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PROVERBS

An Introduction

The term “Proverbs,” which could also be translated “similies” or “parables,” is used in this book more generally to include various other types of short, pithy statements as well. Although this book has a clear order, and proverbs are sometimes grouped by subject matter, each proverb generally stands on its own and is without context. So, proverbs are timeless words of wise men showing the way to conduct one’s life, both in terms of what is right and what is prudent. Hence, the Book of Proverbs is the best example of wisdom literature in the Old Testament.

Wisdom sayings are markedly practical, rather than abstract or theoretical. Since the focus is about everyday life, the scope of subjects treated is rather wide. The authors of the Book of Proverbs did not concern themselves much with overtly sacred or religious matters, but that in no way diminishes the religious character of this book. There is a distinct optimism about the world and its workings, because they believed that God is always in control. Because of this, the reader is assured repeatedly that he will reap what he has sown (compare Gal. 6:7-8). God cannot be left out of the picture, because knowledge and wisdom begin with reverence for Yahweh (Prov. 1:7; 9:10). Numerous passages from Proverbs are reflected in the New Testament and are otherwise well known, but perhaps the most beautiful section is the classical Old Testament description of ideal womanhood in Prov. 31:10-31.

King Solomon who is known to have spoken 3,000 proverbs (1 Kings 4:32) is the principal author of this book, but others, both anonymous and identified, also have their maxims included. Proverbs reached its final form well beyond Solomon’s day. Work was still being done on it in Hezekiah’s time (Prov. 25:1), and it is generally thought that its final editing occurred just after the return from the Babylonian exile.

The Purpose of Proverbs

1¹These are the wise words^a of Solomon,^b the son of David, the king of Israel:

²They teach wisdom and self-control, giving true understanding.

a **1:1** or, “the proverbs”. The Hebrew word is *mashal*. The term can mean: “a (popular) saying” (1 Sam. 10:12), “an adage”; “a maxim”; “a precept”; “a principle”; “an aphorism”; “a truism”; “a motto”; “a moral”; “an axiom”; “a dictum”; “a (concentrated) parable”; “an oracle”; “a comparison”; “a simile”; “an allegory”; “an analogy”; or “a riddle”.

b **1:1** Compare 1 Kings 4:30-32; Prov. 10:1; 25:1; Eccl. 1:1; Song of Songs 1:1.

³They will teach you how to be smart and self-controlled, whatever is honest and fair and right. ⁴To those who have only a little knowledge^c they give the ability to think—knowledge and good sense to inexperienced young people.^d ⁵A wise person should also listen to them and learn even more. Even very intelligent people will find prudent

c **1:4** = naiveté

d **1:4** those who are easily misled (Prov. 7:7; 8:5; 9:6; 14:18; 27:12)

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advice in these words. ⁶Then they will be able to understand wise words—interpreting the words of wise men and their hidden meanings.

Advice to Young Men

⁷True knowledge^a begins with reverence^b for the Always-Present One.^c But foolish people^d hate wisdom and self-control.

a 1:7 not merely scientific knowledge or moral philosophy, but piety toward God. We should know what we owe to God, as well as what He requires of us. True wisdom has its origin in God, and whoever reveres God will receive wisdom, if he prays for it with faith (James 1:5-8).

b 1:7 or, “deep respect”. See Ps. 111:10; Prov. 9:10; Eccl. 12:13.

c 1:7 literally, “Yahweh” (sometimes spelled “Jehovah,” or the shortened form, “Yah” or “Jah.”) This is the personal and covenant Name which God Himself chose to be known by. See Exo. 3:14-15; 6:3. The meaning is associated with the eternal existence of God. The Name seems to suggest the timelessness of God, the very Foundation of all existence. Perhaps there is a hint of this in Rev. 1:4, “... from the One who is, who was, and who will be ...” Jesus probably alluded to this in John 8:58, “Before Abraham was, I AM.” Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:8). Since the original Hebrew text had only consonants, this sacred Name (called “the tetragrammaton,” 4 letters) was YHWH. No one can be sure of the original pronunciation. Because ancient Jewish people thought that the Name of God was too holy to be uttered (Deut. 28:58), and because they were afraid of violating Exo. 20:7 and Lev. 24:16, they routinely substituted the Hebrew word for “Lord” (*Adonay*) for YHWH. That custom is still being practiced today. This is the reason for the traditional “LORD” (with small capital letters). This Name occurs more than 6,000 times in the Old Testament. See the full implications of the meaning of this divine Name in Exo. 33:18-20; 34:6-7; Num. 14:18; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2.

d 1:7 = those who are morally deficient, incorrigible (Prov. 27:22) and completely indifferent to God (Jer. 4:22)

⁸My child,^e listen to your father’s instruction. And, do not forget your mother’s teaching. ⁹Why? Because that will make your life beautiful.^f It will be like a chain for your neck.

¹⁰My child, sinners will try to lead you into sin.^g But don’t follow them.

¹¹They might say: “Come with us.^h Let us ambush and kill somebody! Let’s attack some innocent person just for fun. ¹²Let’s swallow them alive, as deathⁱ does. Let’s swallow them whole, as the grave does. ¹³We will take all kinds of valuable things. We will fill our houses with whatever we steal. ¹⁴Come, join us, and, whatever we steal, we will share with you!” ¹⁵My child, don’t go along with them. Don’t do what they do.

¹⁶They run to do evil. They are quick to kill. ¹⁷It is useless to spread out a net right where the birds can see it!

¹⁸These men are setting their own trap. They will only catch themselves! ¹⁹So, all robbers will end up this way. Greed takes away the life of the robber.

²⁰Wisdom is like a good woman who shouts in the street. She raises her voice in the public squares. ²¹She

e 1:8 literally, “My son,” spoken affectionately, as by a wise old man

f 1:9 literally, “for they (are) a beautiful wreath for your head.”

g 1:10 Compare 1 Cor. 15:33.

h 1:11 The peer pressure of street gangs gives a strong (but false) sense of belonging.

i 1:12 Hebrew: *Sheol* = the grave

cries out in the noisy streets. She makes her speech at the city gates:

²²“O you simple-minded people!^a How long will you love to stay naïve? How long will you scorners make fun of wisdom? How long will you fools hate knowledge?²³ Listen up! Turn back when I warn you. I will tell you what is in My heart. I’ll tell you what I’m thinking.²⁴ I called, but you refused to listen. I held out My hand, but you paid no attention.²⁵ You would not follow any of My advice. You did not want Me to correct you.²⁶ I too will laugh when you get into trouble.^b I will make fun when disaster happens to you.²⁷ Disaster will come over you like a storm. Trouble will strike you like a whirlwind. Pain and misery will overwhelm you.

²⁸“Then you will call out to Me, but I will not answer. You will look for Me early on, but you will not find Me.²⁹ Since you rejected knowledge, you did not choose to revere the Always-Present One.³⁰ You never accepted My advice. You rejected all My correction.³¹ So, you will get exactly what you deserve. You will receive what you planned for

others.³² Simple-minded people wander away and get killed. Fools will be destroyed, because they are complacent.³³ But those who listen to Me will live in peace. They will be safe, without any fear of being hurt.”

Accept Wisdom

2¹My child, believe what I say. And, remember what I command you.² Listen to wisdom. Try with all your heart to obtain understanding.³ Cry out for insight. Beg for understanding.^c ⁴Search for it as you would search for silver. Hunt for it like hidden treasure.^d ⁵Then you will understand what it means to revere the Always-Present One. Then you will begin to know God.⁶ Only the Always-Present One gives wisdom. Knowledge and understanding come from Him.⁷ He stores up a treasure of common sense for those who are honest. Like a shield, He protects those who have integrity.⁸ He guards those who are fair to others. He protects those who follow Him.

⁹Then you will understand what is honest and fair and right. You will understand what is the good thing to do.¹⁰ You will have wisdom in your heart. And, knowledge will be pleasing to you.¹¹ Good sense^e will

a 1:22 those who have no moral direction and who are simplistically inclined to do wrong

b 1:26 These words should *not* be construed to mean that God is cynically indifferent to human condemnation. But, when people have no remorse, there is no recourse (Matt. 25:10,30).

c 2:3 = common sense

d 2:4 Compare Matt. 13:44.

e 2:11 = discretion; sound judgment; wise choices

protect you. Understanding will watch over you.

¹²It will keep you from doing evil. It will save you from individuals whose words are twisted. ¹³Such people abandon what is right. They do what is evil. ¹⁴They enjoy doing wrong. They are happy to do what is crooked and evil. ¹⁵What they do is perverse. Their ways are dishonest.

