight carefully what someone with that bond will say. Should one or both parents be absent, or when those parents have failed in the most basic way, a young person can look for spiritual parents to instruct them.

4:1 Give ear, my sons, to the teaching of a father; give attention so that you may have knowledge (BBE).

When we compare moms and dads, dads more often do the discipline and moms will nurture and support. While Proverbs does talk about discipline, most of the book tries to change a child's behavior by teaching. The relationship here is a warm one. It offers to prevent problems before they happen. There are 4 verses that mention the "rod of correction" and 911 other verses that offer advice. This seems like a good balance.

4:5 Get wisdom, get true knowledge; keep it in memory, do not be turned away from the words of my mouth.

4:6 Do not give her up, and she will keep you; give her your love, and she will make you safe. (BBE)

The parent here asks the child to make wisdom their first love, their first romance. Young people who pursue wisdom like a young man might pursue an attractive woman, will find that any other romance or other pursuit will be safer.

4:6 Do not give her up, and she will keep you; give her your love, and she will make you safe. (BBE)

No woman opens up the depths of her heart to any casual friend. She

saves those secrets for the one she loves and feels safe with. So our desire to be wise is a pursuit of Lady Wisdom and it must be convincing. We must, in a sense “marry” her. We must vow a holy oath, for a lifetime, before lady wisdom decides to tell her secrets. When we make it safe for her to share, she makes it safe for us to live.

4:8 Put her (Wisdom) in a high place, and you will be lifted up by her; she will give you honor, when you give her your love. 4:9 She will put a crown of grace on your head, giving you a head-dress of glory. (BBE)

For a young man to love Lady Wisdom, that is no small thing. He man may bring his few assets to this marriage, but what this woman brings is staggering. She “promotes” the ones that love her, usually over the ones that don’t. She brings her beloved honor and a glorious crown of grace for all to see.

4:18 But the way of the upright is like the light of early morning, getting brighter and brighter till the full day. 4:19 The way of sinners is dark; they see not the cause of their fall (BBE).

This beautiful verse tells us that just people, who live by such light as they have, will be blessed with more. One day they will understand all, although they must sometimes wait for it. Sinners live in darkness and are smug about it, because no one sees what they do. But this darkness that keeps them from being seen, also condemns them to being destroyed. They won't know what it is that made them stumble and fall. How odd, that a wicked man, who chooses justice, goes from knowing everything about everything, to knowing a little about very certain things.

4:23

And keep watch over your heart with all care; so you will have life. (BBE)

While we can think of many things, we need to be aware of what we dwell on or mull over. Be aware of what enters the brain and lands in the heart. Jealousy, lust, cruelty, indifference, bitterness, hatred; should be brought before the Lord in prayer. We need to weed the garden of our hearts often. If we don't, we can find funny or humorous, things that are clearly wrong. We can become tolerant of evil.

4:26 Ponder the path of thy feet. Let all thy ways be established. (KJV)

A path is nothing in itself. It's importance is in the place it goes to. Pushing a high B grade to a low A is only one step. Smoking one cigarette for the first time may not do much damage, but it is good to know where most smokers end up. Is the final destination of your "path" somewhere that you really want to go?

5:19 Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe. (KJV)

It was common in Bible times to raise deer as pets. This verse says that romance was meant to be an escape from the grimness of life. If one can choose a spouse wisely, and cultivate affection after marriage, there can be many moments when burdens can be set aside, for love.

6:10 A little sleep, a little rest, a little folding of the hands in sleep: 6:11 Then loss will come on you like an outlaw, and your need like an armed man. (BBE)

The Bible is so vivid. A thief does not write us a letter to tell us when to be ready for his arrival. He just comes.

But the steps to that event are so easy to predict. Just a little sleeping in, and the thief of poverty is taking the car, and the furniture. And like an armed man, when he comes, there is no escape.

6:26 For by means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread. (KJV)

Chapter six of Proverbs contains three roads to poverty. 1) suretyship (to agree to pay another's debts), 2) laziness (that makes sense) and 3) lust. Lust?

Sure. Look at the expense in trying to support two households, or the hassles in trying to get child support as modern examples of this ancient principle. So talk to young people or anyone about this sin, and warn them about unwanted pregnancy and disease. But also tell them it can cost them money, perhaps lots of money. For some, that might be the best warning of all.

8:6 Give ear, for my words are true, and my lips are open to give out what is upright. 8:7 For good faith goes out of

my mouth, and false lips are disgusting to me. (BBE)

One constant occurrence in life are dirty stories and crude jokes. Some woman gets tricked into getting pregnant and isn't that funny? We can be around these things so much we lose our horror of evil. This verse commands us to "give ear." Upright things are being said; we just have to hear them. And these are the things to have inside, when the cheap and dirty are all around. But the wise person must first find them and then listen to them. That's the hard part.

8:12 I wisdom dwell with prudence and find out the knowledge of witty inventions. (KJV)

8:12 I wisdom, have made wise behavior my near relation; I am seen to be the special friend of wise purposes (BBE).