¹⁶Wisdom will save you from a sexually immoral woman, from the wayward wife with her seductive words. ¹⁷Such women leave the husbands whom they married when they were young. She forgets the vow that she made in the presence of God.^a ¹⁸If you go to her house, then you are on your way to death! What she does leads to death.^b ¹⁹No one who goes to her comes back. He will **not** continue to live.

²⁰But wisdom will help you to be a good person. It will help you to do what is right. ²¹Those who are honest will stay in the land.^c Those with integrity will remain in it. ²²But evil people will be removed from the

a 2:17 = the wedding vow to be faithful to her husband. Compare Exo. 20:14; Ezek. 16:8; Mal. 2:14-15.

b 2:18 Hebrew: *repha'im* = the shadows (which refers to the departed spirits of the grave). Compare Job 26:5; Ps. 88:10-11; Prov. 9:18; 21:16; Isa. 26:14,19.

c 2:21 = originally, the promised land, but symbolic of the pious path to heaven itself (Heb. 3:11,18,19; 4:1,3,5,6,8-11). Compare Gen. 17:8; Deut. 4:1; Ps. 37:29; Matt. 5:5.

land. The treacherous ones will be rooted out of it.

More Advice to Young Men

3¹My child, never forget my teaching. Keep my commands in mind. ²Then you will live a long time. And, your life will be successful.

³Don't ever stop being kind and truthful. Let those qualities show in everything you do.^d Write them down on the tablet of your heart. ⁴Then you will be respected and be praised by both God and people.

⁵Trust in the Always-Present One with all your heart. Don't depend on your own understanding. ⁶Remember God in everything you do. And, He will give you success.

⁷Don't depend on your own wisdom. Revere the Always-Present One and refuse to do wrong. ⁸Then your body will be healthy.^e And, your bones will be strong.

⁹Show honor to the Always-Present One by giving Him part of your belongings. Give Him back the first-fruits from all your crops. ¹⁰Then your barns will be full. And, your wine barrels will overflow with new wine.

¹¹My child, do not reject the

d 3:3 literally, "Bind them around your neck" (like a talisman). Compare 1 Pet. 3:3-4.

e 3:8 literally, "It will be a healing to your navel" (= umbilical cord, the source of life)" Here the Hebrew word *shar* stands for the entire body.

Always-Present One's discipline. And, don't resent it when He corrects you. ¹²The Always-Present One disciplines the one whom He loves, just as a father corrects the child that he likes.^a

¹³Happy is the person who finds wisdom. And, happy is the person who obtains understanding.

¹⁴Wisdom is worth more than silver. It brings more profit than pure gold.

¹⁵Wisdom is more precious than rubies. Nothing that you could desire is equal to it. ¹⁶With her right hand, wisdom offers you a long life. With her left hand she gives you riches and honor.

¹⁷Wisdom will make your life pleasant. It will bring you peace. ¹⁸Just as a tree produces fruit, wisdom brings happiness to those who embrace it. Everyone who holds onto wisdom will be happy.

¹⁹Using His wisdom,^b the Always-Present One made the earth. Using His understanding, He set the sky in place.^c ²⁰Using His knowledge, He caused the deep fountains to flow. And, He made the clouds drop rain onto the earth.

²¹My child, hold onto common sense and reason. Hang onto them!

²²They will give you life. Like

a necklace, they will make your life beautiful. ²³Then you will go on your way in peace. And, you will not get hurt. ²⁴You won't need to be afraid when you lie down. When you lie down, your sleep will be peaceful.

²⁵You won't need to be afraid of any sudden disaster, or the ruination of evil people. It will come! ²⁶But the Always-Present One will keep you safe. He will keep you from being trapped.

²⁷Whenever you are able, do good to people who need help. ²⁸If you already have what your neighbor is asking for, don't say to him: "Come back later. I will give it to you tomorrow."

²⁹Don't make plans to hurt your neighbor. He lives nearby, and he trusts you. ³⁰Don't accuse a person without cause, when he has not harmed you.

³¹Don't be jealous of men who use violence. And, don't choose to be like them. ³²Why? Because the Always-Present One is disgusted with those who do wrong.^d But God is a Friend to those who are honest.

³³The Always-Present One will put a curse on an evil person's house. But, He will bless the home of

a 3:12 See Heb. 12:5-6. The Greek Septuagint (LXX) adds: "And he punishes those whom He accepts as his children."

b 3:19 See Prov. 8:22-31; John 1:3; Col. 1:16.

c 3:19 Compare Isa. 42:5; 51:16.

d 3:32 literally, "for the perverse man (is) an abomination to Yahweh." An abomination is defined as something so repulsive to God that it must be totally eliminated some day by the moral order of the God's universe.

people who do what is right. ³⁴The Always-Present One laughs at those who laugh at Him. But He is kind to humble people.^a ³⁵Wise people will receive honor. But foolish people will be disgraced.

The Benefits of Wisdom

4¹My children, listen to your father's instruction. Pay attention, so that you will learn good judgment. ²I am giving you sound learning. Don't forget what I teach you. ³I, Solomon, was once a little boy in my father's house.^b I was like an only child to my mother. ⁴And, my father taught me, saying to me: "Hold onto my words with all your heart. Obey my commands, and you will live. ⁵Get wisdom and get understanding. Don't forget or ignore my words. ⁶If you don't abandon wisdom, then she will protect you. Love her, and she will keep you safe. ⁷Wisdom is the most important thing. So, get wisdom! Even if it costs everything you have,^c get good judgment! ⁸Regard wisdom as very valuable, and she will make you great. Hug her, and she will bring honor to you. ⁹Like wearing flowers in your hair,

a 3:34 See James 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5.

b 4:3 literally, "when I was a tender son with my father." King David gave special instruction about his young son, Solomon (1 Chr. 22:5; 29:1; Ps. 34:11). And, Solomon was God's child of promise (2 Sam. 7:12-13; 1 Chr. 22:9).

c 4:7 Compare Matt. 13:45-46; Luke 10:42.

she will make your life beautiful. Like a crown,^d she will make you look gorgeous."

¹⁰My child, listen, and accept what I say. Then you will have a long life.^e

¹¹I am guiding you in wisdom. And, I am leading you to do what is right.

¹²Nothing will hold you back! You will advance. ¹³Always remember what you have been taught. Don't let go of it! Guard it. Why? Because that

is the most important thing in your life. ¹⁴Don't follow the path of the evil people. Don't do what bad people do. ¹⁵Avoid their ways. Don't go near what they do! Stay away from them and keep on going. ¹⁶They cannot sleep until they do evil. They cannot rest until they make somebody fall.

¹⁷They fill themselves with cruelty, and drink the wine of violence.

¹⁸But the path of righteous people is like the first light of dawn. It shines brighter and brighter until it is full daylight. ¹⁹The path of evil people is like thick darkness. They can't even see what has hurt them.

²⁰My child, pay attention to my words. Listen closely to what I say. ²¹Don't ever forget my words. Keep them deep within your heart. ²²Why? Because these words are

d 4:9 = the dignity of true wisdom. Compare Heb. 2:9; 2 Tim. 4:8; 1 Pet. 4:4; Rev. 2:20.

e 4:10 literally, "that the years of your life (will be) multiplied." King Solomon did *not* live very long, because he didn't follow his own advice!

the key to life for those who find them. They bring health to a person's whole body.²³ Above all else, be very careful about what you think.^a Your thoughts control your life.^b ²⁴Don't use your mouth to tell lies. Don't ever say things that are not true.²⁵ Keep your eyes focused on what is right. Keep looking straight ahead to what is good.²⁶ Be careful what you do. Always do what is right.²⁷ Don't get off the right track. Stay away from evil!

Warnings against Sexual Sin

S¹My child, pay attention to my wisdom. Listen to my words of understanding.² Be careful to use good sense. Watch what you say.³ The words of another man's wife^c may seem as sweet as honey. Her mouth may be as alluring as olive oil.⁴ But, in the end, she will bring you sorrow.^d She is as sharp as a two-

a 4:23 literally, "carefully guard your heart." The Hebrew word for "heart" means "the mind" = the center of intelligence, emotions, and the human will. So, every action, purpose, and one's entire attitude is determined by *what* a person really thinks and believes. See Prov. 23:7a. Compare Philp. 4:8.

b 4:23 literally, "for out of it (are) the outgoings (= well-spring, the source) of life." Compare Matt. 12:34-35; 15:19; Mark 7:21-23.

c 5:3 literally, "an immoral woman"

d 5:4 literally, "she (is as) bitter as gall (= poison)." Another translation is "wormwood" (Deut. 29:18; Jer. 9:15; Lam. 3:15,19; Amos 5:7; 6:12; Heb. 12:15). Especially see Rev. 8:10-11. It comes from a bitter-tasting shrub which produces absinthe (compare the Latin Vulgate and Aquila's Greek translation); it is a medicine that is used for deworming.

edged sword.⁵ She is on the way to death!^e Her steps are headed straight to the grave.⁶ She gives no thought to worthy goals in life. She does not realize that her ways are wrong.

⁷Now, my sons, listen to me. Don't ignore what I say.⁸ Stay far away from such a woman! Don't even go near the door of her house!⁹ If you do, then you will give away your vitality to others. And, the best years of your life will be given to someone who is cruel.^f ¹⁰Strangers will enjoy your wealth. And, what you've worked so hard for will go to someone else.¹¹ You will groan at the end of your life. Then your health will be gone.⁸ ¹²Then you will say: "I hated discipline! I wouldn't listen when I was corrected.¹³ I would not listen to my teachers. I paid no attention to what they taught me.¹⁴ I have come very close to being completely ruined in front of the whole assembly and the community."^h

¹⁵Be faithful to your own wife.ⁱ She is like your own well of fresh water.¹⁶ (You would not drink from streams

e 5:5 literally, "Her feet go down (to) death" (= leading to a fatal end). Syphilis and AIDS are usually acquired through illicit sexual contacts.

f 5:9 probably referring to a merciless creditor

g 5:11 literally, "when your flesh and muscles are consumed." Compare 1 Cor. 6:18.

h 5:14 = facing public disgrace

i 5:15 literally, "Drink water from your own cistern." = She is your sole source of pleasure. See Prov. 5:18; Song of Songs 4:12; 1 Thes. 4:4; 1 Pet. 3:7.

flowing in the city streets or in the public squares.)^a ¹⁷These things are yours alone. Don't share them with strangers. ¹⁸May your wife be happy. Find your joy in the one you married when you were young. ¹⁹She is as lovely as a deer and graceful as a doe. May her breasts always satisfy you. May you always be captivated by her love. ²⁰My son, don't be infatuated by a sexually immoral woman. Don't caress the bosom of a promiscuous woman.

²¹The Always-Present One sees everything you do.^b He watches wherever you go. ²²An evil man will be caught in his evil ways. The ropes of his own sins will tie him up. ²³He will die because he cannot control himself. He will be led astray by his own foolishness (which was huge).

Warnings against Laziness and Falsehood

6¹My child, don't put up a guarantee for someone else's debt. Don't promise to pay for what somebody else owes.^c ²You might

a 5:16 This verse absolutely opposes indiscriminate sexual relations outside of the holy bonds of marriage. A faithful wife's true love is reserved only for her husband.

b 5:21 literally, "for a man's ways (are) in front of the eyes of (= in full view of) Yahweh." God is omniscient. See Joseph's spiritual perspective in Gen. 39:9. Compare Job 31:4; 34:21; Prov. 15:3; 2 Chr. 16:9; Hos. 7:2; Jer. 16:17; Heb. 4:13.

c 6:1 literally, "if you strike your hands with a stranger" = co-signing a neighbor's bank note; that is, shaking hands to seal the deal (Prov. 17:18; Ezek.

get trapped by what you yourself say. You might be caught by your own words. ³My child, you might have already done this and gotten yourself under somebody else's control. If so, then here is how to get yourself released from that obligation: Go to your neighbor and humble yourself concerning this transaction. Beg him to set you free from your guarantee.^d ⁴Don't go to sleep. Don't even rest your eyes. ⁵Free yourself, like a deer running from a hunter. Set yourself free from a trapper, like a bird escaping.

⁶Go, look at the ants,^e you lazy person! Watch what they do,^f and be wise. ⁷Ants have no commander over them. They have no leader or ruler. ⁸Yet they store up their food during the summer. They gather their supplies at harvest-time.

⁹How long will you lie there, you lazy one?^g When will you ever get up from sleeping!? ¹⁰You sleep a little; you take a nap. You fold your hands to rest. ¹¹That's how your poverty will pounce on you like a bandit! You will have nothing left, as if you had been mugged.

17:18). Also compare Job 17:3; Prov. 11:15; 17:18; 20:16; 22:26-27; Neh. 5:3-5; Matt. 18:23-25.

d 6:3 literally, "and be bold (to) your neighbor." = getting your name removed from that bank loan

e 6:6 See Prov. 30:25.

f 6:6 that is, observe how industrious and thrifty these insects are

g 6:9 Compare Prov. 24:30-31.

¹²Some people are evil and just plain no good. They go around telling lies. ¹³They wink with their eyes and signal^a with their feet. They make signs^b with their fingers.^c ¹⁴They make evil plans in their perverted hearts. They are always stirring up trouble. ¹⁵So, disaster will strike them in an instant. Suddenly, they will be shattered beyond a cure.

¹⁶There are six things that the Always-Present One hates; and there are seven things which are disgusting to Him:^d

- ¹⁷a proud look;
- a lying tongue;
- hands that kill innocent people;
- ¹⁸a mind that thinks up evil plans;
- feet that are quick to do evil;
- ¹⁹a false witness who tells lies
in court under oath;
- and one who causes trouble
among brothers.

²⁰My child, keep your father's commands. Don't abandon your mother's teaching. ²¹Remember those words forever.^e Let it be as if

they were tied around your neck. ²²They will guide you when you walk. They will guard you while you sleep. They will speak to you when you are awake. ²³Their commands are like a lamp.^f This teaching is like a light. And, the corrections which teach you self-control will help you to have a fulfilling life. ²⁴Such instruction will keep you away from sinful women, and from the persuasive words of an unfaithful wife.^g ²⁵Don't lust in your heart for her so-called "beauty." Don't let her captivate you by the special way she looks at you.^h ²⁶Why? Because a prostitute will reduce you to poverty. And, a woman who participates in adultery will cost you your life! ²⁷You cannot carry hot coals against your chestⁱ without burning your clothes. ²⁸And, you cannot walk on hot coals without burning your feet. ²⁹It is just as dangerous if you have sex with another man's wife. Anyone who does that will be punished. ³⁰People don't despise^j a thief when he steals food because he is so hungry.

a 6:13 literally, "scrape" = tapping

b 6:13 or, "point"; "gesture"

c 6:13 All of these "secret" ways of communicating (Prov. 10:10; 16:30) against their victims describe underhanded deceivers who concealed their true intentions. Compare Prov. 26:23-26.

d 6:16 literally, "to His soul". This literary style of poetry is also used in Prov. 30:15,18,29; Job 5:19; and Amos 1-2.

e 6:21 literally, "Always bind them upon your heart."

f 6:23 See Ps. 119:105.

g 6:24 literally, "from the smooth tongue of a strange woman"; that is, a wayward wife = a loose, promiscuous woman. See Prov. 7:5-27.

h 6:25 literally, "with her eyelashes" = the definition of flirting for the purpose of seduction. Jezebel painted her eyes (2 Kings 9:30).

i 6:27 literally, "Can a man carry fire in his bosom!?" (No.)

j 6:30 = They excuse such because they understand the deep-set motive.

³¹Nevertheless, if he is caught, he must pay back seven times more than what he stole.^a It would cost him everything he owns!³²A man who is involved in adultery doesn't have any sense. He will only destroy himself!^b ³³He will be beaten up and disgraced. And, his disgrace will never go away.^c ³⁴Jealousy makes a husband very angry. When he gets even, he will show no mercy.³⁵He will accept no payment for the wrong. He will take no money—no matter how much it is!

A Prostitute's Trap

7¹My child, remember what I say. Treasure up my commands within you. ²Obey my commands, and you will live. Protect my teaching as you would protect your own eyes.^d ³Remind yourself of them.^e Record

a 6:31 See Exo. 22:1-4,9.

b 6:32 The one who commits adultery is committing spiritual suicide.

c 6:33 literally, "will not be wiped away." = It will be permanent. Note Amnon's disgrace after raping his half-sister, Tamar (2 Sam. 13:13,22).

d 7:2 literally, "as the little apple (= the pupil) of your eyes."

e 7:3 literally, "Tie them on your fingers." Though it could be an inscription on a ring, several scholars think that it refers to the *tephillin* (phylacteries (Matt. 23:5)). Not only were these little leather boxes worn on the forehead, but they were worn on the hand. These boxes were filled with tiny strips of parchment containing these four Biblical passages: Exo. 13:1-10,11-16; Deut. 6:4-9; 11:13-21. A box was attached to a leather strap which was wound seven times around the forearm, three times around the middle finger, and the remainder was around the hand.

them in your mind as if it were on a tablet. ⁴Say to Wisdom: "You are my sister." Make Understanding a member of your family. ⁵Wisdom and Understanding will keep you away from the sexually immoral woman, from the unfaithful wife and her seductive words.