Prudence is defined as wisdom that is applied to practice (Clarke). While wisdom is being wise in a moral sense, prudence is being wise in a nuts-and-bolts sense. Wisdom says, "drive the speed limit even if it means we'll be late." Prudence says,

“I know a short cut.” Wisdom says, “pay your bills even if the money is tight.” Prudence says, “I know a way to save money that others have not thought of.” Wisdom says, “don’t cheat.” Prudence shows a clever way to compete, without cheating. Those who talk with Lady Wisdom get to hear from her sister Prudence soon enough.

9:7 He that reproveth a scorner getteth to himself shame: and he that rebuketh a wicked man getteth himself a blot. (KJV)

9:7 He who gives teaching to a man of pride gets shame for himself; he who says sharp words to a sinner gets a bad name. (BBE)

It is said that the same heat that hardens the egg also melts the butter. Trying to instruct or correct some only produces problems for the speaker and no change in the fool.

9:8 Reprove not a scorner lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee.

9:8 Do not say sharp words to a man of pride, or he will have hate for you;

make them clear to a wise man, and you will be dear to him (BBE).

Wise people welcome the chance to do things better. Stinging rebuke only makes them wiser. They love the truth, even when it means learning something about themselves that may not be nice to hear. How powerful, how awesome is that one who, in the midst of criticism that may be viewed as unfair, can hear some nugget of truth that they might not hear any other way.

10:1 A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son is a sorrow to his mother (BBE).

This verse is not just aimed at young people, telling them to please their parents. Rather, it is for the parents of young children. It warns those parents to teach their children to be wise while a child still wants to listen. It will make mom and dad either glad or heavy with sorrow, later on.

10: 2 Wealth which comes from sin is of no profit, but righteousness gives salvation from death (BBE).

This tells us that when we profit from doing evil; doing evil to ourselves, to

others or to the world around us, it will result in being seen as worthless. It asks us, instead to invest in doing right, because this venture will rescue us from death itself. Our character is our work. It is what we invest in first. It rewards us in heaven and here on earth too.

10:5 He who in summer gets together his store is a son who does wisely; but he who takes his rest when the grain is being cut is a son causing shame (BBE).

The chance to develop ourselves or harvest our crops should not catch us by surprise. Just as farming families learn when to plant and harvest, we can learn skills we know we will need later. Thus we prepare ourselves to prosper when the right time comes. We avoid the shame of having something catch us by surprise that should have been easily seen.

10:6 Blessings are upon the head of the just: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked (KJV).

10:6 Blessings are on the head of the upright, but the face of sinners will be covered with sorrow (BBE).

The head of the High Priest was covered with oil, flowing freely to the borders of his robe, before being welcomed into the presence of God. This lavish, outward blessing displayed a rich, inner holiness that all could now see. In the same way, sinners treasure an inner evil. They display their inner person as they speak of violence, until their face and mouth are finally covered by it.

10:7

The memory of the upright is a blessing, but the name of the evil-doer will be turned to dust (BBE).

This verse compares the upright with evil doers. It also compares those trying to make a name for themselves with those who don't have to. You see, I can promote my name and make it as grand as can be, but I can't make people remember it if they don't want to. And whether an evil-doer is living or dead, this verse says their name will turn to dust. Perhaps the only revenge we are allowed on those who do us wrong is to forget all about them. The memory that blesses us however, we will keep.

10:8 The wise in heart shall receive commandments, but a prating fool shall fall (KJV).

To receive a commandment was not any easier in Solomon's time than it is in ours. Commandments are so final. There is no room for one's opinions or personal views on the subject. Wise people receive them anyway. They keep us from falling.

The one with foolish talk requires no such instruction. That's why s/he falls.

10:9 He that walketh uprightly walketh surely, but he that perverteth his ways shall be known (KJV).

10:9 He whose ways are upright will go safely, but he whose ways are twisted will be made low (BBE).

Both Solomon and David knew how shakey the job of being king really was. Public support is fickle. Some in the royal court lusted for power and were not to be trusted. Kings seldom knew who their friends were. The answer to these pressures was simple. Do what is right. Be honest. This makes us self-assured. The

ones who conspire in secret will be revealed soon enough.

10:10 He that winketh with the eye causeth sorrow, but a prating fool shall fall (KJV).

To “wink” here means to overlook evil. God Himself “winks” at evil in the best sense of this term in his desire to redeem us. We “wink” at the evil in ourselves and in others to avoid having to do something about it. In the end this causes sorrow.

There are some who translate the second half of this verse this way: “but he who makes a man see his errors is a cause of peace (BBE).” This seems closer to the theme of “winking” or ignoring wrong. And it’s certainly true.

10:11 The mouth of the upright man is a fountain of life, but the mouth of the evil-doer is a bitter cup (BBE).

10:11 The mouth of the righteous man is a well of life, but violence covers (some versions: “overwhelms”) the mouth of the wicked (KJV).

We might think that the words of a righteous person should be harsh or

stern. This verse says that those words should be like a fountain in that they refresh and give life. Those thirsty for hope, joy and insight would go there often. Bitter, violent words can also spring out of someone's mouth and some will thirst for those too. When it says violence "covers" the mouth of the wicked, the theme of the verse implies that wicked speakers will be covered as if they were drowned in a flood.

10:12 Hatred stirreth up strifes, but love covers all sins (KJV).