⁶One day, I was at the window of my house. I looked out through the curtains. ⁷I saw some foolish men. I especially noticed one young man who had no sense at all. ⁸He was strolling down the street near the corner where the immoral woman lived. He was walking down the way that led to her house. ⁹It was the twilight of the evening. It was just starting to get dark.^f

¹⁰Then, look, the woman approached him.^g She was dressed seductively, like a whore; she was planning to lure him. ¹¹She was a brash and defiant woman. She never stayed at home. ¹²She was always out in the streets or in the city square. She was always waiting around^h on every street corner. ¹³She grabbed that young man and kissed him.ⁱ Without shame, she said to him:

¹⁴"I have already given my peace-

f 7:9 literally, "in the pupil of night and darkness"

g 7:10 This simple-minded fool was no match for the skillful, feminine wiles which were about to confront him.

h 7:12 or, "soliciting"

i 7:13 Compare Gen. 39:12.

offering.^a I have just kept my special vows.^b ¹⁵So now, I have come out to meet you.^c I have been looking for you, and I have found you! ¹⁶I have covered my bed with colored, linen sheets from Egypt. ¹⁷I have made my bed smell sweet with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. ¹⁸Come on, let's make love until morning! Let us enjoy each other's caresses. ¹⁹My husband is not at home. He has gone away on a long trip. ²⁰He took plenty of money with him. And, he won't be home until later this month!"

²¹So, by her seductive words, she persuaded him.^d By her pleasing words, she led him into doing wrong. ²²Immediately, he followed her. He was like an ox being led to the butcher. He was like a deer caught in a trap. ²³But, suddenly, an arrow sliced through his liver! He was like a bird flying into a trap. He did not know that what he was doing would kill him.

²⁴Now, my sons, listen to me. Pay attention to what I say. ²⁵Don't let

a 7:14 She was indicating that she had plenty of leftover meat (from the sacrifice) waiting for them to eat at her house. It needed to be consumed right away before it spoiled (Lev. 7:15-16). She was offering him a big meal.

b 7:14 literally, "I have completed my vows today." It is possible that she was *not* an Israelite woman, but a wealthy non-Jewish woman dedicated to a local fertility cult which flourished in Solomon's time.

c 7:15 She was trying to make this dope believe that he was very special, when, in fact, she would sleep with anyone who would suit her purpose.

d 7:21 See Prov. 2:16; 5:3,23; 6:24; 7:5.

yourself be tricked by such a woman. Don't stray into her paths of sin. ²⁶She has ruined many good men.^e Numerous men have died because of her. ²⁷Going to her house is like taking the road to death!^f That path leads down to the inner rooms of death.

Wisdom Personified

8¹Like a person, Wisdom calls out to you. Understanding^g raises her voice. ²On the hilltops along the road, and at the crossroads, she stands there calling. ³She's there beside the city gates. At the entrances of the city, at the doors, she cries out loudly: ⁴"People, I am calling out to you. My voice is directed to all mankind. ⁵You who do not know any better, acquire the ability to think.^h You who are foolish, obtain understanding. ⁶Listen, because I have important things to say. What I am telling you is right. ⁷What I say is true. I hate it when people speak evil. ⁸Everything I say is true. Nothing I say is crooked or false. ⁹People with good sense know that what I speak is correct, and it is upright to those who have

e 7:26 or, "She has victimized many men." = She caused their downfall. Note the outcomes of the illicit love affairs of Samson, David, and Solomon and how they suffered the consequences of their actions.

f 7:27 Hebrew: *Sheol* = where all the dead people are. Compare Matt. 7:13; 1 Cor. 6:9-10.

g 8:1 or, "Reason"

h 8:5 or, "learn to be prudent." = becoming mature

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found spiritual insight. ¹⁰Choose my instruction instead of silver. Choose knowledge rather than the finest gold. ¹¹Wisdom is more valuable than rubies. Nothing that you desire is equal to it.

¹²“I am Wisdom, and I dwell with Good Judgment.^a I have also found Knowledge and Good Sense. ¹³If you revere the Always-Present One, then you will also hate evil. I^b hate pride, arrogance, evil ways, and lies. ¹⁴Common Sense and Good Advice belong to me. I am Understanding, and I have Power.^c ¹⁵Kings use me to govern. And, rulers employ me to make laws that are fair. ¹⁶Princes use me to lead. I am the instrument for all statesmen of the world to make good decisions. ¹⁷I love those who love me. Those who search for me early on will find me.^d ¹⁸Riches and Honor are with me. So are True Wealth that lasts and Justice. ¹⁹What I offer^e is better than gold, even the finest gold. What I give you is more valuable than pure silver. ²⁰I do what is right. I do what is fair. ²¹I bestow true wealth upon those who love me. I fill them up with treasures.^f

²²“I, Wisdom, was with the Always-

a 8:12 or, “Intelligence.”

b 8:13 = Wisdom

c 8:14 Compare Eccl. 9:16.

d 8:17 Compare Isa. 55:6; Matt. 7:7; Acts 17:11,27.

e 8:19 literally, “My fruit”

f 8:21 Compare Matt. 6:20; Luke 12:15; 1 Pet. 1:4.

Present One^g when He began His creative work, before He made anything else in ancient times. ²³I was appointed in the very beginning, even before the world began. ²⁴I began before there were oceans, when there were no springs overflowing with water. ²⁵I began before the mountains had been shaped. I was born before the hills had ever been put in place. ²⁶God had not yet made the earth or any of its fields, or the first dust of the world. ²⁷I was there when God put the skies in place, when He stretched out the horizon over the oceans. ²⁸I was there when He made the clouds above. I was there when He established the fountains in the oceans. ²⁹I was there when He ordered the sea not to go beyond the boundaries that He had set for it. I was there when He laid the foundations of the earth. ³⁰I was like a craftsman by His side then. I was happy every day, and I enjoyed being in His presence all the time. ³¹I enjoyed His whole world. And, I was happy with all its people.^h

³²“Now, my children, listen to

g 8:22 literally, “Yahweh possessed me.” The Greek Septuagint’s mistranslation of this Hebrew verb, *qananiy*, (using *ektise* (= created) instead of *ektesato* (= possessed)) aided the Arian heresy of early church history. Modern-day Arians (Jehovah’s Witnesses and some others) claim that Jesus Christ was created by God. See John 1:1.

h 8:31 literally, “the sons of men” = the human race. Adam was made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-28).

me. Those who follow my ways will be happy. ³³Listen carefully to my instructions, and you will be wise. Don't ignore me! ³⁴The person who listens to me will be happy. He watches at my door every day.^a He is waiting at my doorway. ³⁵Whoever finds me finds life.^b And, the Always-Present One will be pleased with him. ³⁶But, whoever does **not** find me is only hurting himself. All those who hate me love death!"

Wisdom and the Foolish Woman

9¹Wisdom has built her house. She has set up its seven columns.^c ²She has prepared her meat. She has mixed her wine.^d She has also set her table. ³She has sent out her servant girls to invite people. She calls out from the highest spot in the city. ⁴She says to one who is not wise: "Come in here with me, you simple-minded person! ⁵Come, eat my food.^e And, drink the wine which I have prepared. ⁶Stop your foolish^f ways, and you will live. Be a person of understanding.

⁷"If you correct someone who makes fun of Wisdom, then you will

only get insulted.^g One who rebukes an evil person **will** get hurt! ⁸Do not correct someone who makes fun of Wisdom, or he will hate you. But correct a wise man, and he will love you. ⁹Give instructions to a wise man, and he will become even wiser. Teach a good man, and he will learn even more.

¹⁰"Wisdom begins with reverence for the Always-Present One.^h And, Insight starts with knowing God, the Holy One. ¹¹Through me, Wisdom, you will live a long time. I will add years to your life. ¹²The wise person is rewarded by his own wisdom. But a person who makes fun of Wisdom **will** suffer."

¹³"Foolishnessⁱ is like a brash woman. She is ignorant and doesn't even know it. ¹⁴She sits at the door of her house on a seat at the highest place in the city. ¹⁵She calls out to those who are passing by on the street. They are minding their own business. ¹⁶She says to one who is not wise, "Come in here with me, you simple-minded person! ¹⁷Stolen water is sweeter.^j Stolen food is more

a 8:34 like eager students waiting for the teacher to appear

b 8:35 Compare John 1:4; 17:3.

c 9:1 or, "7 pillars." The number "seven" often stands for perfection in Scripture.

d 9:2 adding water to enhance the flavor and to make it less intoxicating

e 9:5 = the choice morsels of wisdom

f 9:6 literally, "simple-minded"

g 9:7 Compare Prov. 1:22; Matt. 7:6.

h 9:10 See Prov. 1:7; 2:5; 14:26-27; Job 28:28; Ps. 34:11; 111:10; Acts 9:31.

i 9:13 Like the "woman" called "Wisdom," Stupidity is personified in the following verses.

j 9:17 = the thrill of getting away with doing something immoral. That is precisely what makes partaking of forbidden things so alluring. See Gen. 3:6; Rom. 7:7-13; 1 John 2:16.

delicious.”^a ¹⁸But such a simpleton doesn’t know that whoever goes there will die! He doesn’t realize that the guests of Foolishness are deep in the grave.