10:12 Hate is a cause of violent acts, but all errors are covered up by love (BBE).

The real reasons for strife and discord are likely to be below the surface of what we first see. Violent acts can be "stirred up" or "awakened" (BDB/Strong's) by those with awful motives, often over things that are not that important. The answer is that we find the error or sin that is the real cause. Love covers sins in that it doesn't expose them beyond the circle of those who are part of the problem or part of the answer.

10:13 In the lips of him who has knowledge wisdom is seen; but a rod (Lit: "a

stick” Strong’s) is ready for the back of him who is without sense (BBE).

This compares those who express wisdom against those who don’t. If we know something about life, others will see it in the way we talk. That is the sense of the first part of the verse. We won’t have to point it out to them. But if we refuse to learn our lessons, lots of people may also get to see just how little sense we have as we face pain and public disgrace. Either way, we are all going to learn something.

10:14

A wise man stores up knowledge. But the mouth of the of the foolish is near destruction.

It’s common for a student in a class to think that “this subject doesn’t apply to me.” But a wise person stockpiles knowledge like a squirrel stores up nuts for the winter. He or she doesn’t need those facts now, but sure as the seasons change, they will need at least some of them later on. But this storehouse of the wise is so different from the mouth of the fool. This one who often speaks the loudest but really has nothing to offer, can do more than just cause problems. They open their mouth and we are all very close to . . .

10:15 The rich man's wealth is his strong city; the destruction of the poor is their poverty.

The Haitians have a proverb. "No one listens to the cry of the poor or the sound of a wooden bell." Life can be so hard; so unfair. Goliath so often wins over David. The poor no matter how noble are destroyed by their poverty. The rich, no matter how corrupt, are secured by their wealth. In making us wise, Solomon must "tell it like it is" no matter how harsh. Believers must "see it as it is" and do something.

10:16 The labor of the righteous tendeth to life, the fruit of the wicked to sin (KJV).

10: 16 The work of the upright gives life: the increase of the evil-doer is a cause of sin (BBE).

Just as every path has a destination, so every job has it's paycheck. How sad to find the end result of a job is payment of the worst kind. Why work at such a job? Why not do the work of the righteous? The paycheck is eternal life.

It is as we wait that this proverb is helpful. It reminds us that there is an storing up of blessing and ruin, depending on what we do. The short term result of any job seldom tells us the whole story.

10:17 He who takes note of teaching is (in) a way of life, but he who gives up training is a cause of error (BBE).

Or “anyone willing to be instructed is on the pathway to life.”

It is common to think that the finest virtues one can have in life is being an free thinker, being able to stand up for our rights and to follow our dreams. Those things are good, but are not the central issue of life, according to this verse. The way of life is this: “can we be taught?” Those people who do are destined to live in the fullest sense of the term. One that can be told to do right and still do wrong, has made life’s most basic error.

10:18 He that hideth hatred *with* lying lips, and he that uttereth a slander, is a fool. (KJV).

It is foolish to keep in our heart those things we can’t be honest about. Not every thought of hatred is wrong,

but fools treasure them. They brood on them, while looking calm on the outside. When they say cruel things about another that they know aren't true, they convince their voice to sound sincere and convince themselves that they are right. Thus they become "of two minds" and unstable. In the end they are someone to be pitied.

10:19 Where there is much talk there will be no end to sin, but he who keeps his mouth shut does wisely (BBE).

How easily gossip flows from the lips. How quickly talk can flow from the mundane to the profane. There is much to be gained by saying little and choosing wisely what we say. We don't have to keep track of what was said back when and what we meant. But the greatest gain is the favor of heaven. It is not just shame one risks by talking too much. We risk sinning.

10:20 The tongue of the upright (or just) man is like tested silver: the heart of the evil-doer is of little value (BBE).

It is always tempting to think that what we share from our heart is worth

a lot. It can be, but not always. What gives what we say substance is not it's abundance, it's brilliance nor it's eloquence, but it's justice. People may not like those words, but they can't ignore them.

10:21 The lips of the upright man give food to men, but the foolish come to death for need of sense (BBE).

If we lived in Solomon's day, it was a good, if rather common thing to feed myself by working with my hands. If I fed myself by merely what I said, that would be a very rare thing. But if I fed myself and many others merely by what I said, that could be seen as something of a miracle. Do we understand the power of righteous words to feed not just the bodies, but the souls of many? That is a greater miracle. Fools, blessed with the same ability to speak, do more than just suffer for their foolishness. They die from it.

10:22 The blessing of the Lord gives wealth: hard work makes it no greater (BBE).

Most other translations word the second part as "it come without sorrow." What trouble often comes with

wealth; what problems! When food increases, those who eat it increase as well, Solomon says. Wealth gotten God's way, blessings achieved God's way, are the best one can have. It comes without the sorrow. What a miracle!

10:23 It is sport to the foolish man to do evil, but the man of good sense takes delight in wisdom (BBE).

One of the hallmarks of a fool is the pleasure they find in evil. Their mischief delights them. We call these people clever. The Bible calls them fools. If however, we choose to be someone with good sense, no less a person than God Himself calls us wise.

Prov 10:24 The thing feared by the evil-doer will come to him, but the upright man will get his desire (BBE).

Don't the wicked have hopes and dreams? Don't they aspire to better things like the rest of us? Yes they do, just as the righteous have fears and doubts. But it is not the dreams or the fears that are crucial. It is one's rightness with the Almighty. The final outcome of both is so different. It is

based on the nature of their souls and not their goals.

10:25 As the whirlwind passeth, so is the wicked no more: but the righteous is an everlasting foundation (KJV).

God was angry with a man called Job and spoke to him out of the whirlwind. Job responded to God, not with anger, but with surrender. When the storm was gone, Job was still there and was greatly blessed. The whirlwind lasts only a short time and it stays in one place for a few moments. It comes to both the wicked and the righteous. It cleanses some and removes others. It makes good people better. Those who remain are the foundation upon which others build.

10:26 Like acid drink to the teeth and as smoke to the eyes, so is the hater of work to those who send him (BBE).

Some fires give smoke and no warmth. Some drinks taste bitter and do not refresh. Some people have no message of their own and can't even deliver the one someone gives him. Don't give in to laziness. It is a surprise just how useless we can become.

10:27 The fear of the Lord gives long life, but the years of the evil-doer will be cut short (BBE).

The fear of the Lord adds days to a life and so the converse is also true, that the contempt of the Lord takes away uh, years. Jesus said “sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” This means we don’t have to solve more than a days worth of problems today. And this fear of the Lord gives us many days to do that daily task.

10:28 The hope of the righteous shall be gladness: but the expectation of the wicked shall perish (kjv).

What we expect to happen is based on how things often are. Hopes are based on how we want things to be. Based on what has always happened in the past, what do we expect will happen next ? Now, what do we hope will happen next? When the Lord makes us righteous, we are no longer stuck with life-as-usual and the-way-things-have-always-been. I don’t know what others are hoping for, nor if we will get exactly what we want. But if we have been made right with God, we’ll find He doesn’t let us down.

10:29 The way of the Lord is strength to the upright, but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity (KJV).

The Roman cross was meant to humble as well as punish. It was meant to make Rome look strong and her enemies weak. God's way is often seen like that by those who don't understand. Upright people love their enemies, turn the other cheek, and go the extra mile. Yet this way is stronger than the world admits. Those who know the cross of Jesus know also the empty tomb.

10:30 The upright man will never be moved, but evil-doers will not have a safe resting-place in the land (BBE).

Imagine the fear of the wicked. They can harm the righteous all they want. But in the end, when the dust finally settles, the righteous are still standing right where they left them. Being upright gives us the power to remain.

10:31 The mouth of the upright man is budding with wisdom, but the twisted tongue will be cut off (BBE).

Isn't it great for someone to think we are smart; to think that the words that come from us are wise? Seek to be

just and the world will call you wise. But look at the anger directed at the forward or perverse tongue. It is not just silenced. It is “cut out.”

10:32 The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable; but the mouth of the wicked speaketh forwardness (KJV).

The Hebrew word for the English word “acceptable” can also mean delightful or helpful. The root of the word means to please someone as if we were giving back a debt that is owed to them. The sense of the verse is that those words that the righteous speak creates favor in those who listen to them. One would think that a person who speaks of righteous things would be sort of forward, in-your-face and be quick to tell folks to straighten up and fly right. But that is not always so.

11:1 The Lord abhors dishonest scales, but accurate weights are his delight (KJV).

The scales were used in Solomon’s time to weigh things when they were bought. Dishonest weights were used to cheat. It is strange to find how many believers believe that they

don't have to follow the rules of fair play. After all, if one is now a "saint," that puts all those others in the uh, "sinner" group. And some would say that we can just ask God to forgive us later. But the fact remains that God's delight is in honest scales and fair dealings no matter of who does them. The same goes for His anger.

11:2 When pride comes, there comes shame, but wisdom is with the quiet in spirit (BBE).

Look through any self-help book and you will seldom find any mention of the subjects of being proud or humble. This leaves us open to the mistakes we are warned about here. When we think of the the proud, we might see a polished, confident, can-do leader who is perhaps coarse or self-centered. We might see the lowly as being likable, but also as pushovers, weak, and unsure. But a lowly person can be able, but have little ego to bruise, and no selfish motives to cover up. Thus, they can have more insight into a problem than the proud. They aren't prone to ending up ashamed, either.

11:3 The righteousness of the upright will be their guide, but the twisted ways of the false will be their destruction (BBE).

A complex decision sometimes seems even more complex if we ask the question, “but is it the right thing to do?” It seems to add something more to think about to what may be an already confusing subject. Allowing ourselves to do evil should make things simpler, right? This verse says no. Those few, fixed rules of right and wrong, in many cases, may be all we need to “guide” us in the best possible way. They also give us the best reason to avoid the other way. Do what is right. Doing wrong will destroy us.

11:4 Wealth is of no profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness keeps a man safe from death (BBE).

In verse 10:2, it says wealth which comes from sin will not help us in the day of wrath. Well what about wealth that comes the right way? Suppose we earn it by working for it? Isn't that better? Yes of course, but it still doesn't help in the day of wrath. This day of wrath is not just the final day of judgment. It also refers to any

time we are tested to the very core of who we are. Even the right pursuit of money can keep us from forming more profound, inner strengths that, in a crises, can decide whether we live or die.