Some Proverbs of Solomon

10¹These are the wise sayings of Solomon:

A wise son causes his father to be happy. But a foolish son makes his mother sad.

²Riches obtained by dishonesty have no value. But right living will deliver you from death.

³The Always-Present One does not allow people who live right to go hungry.^b But, He does not let evil people receive what they hunger for.

⁴A lazy person will end up poor.^c But a hard worker will become rich.^d

⁵A son who gathers crops when they are ready is wise. But the son who sleeps through the harvest season is a disgrace.

a 9:17 literally, “And bread (eaten) in secret is pleasant.” See Prov. 20:17. The pleasures of sin cannot be enjoyed in open daylight; it must be done in secret, under the cover of darkness (John 3:19; Eph. 5:8,11; 1 Thes. 5:5; 1 Pet. 2:9).

b 10:3 Compare Ps. 34:9-10; 37:16-20,25; Matt. 6:26,33.

c 10:4 literally, “Poor (is) the one who is working (with) a slothful hand.” See Prov. 6:6-11; 12:11,24,27; 13:4; 14:23; 18:9; 27:23-27; 28:19. The Hebrew word for “hand” here is *kaph*. It is the open, ineffective palm.

d 10:4 literally, “But the hand of the diligent makes (one) rich.” The Hebrew word for “hand” here is *yad*. It means a tense hand that is braced for vigorous work.

⁶People who do what is right will have rich blessings. But the evil people will be overwhelmed by violence.

⁷Good people will be remembered as a blessing. But evil people will soon be forgotten.

⁸A wise person does what he is told. But the fool who talks back will be crushed.

⁹The honest person will live safely. But the one who is dishonest will be caught.

¹⁰A subtle wink may get you into trouble. But foolish talk will lead to your ruin.

¹¹Like a fountain of water, the words of a good person give life. But the words of evil people contain nothing but violence.

¹²Hatred stirs up troubles, but love forgives all wrongs.^e

¹³You can expect discerning people to speak wisely. But people without any sense will be punished.

¹⁴Wise people keep in reserve what they know. But a foolish person talks too much, and he is ruined.

¹⁵Having lots of money protects the rich man.^f But, having no money destroys the poor.

e 10:12 literally, “but love covers all transgressions.” See 1 Cor. 13:4-5; James 5:20; 1 Pet. 4:8. Love forgives and forgets all offences.

f 10:15 literally, “A rich man’s wealth (is) his strong city.” See Prov. 18:11. Ultimately, one cannot trust in earthly wealth (Ps. 52:7; Luke 12:15; 1 Tim. 6:17); it is *not* a sure thing!

¹⁶Good people are rewarded with success. But an evil person is paid back with guilt.

¹⁷The person who accepts instruction is on the pathway to life. But the one who ignores correction goes astray.

¹⁸Whoever hides his hatred is a liar. Whoever tells lies about somebody is a fool.

¹⁹If you talk too much, then you are more likely to sin. If you are wise, then you will keep quiet.

²⁰The words of a good person are like pure silver. But an evil person's thoughts are worth very little.

²¹A good person's words will help many people. But foolish people die because they do not have any sense.

²²The Always-Present One's blessing brings riches, and, with it, comes no sorrow.

²³A foolish person enjoys doing wrong.^a But a person with understanding enjoys doing what is wise.

²⁴An evil person will get what he fears the most. But good people will receive what they want the most.

²⁵A storm will blow the evil person away. But a good person will always be safe.

²⁶A lazy person brings nothing but trouble to the ones he works for. He annoys other people like vinegar on

your teeth^b or smoke in your eyes.

²⁷Whoever respects the Always-Present One will have a long life. But an evil person will have his life cut short.

²⁸A good person can look forward to happiness. But an evil person can expect nothing.

²⁹The Always-Present One will protect upright people. But He will ruin those who do evil.

³⁰Good people will always be safe. But evil people will not remain in the land of promise.

³¹A good person says wise things. But a liar's tongue will be stopped.

³²Good people say the right things. But evil people tell lies.

11¹The Always-Present One hates dishonest scales,^c but He is pleased with accurate weights.

²Pride leads only to shame. It is wise to be humble.

³Good people will be guided by honesty. But dishonesty will destroy those who are not trustworthy.

⁴Riches will not help on the day of punishment. But doing what is right will rescue you from dying too soon.

b 10:26 Compare Ezek. 18:2. It is like setting one's teeth on edge.

c 11:1 literally, "False balances (= cheating in business transactions) (are) an abomination to Yahweh," See Deut. 25:13-14. Crooked merchants used heavy weights when buying things wholesale, but light ones when they were selling to the public. Compare Lev. 19:35-36; Amos 8:5; Mic. 6:11; Ezek. 45:10.

a 10:23 or, "Doing wrong (is) like a game to a fool." See Prov. 2:14; 15:21; 26:19.

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⁵The goodness of a man with integrity makes his life easier. But an evil person will be destroyed by his own sins.

⁶Doing what is right brings freedom to honest people. But those who are not trustworthy will be caught by their own ambition.

⁷When an evil person dies, his hope is gone. The expectations that the trouble-maker had will come to nothing.

⁸The good person is rescued from trouble. It happens instead to a bad person.

⁹An ungodly person can destroy his neighbor by his words. But good people will escape by being smart.

¹⁰When good people succeed, the city is happy. But when evil people die, there are shouts of joy.

¹¹The influence of good people makes a city great. But the evil people can destroy it with their words.

¹²A person without good sense finds fault with his neighbor. But a smart person remains quiet.

¹³A person who gossips cannot keep secrets. But a trustworthy person can keep a secret.

¹⁴A nation will be defeated when there is no leadership. But when many people give good advice, it will be safe.

¹⁵Whoever guarantees to pay what

somebody else owes will suffer for it. It is safe to avoid such promises.

¹⁶A kind woman gets honor just as cruel men get wealth.

¹⁷A loving person is doing himself a favor. But a cruel person only brings trouble on himself.

¹⁸An evil person really gains nothing from what he earns. But a good person will surely be rewarded.

¹⁹The person who is truly good will live. But the one who chases after evil will die.

²⁰The Always-Present One detests those with evil hearts. But He is delighted with those who are upright.

²¹You can be sure that an evil person **will** be punished. But those who do what is right will **not** be punished.

²²A beautiful woman who doesn't have any sense is like having a gold ring in a pig's snout!^a

²³The wishes of those who do right will come true. But the hopes of the evil people will result in judgment.

²⁴Some people give a lot, but they get back even more.^b While others don't give what they should, and they end up poor!

²⁵A person who gives to others will

a 11:22 In the ancient world, bejeweled nose-rings sometimes adorned the faces of the women (Gen. 24:22,47; Isa. 3:21; Ezek. 16:12).

b 11:24 literally, "One man gives freely, yet he grows all the richer." Compare the same principle revisited in 2 Cor. 9:6-11. See Prov. 3:9-10; Eccl. 11:1-2; Ps. 112:9.

get richer.^a Whoever helps others will indeed be helped himself.^b

²⁶People condemn someone who keeps all the grain for himself.^c But they bless a person who is willing to sell it.^d

²⁷Whoever eagerly looks for good will find kindness. But whoever is looking for trouble will find it.

²⁸Those who trust in riches will be ruined. But good people will be as healthy as a green leaf.

²⁹Whoever brings trouble to his own family will inherit nothing but the wind.^e And, a foolish person will become a servant to the wise of heart.

³⁰As a tree produces fruit, a good person gives life to others. A wise person wins souls.

³¹Listen, good people will be rewarded on earth. And, an evil, sinful person will surely be punished!

a 11:25 literally, "A generous man will be made fat" (= enriched). Fatness often signified prosperity (Deut. 32:15; Ps. 22:29; Prov. 13:4; 28:25; Luke 6:38).

b 11:25 literally, "and one who waters will himself be fully watered." True philanthropists understand this principle.

c 11:26 literally, "The people curse the one who holds back grain." = a miser who hoards everything. Such unscrupulous men were monopolizing the region's entire supply of grain in order to raise the prices in the local stock market (Amos 8:4-6).

d 11:26 literally, "But a blessing (is) on the head of the one who sells it." That is, in a time when the public really needs it. See Gen. 41:53-57; 42:6.

e 11:29 Compare Prov. 15:27. A man's *first* obligation is the welfare of his family. If he does not see this moral principle, he will end up losing them altogether.