11:5 The righteousness of the good man will make his way straight, but the sin of the evil-doer will be the cause of his fall (BBE).

Whereas verse 11:3 tells us to be honest in our decisions, this verse promises the righteous a directed or a clear path, once the decision is made. The word “straight” refers to a way that is easy to see, pleasant to walk on. It is one that doesn’t have lots of holes or rocks in the way. In effect, the path is easier, not harder, because it is right. But isn’t doing a righteous thing always harder than doing a bad thing? Only sometimes and in the short term, not most of the time.

11:6 The righteousness of the upright will be their salvation, but the false will themselves be taken in their evil designs (BBE).

Cleverness, being able to exploit people, telling lies; all these things are tools that can be used to get us out of trouble. But what a joy to be safe from problems because we told the truth and did the right thing. That place of safety is safe like no other safe place can be. A false person will never get to know about it because in the end, being upright is the only safe place there is.

11:7

At the death of an upright man his hope does not come to an end, but the hope of the evil-doer comes to destruction (BBE).

The word for evil-doer is felt by many to mean a bad person plus their strength and riches (Gill). You see we can do a lot when we have hope. But when our hope is only in our ability to handle things ourselves, we lose that hope when we become weak or grow old. It is painful because that strength was the only thing we had in this world to help us. So our power and our hopes die together. Wise people hope in that one greater than themselves, so that when their strength goes, hope remains.

11:8 The upright man is taken out of trouble, and in his place comes the sinner (BBE).

It is said of King Saul that he “feared David.” It is said of David that he “feared God.” Despite Saul’s cruel pursuit of David, it was Saul who finally died on the battlefield and it was David who sat on the throne. Both were in trouble. Only one got out.

11:9 With his mouth the evil man (most versions: hypocrite) sends destruction on his neighbor; but through knowledge the upright are taken out of trouble (BBE).

Don’t think that spoken words can’t cause big problems. Hypocrites, or liars can destroy people with them. Realize that the hypocrite who destroys his neighbor does the same things he accuses another doing. That is why he is called a hypocrite. But being just and getting the facts, not more lies, is the answer.

11:10 When things go well for the upright man, all the town is glad; at the death of sinners, there are cries of joy (BBE).

It is said that King Herod the Great was so hated that as he got close to dying, he had hundreds of innocent people arrested with orders that they would be executed on the day he died so that there would be mourning. The order was never carried out. But it's too bad that the wicked still teach us a lot. Without the wicked we just don't respect the good like we should. Cities rejoice when the righteous prosper. But they shout for joy at the death of the oppressor.

11:11 By the blessing of the upright man the town is made great, but it is overturned by the mouth of the evil-doer (BBE).

Can simple words destroy an entire town? Aren't towns overthrown by armies climbing over the walls and the like? How full of power words must be, either for good or for ill.

Against this seemingly weak but very powerful weapon is something that looks even weaker. It is God's "blessing" on the upright. One can at least measure words. But how do we measure God's blessing? We can't. Yet these two forces can decide the fate

of many who are not aware of their power.

11:12 He who has a poor opinion of his neighbour has no sense, but a wise man keeps quiet (BBE).

Quarrels between neighbors are as certain as death and taxes, but only because we are foolish. The one who starts the quarrel is the fool here. He has entered a battle without his sword and shield. Wise people make every effort to get along with those close enough to do them great harm. They do this, even if it means keeping silent about minor irritants and insults.

11:13 He who goes about talking of others (lit: gossips) makes secrets public, but the true-hearted man keeps things covered (BBE),

We like to see the telling of a secret, as a change from how we really are. This proverb says no. It says we reveal secrets because we are gossips. This is like other verses that say we lie because we are liars, and we steal because we are thieves. The outward act should warn us of deeper, inner flaws. But if we can keep a secret, it

shows an inner decency for all to see. It is odd that one reason we gossip is because we want to make ourselves look good at another's expense. The odd part is that if we can show others that we can keep a secret, the secret stays hidden, but our goodness does not.

11:14 When there is no helping suggestion the people will have a fall, but with a number of wise guides they will be safe (BBE).

It is no accident that Solomon, the wisest man in the world should tell us to seek advice from someone besides ourselves. Getting advice from many wise folks is even better. No one, not even Solomon, is smart enough all by themselves to think through all of life's problems. Wise people are humble. They know when they have a problem they can't figure out, and will go get help. It's safer that way.

11:15 He who makes himself responsible (or "is a surety," KJV) for a strange man will undergo much loss; but the hater of such undertakings will be safe (BBE).

Surety is when we promise to pay off a debt, rather than just return an item. For example, I might want to buy land and agree to make payments on it until I have paid it all. If I practice surety, the lender can come take the other things I own if I can't make the payments. If I don't practice surety, the land simply goes back to the owner. While surety is a common practice in our modern world, this verse argues it is not a good one. To promise to pay the debts of a stranger is very foolish. To avoid the practice altogether is a "sure" way to avoid trouble.

11:16 A gracious woman retaineth honor, and strong men retain riches (KJV).

Outnumbered and weaker, this woman has the stubborn will to achieve something much better. She shows us that it is not the number or the strength of those in the fight that's vital. But it's about the inner decency and the better goal. Those make us strong. She reminds us how to fight and what to fight for.

11:17 The man who has mercy will be rewarded, but the cruel man is the cause of trouble to himself (BBE).

Most other versions of this verse read the first part as “the merciful man does good to his own soul.” So do I trouble myself? Or do I make time to do good to my own soul? Am I so concerned with meeting the needs of others, am I such a martyr to our own cause, that I can’t spend time renewing the person within? This is not talking about letting ourselves become lazy. Instead, it is about the normal result of a heart filled with mercy. Just what kind of person am I anyway?

11:18 The wicked work a deceitful work; but to Him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward (KJV).

Things get hidden for various reasons. We can steal something and hope to get away with it. We can do something very good and sometimes no one notices. Both are hidden, but one is good and another bad. One is planned, the other just happens. Hide a stolen stereo in the ground and it might not get found. Hide seeds in the ground and they don’t stay hidden; they can’t stay hidden because they sprout after a while. Good works

are like that. They will tell our story for us.

11:19 So righteousness gives life; but he who goes after evil gets death for himself (BBE).

If I watch an Olympic swimmer win first place, I can admire their skill even if I don't swim. This same goes for those who excel in business, government, a profession, a trade, education, or the ministry. In a competing world with fuzzy morals, anyone who gets first place, gets applause.

But the wise know better. They know there are those who defy all logic and chase after evil and destroy themselves. They do this as if it were a race to the finish and a prize to be won.

Don't admire people who do bad things, even if they are good at it.

11:20 The uncontrolled are hated by the Lord, but those whose ways are without error are his delight (BBE).

It is easy to talk too much and not be aware that others find us boring or offensive. People are polite that way. God is polite in the same way. But there is no mystery about how

He feels about things. He has already said what He thinks. He is against the crooked or perverse person and though He loves all of His creations, His delight is in those who are upright or innocent. Some things aren't all that mysterious. Some just wish they were.

11:21 Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished; but the seed (or the children) of the righteous shall be delivered (KJV).

If we are going to do something bad, it's a good idea to do it with other people. It spreads the blame around and, if we get stuck somehow, the others can help us out. We can even train our kids to do the same rotten things we do and hope for their help when we need it. Even so, this verse says they'll get punished anyway. Righteous people get trapped in things too and sometimes have to ask for help. The one who saves them also saves their children, sometimes even if it's only for the sake of the parents. That's better.

11:21 Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished; but the seed

(or the children) of the righteous shall be delivered (KJV).

Both the righteous and the wicked can find themselves trapped in things that they would like to escape from. The wicked hope their wickedness plus their wicked friends and family are the way out. They have allies they can see. The righteous, on the other hand, may sometimes find themselves alone in their struggles. But they are only as alone as their doubts will let them be. For although God is unseen, He is almighty and He doesn't forget us. He doesn't forget our children either.

11:22 Like a ring of gold in the nose of a pig, is a beautiful woman who has no sense (BBE).

Just as a man may rely on his muscle to help him in life, so a woman may want to rely on her good looks to help make her way. In a world that honors beauty over brains, it is easy for her to try to be pretty and forget the good sense that she really needs. Then the jewel of beauty adorns a life that is ugly.

11:23 The desire of the upright man is only for good, but wrath is waiting for the evil-doer (BBE).

It is not what happens now that is vital. It is what happens later. It is the fate of the man, the close of the speech, the end of the trail that means the most. The brief triumph of evil passes. The desire of flawed, but upright people to do good is achieved. The reward of both is without doubt.

11:24 A man may give freely, and still his wealth will be increased; and another may keep back more than is right, but only comes to be in need (BBE).

Let's follow the logic here. I have ten dollars and I give away one dollar. That leaves me with um, nine. But this verse says maybe not. I might give away one dollar for a good cause to someone who needs it. I now have uh, eleven? Yes, Even though it doesn't seem to make sense, the risk of losing our wealth is greater when we hold onto it, than when we "give freely" the "right" amount. The poor like this verse because they like to think that it tells the rich to give without limits. But this verse urges all

to give an amount that is right. The rest is ours to spend as we like.

11:25 The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself (KJV).

Where the last verse asks us to give what we have to avoid poverty, this verse suggests the amount of our giving. It says the “liberal” or generous soul that satisfies the needs of others will also be satisfied. Food and water are the examples here. One will satisfy. The other, like good news from afar (ch 25, vs 25), will refresh, but they apply to broader things.

11:26 He who keeps back grain will be cursed by the people; but a blessing will be on the head of him who lets them have it for a price (BBE)

Isn't what I have mine to control? Yes it is! Does anyone have the right to tell me what to do with my own food? No, not really. Is there some law that says I have to give away what I went out and earned? Nope. Don't people who get themselves into their own mess need to get themselves out? Generally, yeah. Can't I hold onto my goods until I can sell them at the best

price? Wait a minute. Being kind to the poor may mean more than just giving. Giving often tells the receiver s/he is supposed to give something back. Selling something, in a humane way, frees the buyer from having to return the favor. So in some ways, it is more generous.