12¹The person who loves instruction^f loves knowledge.

But a person who hates being corrected is stupid.

²The Always-Present One is pleased with a good person. But God will condemn anyone who plans evil.

³Doing evil does not bring a person any security. But a good person is solid.

⁴A good wife is like a crown for her husband.^g But a disgraceful wife is like a disease in his bones.^h

⁵The purposes of righteous people are fair and honest. But the advice of evil people is treacherous.

⁶The evil people talk about killing people.ⁱ But the words of good people will save them.

⁷The evil people die, and they are gone. But a good man's family goes on and on.

⁸A wise person is praised. But a man with a perverse heart will be despised.

⁹A person might not seem important, but if he still has a servant, he is better off than someone who acts important and yet has no food.

¹⁰A good man takes care of his

f 12:1 or, "discipline"

g 12:4 See Prov. 31:10-31.

h 12:4 Such a woman is poisoning her husband's life, depriving him of his strength and vigor. She is sapping his very existence, though she is "bone of his bones" (Gen. 2:23).

i 12:6 literally, "The words of the evil ones ambush blood." Compare 1 Kings 21:13.

animals. But even the so-called “kind” acts of evil people are considered cruel.

¹¹The person who works his land will have plenty of food. But the one who chases fantasies lacks good judgment.

¹²Evil people want the things that other evil people have stolen.^a But good people want to be generous to others.

¹³Evil people are trapped by their own evil talk. But a good man gets out of trouble.

¹⁴A person will be rewarded for what he says. And, he will also be rewarded for whatever he does.

¹⁵A foolish person thinks that he is doing right. But a wise person listens to advice.

¹⁶A foolish person quickly shows that he is upset. But an astute person ignores an insult.

¹⁷An honest witness just tells the truth. But a dishonest witness tells lies.

¹⁸Careless words stab like a sword. But the words of wise persons bring about healing.

¹⁹Truth will last forever. But lies last only for a moment.^b

²⁰Those who plan evil intend to lie.

But those who promote peace will be happy.

²¹No harm happens to a good person. But the lives of evil people are full of trouble.

²²The Always-Present One is disgusted with those who tell lies. But He is very pleased with those who actually do what they promise.

²³A shrewd person keeps what he knows to himself. But the heart of fools shows its stupidity.

²⁴Hard workers will become leaders. But those who are lazy will become slaves.

²⁵Worry makes a person feel as if he is carrying a heavy load. But a kind word cheers up anybody.

²⁶A good person takes advice from his friends. But bad people are easily led into wrong-doing.

²⁷A lazy person catches no food to cook.^c But a hard worker will obtain great wealth.

²⁸Doing what is right is the way to life. That path does not lead to death.

13¹A wise son obeys his father’s instructions. But a person who makes fun of wisdom won’t listen to correction.

²A good person will be rewarded for

a 12:12 literally, “the net of bad men.” = loot

b 12:19 literally, “while I wink” = a blink of the eye. Lies will soon be discovered and exposed (Prov. 19:9).

c 12:27 literally, “will not roast his prey.” Whatever the lazy hunter might have caught temporarily in his net will get away. In other words, through his own lack of diligence, the lazy man lets real opportunities slip through his fingers.

what he says. But those who cannot be trusted are hungry for violence.^a

³Whoever is careful about what he says^b protects his life. But anyone who speaks without thinking will be ruined.

⁴The lazy person will not get what he wants. But a hard worker gets everything he wants.

⁵A good person hates what is false. But a bad person does shameful and disgraceful things.

⁶Doing what is right protects the honest person. But evil ruins the sinner.

⁷Some people pretend to be rich but actually possess nothing. Other people pretend to be poor, but they are actually very wealthy.

⁸A rich man may have to pay a ransom for his life. But a poor person will never have to face such a threat.

⁹Good people shine brightly. But evil people will die, like a flame that is snuffed out.

¹⁰Pride leads to arguments. But those who receive advice are wise.

¹¹Money that comes too easily disappears quickly. But money that is gathered little by little will slowly grow.

¹²It is sad when you don't get what

you hope for. But when wishes comes true, it is like eating fruit from the Tree of Life.

¹³Whoever rejects what he is taught ruins himself. But whoever does what he is told will be rewarded.

¹⁴The teachings of a wise person give life. It is like a fountain of water that can save people from death.

¹⁵People with good sense will be liked. But the lives of those who are not trustworthy are rough.

¹⁶Every wise person behaves shrewdly. But a foolish person shows how foolish he is.

¹⁷A bad messenger causes nothing but trouble. But a trustworthy courier makes everything right.

¹⁸A person who refuses instructions will end up poor and disgraced. But the person who accepts correction will be honored.

¹⁹It is so good when wishes come true. But foolish people still refuse to stop doing evil.

²⁰Whoever spends time with wise people will become wise. But whoever associates with fools will suffer.

²¹Trouble chases sinners. But good people enjoy success.

²²A good man's wealth will be inherited by his grandchildren. But a sinner's wealth will be stored up for a good person.

a 13:2 Hebrew: *chamas*. Violence begets violence (Prov. 1:31; 10:6; Matt. 26:52).

b 13:3 literally, "The one who guards his mouth" = controls his speech. Compare Prov. 10:14; 12:18; 18:7,21; 21:23; James 1:26; 3:2.

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²³A poor man's field can produce plenty of food. But it is swept away when there is no justice.

²⁴If a person does not punish his children, he does **not** love them.^a But the person who loves his children is careful to correct them.

²⁵Good people have enough to eat. But evil people will go hungry.

14¹A wise woman^b strengthens her family. But a foolish woman destroys her family by what she does.

²A person who lives a good life shows respect for the Always-Present One. But the one who is devious in the way he lives despises God.

³A foolish person will be punished for his proud words. But a wise person's words will protect him.

⁴When there are no oxen,^c there is no food in the barn.^d But, with the strength of a bull, much grain can be grown.

⁵A truthful witness does not lie. But a false witness tells nothing but lies.

⁶Those who make fun of wisdom search for it, and they don't find it. But the person with understanding finds knowledge easily.

a 13:24 literally, "The one who holds back the rod hates his son." Compare Prov. 3:11-12; 19:18; 22:15; 23:13-14; 29:15,17.

b 14:1 See Prov. 31:10-31.

c 14:4 to pull the plow

d 14:4 literally, "Without oxen, an (empty) stall (is) clean."

⁷Stay away from a foolish person. You won't learn anything from him.

⁸What makes an astute person wise? It is understanding what to do. But dishonesty is what makes a person foolish.

⁹Foolish people don't care if they sin.^e But honest people want to be forgiven.

¹⁰No one else can know your sadness. Strangers cannot fully share your joy.^f

¹¹The houses of evil people will be destroyed. But the tents of good people will still be standing.

¹²Some people think they are doing what is morally right.^g But what they are doing will actually kill them.

¹³Even when someone is laughing, he may be sad inside. And, when the laughter is over, there is sorrow.

¹⁴Backsliders^h will be paid back for their evil ways. But a good person will be rewarded for his good deeds.

¹⁵A simple-minded person will believe anything. But a prudent person ponders everything he does.

e 14:9 literally, "Fools mock at a guilt-offering." = They scoff at making amends with anyone. In other words, they think that there is no such thing as "guilt." Compare Prov. 15:8; 19:28.

f 14:10 literally, "No stranger shares in its joy (fully)." However, Jesus Christ, "our High Priest, *can* sympathize with our weaknesses. He was tempted in every way as we are" (Heb. 4:15).

g 14:12 literally, "There is a way (that seems) upright in front of a man." Compare Prov. 3:7; 12:15; 16:2,25; 21:2.

h 14:14 literally, "one who slides back (in) heart" = one who has lapsed back into sin

¹⁶A wise person is careful and stays out of trouble. But a foolish person is too quick to act; he's reckless.

¹⁷A person who loses his temper quickly does foolish things. And, a crafty person is hated.

¹⁸Simple-minded people get nothing — except more stupidity! But clever people are rewarded with knowledge.

¹⁹Evil people will have to bow down in the presence of good people. The bad people will bow down at the door of the person who does what is right.

²⁰The poor person is rejected, even by his neighbor. But a rich person has many so-called “friends.”

²¹It is a sin to despise your neighbor. But, being kind to needy people brings happiness.^a

²²Those who make evil plans will be ruined. But people love and trust those who plan to do good.

²³Those who work hard make a profit. But those who just talk will be poor.

²⁴Wise people are rewarded with wealth. But foolish people will only get more foolishness.

²⁵A truthful witness saves lives. But a false witness is a traitor.