11:27 He who, with all his heart (many trans: dillegently), goes after what is good is searching for grace; but he who is looking for trouble will get it (BBE).

The greeting of the Master on the final day is “Well done thou good and faithful servant” (Matt 25:21). The person who tries to be good without having to work at it for awhile, impresses nobody, not even God Himself. Being diligent means we work at something, well diligently. We get up and try again, even if our past attempts at being good failed. Goodness, like any skill, improves with time and practice. When achieved, it comes with the favor of both a joyful heaven and a shocked world.

11:28 He that trusts in his riches shall fall, but the righteous shall flourish as a branch.

Riches and doing right often compete against each other for our hearts. Which one do we want to place our hopes in; the bank account with all those numbers that we can see, or something we can't see? And if doing right offers some advantage, suppose we are not as righteous as we could be? Suppose we are righteous only sometimes, not all the time? So riches often wins in that contest for our trust. But only one is stuck to a tree. That's why the righteous, or those trying to be righteous, flourish as a branch. They are strong because they pull that strength from something bigger than they are. So the real question then, is not what we did or wish we had. The question is, what have we grown attached to?

11:29 The troubler of his house will have the wind for his heritage

Households find their trouble sent to them from many quarters; money, jobs, poor grades at school and the like. We can't stop those from coming. But we can keep from creating problems within the four walls of our house. These are the problems we have control over. It is possible

to “trouble” those closest to us now in an unfair way, in order to get our point across or whatever, and not realize the disaster we can “inherit” later.

11:29 . . . and the foolish will be servant to the wise-hearted (BBE).

Servant hood or slavery were clear reminders of rank and status in the ancient world. Servants served in households for years, sometimes for a lifetime based on various agreements they could make. Some believed that there were those who were just born to be slaves; their lack of brains didn’t allow them to be something better. Surprise! Being wise had a power that was greater than the most rigid social barriers of that day or any day.

11:30 The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise (KJV).

If we were a kings or queens, we would find that it is common for a ruler to demand that their subjects to obey them, sometimes out of guilt and often out of fear. But we would also find that it is wiser, even if it is harder, to inspire people to obey us, The reason it is wiser is that, when

people obey from the heart, they do more. The reason it is harder is because to win their soul, we must become a better person ourselves. We have to live up to the lofty things we talk about. Or, as the other part of this verse talks about, they must taste the good fruit of our being upright to know that the tree is good too. As believers, it is possible to demand that other people believe as we do. But it is wiser to inspire it. We can do this by being kind, considerate, patient and the like. We have to practice a faith that entices people, so that we can say, "oh taste as see that the Lord is good."

11:31 If the upright man is rewarded on earth, how much more the evil-doer and the sinner (BBE)!

There are a fair amount of believers who really feel that we have to wait until we get to heaven before we get to enjoy the rewards of serving the Lord. This is simply not true. Life is not always a matter of just hanging on by the skin of our teeth until we hear those pearly gates click behind us. Everything here is not just drudgery and self-denial. Not all the evil waits until Judgment Day to be punished.

There is great joy in following the Lord now. It is possible to have justice now. Neither are we free to just throw up our hands, give up and wait for the Lord's return. Sometimes the head must remind the heart that these things are so.

12:1 Whoso loveth instruction loveth knowledge, but he that hateth reproof is brutish.

To love being taught, means something far different than just sitting happily in a classroom while a teacher tells us where Brazil is. Solomon says that knowledge can only come when we are willing to be corrected or disciplined. That is the broader meaning of the term "instruction" here. And we must "love" it, even when it hurts. We are in danger when we resent being told we are wrong. We risk becoming "brutish." The Hebrew word comes from the root word "to graze" and suggests an animal, like a cow, happily grazing on a hill, who has no idea where hamburgers and leather purses come from.

12:2 A good man has grace in the eyes of the Lord; but the man of evil designs gets punishment from him (BBE).

It is common to say in church circles that we can't earn our way to Heaven, and this is true. It has to be our faith in Him, not our efforts, that gets us on the list and through the door. The problem comes when He doesn't see an emerging goodness in us afterwards. Then it is hard for us to enjoy His grace or His favor. The Almighty has always had a problem when those who don't pretend to follow Him do more good things than those who say they do.

12:3

No man will make himself safe through evil-doing; but the root of upright men will never be moved (BBE).

We look for things in the world that we can count on. We try something, anything, even though its been done before and some have failed. Some have a secret, of course. If we can't get what they want the right way, we can always cheat. After all, even good people get hammered. Being righteous sure doesn't protect us from problems. But cut down the righteous and they still have roots. The righteous can bloom again. Cheaters don't.

12:4 A woman of virtue is a crown to her husband; but she whose behaviour is a cause of shame is like a wasting disease in his bones (BBE).

It is said that a woman sets the emotional climate of a home. If so, then it's the husband that sets the moral climate, both in courtship and in marriage. And it's to his advantage to set a high one for both of them to follow. It's not that she can't be moral by herself. It's just harder for her to do so when she allows him to be the leader. If he is smart, he leads the union with fairness and honesty, because a "virtuous" wife, or a wife who also conducts herself with fairness and honesty becomes a crown of honor to himself. She tells the world he can rule. He is not ashamed to have her say it.

12:5 The thoughts of the righteous are right, but the counsels of the wicked are deceit (KJV).

The world tells us to get advice from smart people. This verse says to get advice from good people. A good person may sometimes think bad thoughts, but a wicked person turns bad thoughts into guiding principles. And, there is generally no waiting for

their advice. A wise person will go find someone with integrity and will ask them for their thoughts. They won't deceive. Their thoughts will be right.

12:6 The words of the wicked are to lie and wait for innocent blood; but the mouth of the upright shall deliver them (KJV).

“It is only as we overcome our Christian heritage that we can build the Third Reich.” A. Hitler

It's awful to think of someone hiding behind a rock with a gun, not to rob, but to kill an innocent victim. Some words are like that. For those who value “book larning” it is good to know that among the many things that are good to know, there are also a few terrible lies that are written by people with terrible motives. A wise student looks for them and avoids them. A righteous person speaks out against them.

12:7 Evil-doers are overturned and never seen again, but the house of upright men will keep its place (BBE).

In Psalms 37 David saw the house of the wicked King Saul spreading like a green bay tree. Later David

couldn't find them, even when he really looked. But when David died, his house remained, but not because it was tranquil, and not because the people within it didn't have flaws. David loved doing right and was honest about his sins. Thus, the house stands.

12:8 A man will be praised in the measure of his wisdom, but a wrong-minded man (or of a perverse heart, KJV) will be looked down on (BBE).

Being wise sounds boring and telling really gross jokes seems cool. The problem is, that while the perverse are good for a few laughs, the world tires of them quickly and then despises them greatly. Hollywood doesn't know this yet. But there are those who are commended because they honor God, are fair, show mercy and can keep their promises. They use their limited time, money and energy wisely; for good and not for evil. After awhile, there is no comparison.

12:9 He who is of low position and has a servant, is better than one who has a high opinion of himself and is in need of bread (BBE).

Or, “Better is a poor man who provides for himself, than a noble man who lacks bread” (Adam Clarke). Or, better is a poor man who can handle his money than a rich man who can’t. This verse shows us the problem of the those who can’t do common work because they deserve better. The idea of what we deserve to have and what we are too proud to do can trap us if we aren’t careful. There’s nothing wrong with flippin’ burgers to pay the bills and buying only those things we can afford. The wise allow a humble paycheck to create a humble heart. That heart is free.

12:10

An upright man has thought for the life of his beast, but the hearts of evil-doers are cruel (BBE).

Most translate the second half of this verse as, “but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.” Moses required Israel to rest their oxen on the sabbath, along with themselves. He did this because righteous people are also merciful people and a good measure of just how righteous they are is the mercy they show. This goes even down to our animals.

The wicked, who see the righteous reaping the benefits of being kind, can give it a try. But this is where they discover that the evil that has helped them has also trapped them. They are still cruel, even when they don't want to be.

12:11 He who does work on his land will not be short of bread; but he who goes after foolish men is without sense (BBE).

Certainly in a world that could put a man on the moon, there must be a modern alternative to sweat, hard work, and having to do boring, thankless routines. Rarely, however, can something take the place of hard work. That's how we are fed. To allow someone to tell us otherwise, and to then follow them shows more than some confusion on the subject. It shows we just don't have any common sense.

12:12 The wicked desireth the net of evil men, but the root of the righteous yieldeth fruit (KJV).

People who steal from others also steal from each other. Then, what is quickly gained can be just as quickly lost. That's one of the main problems

of being thieves. In contrast, plants must be uh, planted, then cultivated, watered, and looked after. It takes time. Farmers may worry that after all their hard work, will those roots produce? The righteous may worry that if they don't cheat at what they do, will they still get results? This verse assures them that yes they will, no matter which field they choose to work in.

12:13 In the sin of the lips is a net which takes the sinner, but the upright man will come out of trouble (BBE).

Just people do not give themselves the same freedom to speak that others enjoy. They don't distort facts, tear down good leaders, accuse without good reason, or pass on gossip. Instead, they choose their words well. They know that sometimes the one factor that decides whether one gets out of a problem or remains trapped in it can boil down to nothing more than just the words they say.

12:14 From the fruit of his mouth will a man have good food in full measure, and the work of a man's hands will be rewarded (BBE).

Looking at other versions, the sense of this verse is this. We will be filled up or deeply satisfied when we say good things and are rewarded for what we do. Hmm. Thinking of Solomon's day when farming was the way most earned their living, simple logic says that the reward for doing something should be greater than the reward for just saying something, shouldn't it? Perhaps, but the reward for words that heal, reconcile, bring hope and courage, that forgive and understand, is very great. That "fruit of the mouth", like some fruit tree, may need to be cultivated for awhile.

12:15

The way of the foolish man seems right to him? but the wise man gives ear to suggestions (BBE).

Our society values the "independent thinker." These people, without help from anyone else and against all odds, go against the flow, do great things and are proven right in the end. But that is more fantasy than being real. Most of us need advice from time to time to know which way to go. It is a sign of being wise, not of being weak or dumb, to ask for it.

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