²⁶A person who reveres the Always-

^a 14:21 literally, “But the one who is kind to needy people (is) blessed.” Compare Prov. 22:9; 28:8; 31:9. See the example of Jesus Christ in 2 Cor. 8:9. Compare Matt. 5:7; Acts 20:35.

Present One will have security. And, his children will be protected.

²⁷Reverence for the Always-Present One gives life. It is like a fountain of water that can save people from the trap of death.

²⁸A king is honored when he rules many people. But a prince is ruined if he has none.

²⁹A person who does not get angry quickly shows that he has great insight. But a person who quickly loses his temper exalts his stupidity.

³⁰Peace of mind means a healthy body. But jealousy will rot your bones.

³¹Whoever is cruel to a poor person insults his Maker. But anyone who is kind to that needy person honors God.

³²The evil person is ruined by his own wrong-doing. But, even in death, the righteous individual is protected.

³³Wisdom rests in the heart of an intelligent person. And, even fools recognize that.

³⁴Doing what is right makes a nation great. But sin will bring disgrace to any people.

³⁵A king is pleased with a wise servant. But the king will become angry with one who embarrasses him.

15¹A gentle answer will calm tempers. But an unkind answer will cause more anger.

²Wise people use knowledge when

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they speak. But fools speak only foolishness.

³The Always-Present One's eyes see everything that happens. He watches both evil people and good people.

⁴Just as a tree gives us fruit, healing words give us life.^a But perverse words crush the spirit.

⁵A foolish person rejects his father's instructions. But anyone who accepts correction is wise.

⁶There is much wealth in the house of a righteous person. But the earnings of an evil person bring him only trouble.

⁷With their words, wise people spread knowledge. But there is no knowledge in the thoughts of foolish people.

⁸The Always-Present One detests the worship that evil people offer. But He is very pleased with an honest person's prayer.

⁹The Always-Present One detests what evil people do. But He loves the person who is trying to do what is right.

¹⁰The person who quits doing what is right will be severely punished. The one who hates to be corrected will die.

¹¹The Always-Present One knows everything that is happening where

the dead people are.^b So, He can surely know what live people are thinking.

¹²A person who makes fun of wisdom does not like to be corrected. He will not seek advice from wise people.

¹³Happiness makes a person smile.^c But sadness breaks a person's spirit.

¹⁴Smart people want more knowledge. But a foolish person just wants more foolishness.

¹⁵Every day is difficult for those who suffer. But a happy heart has a continual banquet.

¹⁶It is better to be poor and to revere the Always-Present One than to be very wealthy and to have much trouble.

¹⁷It is better to eat vegetables with those who love you than to eat the best steak with those who hate you.

¹⁸A person who gets angry quickly causes trouble. But a person who controls his temper stops a quarrel.

¹⁹A lazy person's life is as difficult as walking through a patch of thorns. But the path of honest people is as easy as walking down a smooth highway.

²⁰A wise son makes his father

^a 15:4 literally, "A healing tongue (is) a tree of life." Compare Prov. 3:18; 11:30.

^b 15:11 literally, "Sheol (= the grave) and Abaddon (= destruction, Luke 8:31; Rev. 9:2; 20:1-2); compare Job 26:6; Ps. 139:7-8; Prov. 27:20; Rev. 9:11) (are) before Yahweh."

^c 15:13 literally, "A happy heart makes the face good" (= cheerful). Compare Prov. 14:30.

happy. But a foolish man is hateful to his mother.

²¹A person without any sense enjoys being foolish. But a person with insight does what is right.

²²Plans fail without good advice. But plans succeed when you get advice from many others.

²³People enjoy giving good answers! Saying the right word at the right moment is so pleasing!

²⁴An astute person does things that will make his life better. He avoids whatever would cause his death.

²⁵The Always-Present One will tear down the arrogant person's house. But God will protect the property of a widow.

²⁶The Always-Present One hates evil thoughts. But He is pleased with pure words.

²⁷A greedy person brings trouble to his own family. But the person who cannot be paid off to do wrong will live.

²⁸A good person thinks before he answers. But evil people blurt out terrible things.

²⁹The Always-Present One does not listen to the evil people. But He hears the prayers of those who do right.

³⁰A friendly smile makes you feel better. Good news will show itself in your face.

³¹A wise person pays attention to corrections that will improve his life. He will live in the midst of wisdom.

³²A person who refuses discipline hates himself. But the person who accepts correction gains understanding.

³³Respect for the Always-Present One will teach you wisdom. If you want to be honored, then you must first be humble.^a

16¹People make plans in their hearts. But only the Always-Present One has the final word.

²A person may think that he is doing right. But the Always-Present One will judge man's reasons.^b

³Depend on the Always-Present One in whatever you do. Then your plans will succeed.

⁴The Always-Present One works out everything for His own purposes. He even reserves a day of disaster for evil people.^c

a 15:33 literally, "Humility (comes) before honor." Compare Prov. 18:12; 25:6-7; Matt. 23:12; Luke 1:52; 14:11; 18:14; 24:26; Philp. 2:5; Heb. 12:2; James 4:6; 1 Pet. 1:11; 5:6. Contrast Prov. 16:18.

b 16:2 literally, "But Yahweh ponders (= weighs) the spirits." = examining man's motives. Man is ignorant and prejudiced about his true status, but it is God who will render the final judgment (Acts 17:30-31; 24:24-25; 1 Cor. 4:4; 2 Cor. 5:10-11; Heb. 4:12; 9:27; Rev. 20:11-15). As human beings, we are prone to be blind to our own faults. We do not see ourselves as others see us (1 Cor. 4:3-4). See Prov. 21:2. Compare Prov. 24:12; Ps. 19:12; 139:23.

c 16:4 Compare Exo. 9:16; Ezek. 38:22-23; Rom. 2:5-11. Although God's wants all people to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4), and, He did not send His Son into this

⁵The Always-Present One detests a person who is arrogant. You can be sure that such an individual will be punished.

⁶God's constant love and truth bring about the forgiveness of sin. By revering the Always-Present One, you will avoid evil.

⁷A person should live so that he pleases the Always-Present One. If he does this, then God causes even his enemies to be at peace with that individual.^a

⁸It is better to be poor and do what is right than to be very wealthy and be unfair.

⁹A human being may conceive plans. Nevertheless, it is the Always-Present One who decides what we will do.^b

¹⁰The words of a king are like

world to condemn us but to save us (John 3:17), we have the freedom to reject the gracious purpose of God. If we voluntarily reject God's plan for our lives, we effectively cancel the redemptive blood of Christ (Heb. 10:26-31), which is the only means of our salvation (Eph. 1:7; Heb. 9:22-26). God does not *cause* our destruction. In the beginning, all things were "very good" (Gen. 1:31), and man was given the power and capacity to do good. We always have the option to do evil. Even what is done outside the will of God is not contrary to God's provisions. God has a way of specifically transforming evil deeds to His good use. The things which oppose His grand design can still render service to His purpose (Acts 2:23; Rom. 9:22).

a 16:7 Compare Gen. 26:27; Exo. 34:24; 2 Chr. 14:6-7; 17:10; Prov. 3:17; Rom. 12:18; Heb. 12:14.
b 16:9 literally, "But Yahweh directs his step." Compare Prov. 16:1,3; 19:21; 20:24; Ps. 37:23; Jer. 10:23.

a message from God.^c So, his decisions should always be fair.

¹¹The Always-Present One wants fair balances and scales to be used. He wants all weights to be honest.^d

¹²Kings detest wrong-doing; governments only endure if they are fair.

¹³Kings are pleased with those who speak honest words. A king values a person who speaks the truth.

¹⁴If a king becomes angry, then he may put someone to death. So, a wise man will try to keep the king happy.

¹⁵A king's kindness can give people life. His favor is like a spring shower.^e

¹⁶It is better to get wisdom than gold. It is better to choose understanding rather than silver.

¹⁷A person of integrity turns away from evil. A person who watches what he does protects his own life.

¹⁸Pride will destroy a person. An arrogant attitude leads to ruin.

¹⁹It is better to be humble and to remain in poverty than to share stolen property with proud people.

²⁰Whoever pays attention to God's

c 16:10 literally, "An oath (is) on the lips of a king." In that theocracy, the king was functioning as God's representative (Deut. 1:17; 2 Sam. 14:17,20; 19:27; 1 Kings 3:9,28).

d 16:11 literally, "All the stones in the bag (are) His work." = God sets the standard for fairness.

e 16:15 literally, "And his favor (is) like the clouds of the latter rain." This essential, seasonal rain (March or April) matured their barley and wheat crops for harvesting (Deut. 11:14). Compare Prov. 19:12b; Ps. 72:6.

instructions will succeed. And, whoever trusts in the Always-Present One will be happy.

²¹A dutiful person is known for his understanding. He wins people over to his side with pleasant words.

²²Insight is like a fountain of water which gives life to those who own it. But trying to instruct fools is folly.

²³A wise person's good sense tells him what to say. This helps him to teach others better.

²⁴Pleasant words are like a honeycomb. They make a person happy and healthy.

²⁵Some people think they are doing what is right. However, at its end, it causes them to die!

²⁶The worker's hunger helps him. His desire to eat makes him work.

²⁷An utterly worthless person makes evil plans. And, his words are like a blazing fire.^a

²⁸A twisted man stirs up trouble. One who gossips separates close friends.

²⁹A violent man lures his neighbor into the wrong road. And, he leads him down the path that is not good.

³⁰The one who signals with his eyes^b is planning evil things. And, the

a 16:27 literally, "And, (it is) on his lips like a scorching fire." Compare James 3:6. This mischief-maker wants to burn up the good reputations of other people.

b 16:30 or, "winks" (see the note at Prov. 6:13); possibly meaning: a narrowing of the eyes because he is cunningly concentrating on plotting evil. Such

one who smirks at you is ready to do something wrong.^c

³¹Gray hair^d is like a crown of honor. You earn it by living a good life.

³²Patience is better than strength. Controlling your temper is better than capturing a city.

³³People pick lots^e to make a decision. But the entire answer comes from the Always-Present One.^f

17¹It is better to eat a dry crust of bread in peace than to have a banquet where there is quarreling.

²An astute slave will rule over his master's disgraceful son. And, that servant will even receive a brotherly share of the inheritance.

³A crucible^g is for purifying silver, and a furnace is for refining gold, but the Always-Present One tests hearts.^h

⁴A bad person listens to evil words. A liar pays attention to cruel words.

⁵Making fun of a poor person is

a man won't look you straight in the eye.

c 16:30 literally, "And the one who compresses (= tightens) his lips brings evil to pass." = showing determination

d 16:31 = old age

e 16:33 a reverent way of seeking God's help in making a decision (Exo. 28:30; Num. 26:53; Josh. 7:18; 1 Sam. 14:37-42; Neh. 11:1; Jonah 1:7; Acts 1:26; Heb. 6:16). It was similar to "picking straws".

f 16:33 literally, "But the deciding of it all (is ordered) from Yahweh." Compare Prov. 18:18.

g 17:3 a container which is capable of withstanding intense heat. It was used for melting metals.

h 17:3 Compare Gen. 22:1ff; Ps. 12:6; 26:2; 66:10; Prov. 15:11; 16:2; 24:12; 27:21; Jer. 12:3; 17:10.

insulting the God who made him.^a If you laugh at somebody else's troubles, then you yourself will be punished.

⁶Grandchildren are the glory^b of old men. And, children are proud of their fathers.

⁷Eloquent speech and a fool do not go together. Neither does being a nobleman and being a liar.

⁸Some people think that they can bribe others^c and others will do whatever they ask. Such individuals think that a pay-off will succeed every time.^d

⁹Whoever forgives someone's sin makes a friend. But whoever keeps on talking about that sin breaks up friendships.

¹⁰A discerning person will learn more from one warning than a fool will learn from 100 lashes on his back.

¹¹A rebel is only looking for trouble. So, a cruel messenger will be sent against him.

¹²What is more dangerous than meeting a mother bear that has been robbed of her cubs!?

a 17:5 or, "His Maker." See Gen. 1:26; 5:1; 9:6; Job 35:10; Ps. 100:3; Isa. 64:8; Acts 17:29; 1 Cor. 11:7; Col. 3:10; James 3:9.

b 17:6 literally, "the crown"

c 17:8 literally, "A precious stone (is) the bribe in the eyes of its owner." = A briber thinks that money "works like a charm" (= a talisman) to get anybody to change to his way of thinking.

d 17:8 literally, "(that) wherever he turns, he (seems to) prosper." Bribes are condemned in the Bible (Exo. 23:8; Deut. 16:19; 1 Sam. 12:3; Prov. 15:27; 17:23; 28:16; Eccl. 7:7; Amos 5:12; Isa. 1:23; Jer. 22:17; Ezek. 13:19; Acts 24:26).

Confronting a fool in his folly!

¹³If a person pays back evil for good, then his household will always be full of trouble.

¹⁴The start of a quarrel is like opening a flood-gate. So, stop the dispute before a fight breaks out.

¹⁵The Always-Present One hates these two things: (1) letting guilty people go free; and, (2) condemning an innocent person.

¹⁶It won't do a fool any good to try to buy wisdom. He doesn't really want to be wise.

¹⁷A real friend is friendly toward you all the time. And a blood brother will always be there for you.

¹⁸It doesn't make any sense for a person to do business^e by putting up a security deposit for his neighbor.

¹⁹Whoever loves crime loves contention. Whoever is proud^f is asking for trouble.

²⁰A person with a crooked heart will not find any success.^g And, the person whose words are twisted will get into trouble.

²¹It is painful for a man to have a stupid son. There is no joy in being the father of a fool.

e 17:18 literally, "to strike the palm"

f 17:19 literally, "exalts his door". Some scholars think that this refers to a lofty entrance of the high walls of rich people; it only encourages thieves to rob them because they conclude that there must be valuable things behind that ostentatious gate!

g 17:20 Cynics do not see good in anything or in anyone.

²²A cheerful disposition is like good medicine. But, a broken spirit drains one's strength.^a

²³An evil person secretly accepts a pay-off to twist the course of justice.

²⁴A person with insight focuses upon wisdom. But a stupid person lets his mind wander everywhere else.

²⁵A stupid son grieves his father. And, he causes great sorrow for his mother.

²⁶Also, it's wrong to punish a person who is innocent or to flog leaders for being honest.

²⁷The knowledgeable person says very little. And, a person with insight stays very calm.

²⁸Even a foolish person seems to be wise—if he keeps quiet!^b He appears to have insight, if he does **not** speak.

18¹An unfriendly person cares only about himself. He goes against all common sense.

²A foolish person^c does not really want to understand anything. He only enjoys telling others what **he** thinks.^d

³Doing something bad will cause people not to like you. Doing something shameful will only bring disgrace upon you.

a **17:22** literally, "But a stricken spirit dries up the bones (= the body)." It would be like the bone marrow withering. Compare Prov. 3:8; 12:4; 14:30; 12:25; Ps. 22:15; 32:3-4; 37:7-8.

b **17:28** Compare Job 13:5.

c **18:2** = an egotist

d **18:2** literally, "but only in uncovering his heart" = just expressing his own opinions. Compare Prov. 12:23; 13:16; 15:2; Eccl. 10:3.

⁴Understanding the words of people is as hard as getting water out of a deep well. But understanding wisdom is as easy as getting sparkling water from a flowing stream.

⁵It is not good to honor an evil person. Nor is it good to be unfair to a good person.

⁶A fool's words start quarrels. Such words cause people to want to give him a beating.

⁷A fool's words will ruin him. He will be trapped by his own words.

⁸The words of a gossip are like tasty morsels. These sink deep into a person's heart.

⁹Also, a person who does not work hard is just like a person who wastes things.

¹⁰The Always-Present One is like a strong tower. A righteous person can run inside it for safety.

¹¹Rich people trust their wealth to protect them. They think it is like the high^e walls of a city.

¹²A person who is arrogant will be shattered. But those who are humble will be honored.

¹³A person who gives an answer **before** he hears a thing—it is to his own folly and disgrace.

¹⁴The will to live can get you

e **18:11** = unscalable

PROVERBS 18, 19

through sickness.^a But no one can live with a crushed spirit.

¹⁵The mind of a discerning person obtains knowledge. The wise person listens to learn more.

¹⁶Giving a gift to an important person paves the way. It will help to get you in to see him.

¹⁷The first person to tell his side of a story seems right. However, that changes when somebody else comes and asks him questions.^b

¹⁸Picking lots settles arguments.^c It keeps the two strong sides from fighting.

¹⁹A brother who has been insulted is harder to win back than a walled city. And, arguments are like the barred gates of a fortress.

²⁰Whatever you say affects you. You will be rewarded by whatever you speak.

²¹Whatever you say can mean life or death. Those who love to talk will receive the consequences for what they say.

²²A man who finds a good wife finds something good.^d He obtains

a 18:14 literally, "The spirit of a person will endure his sickness." Why? Because such an individual has absolute faith in God.

b 18:17 literally, "His neighbor comes and tests (= scrutinizes) him." = cross-examination. Compare Prov. 28:11. One-sided statements are not reliable.

c 18:18 literally, "The lot causes strife to cease." Why? Because both sides are willing to accept God's will in the matter.

d 18:22 Compare Prov. 12:4.

favor from the Always-Present One.^e

²³Poor people beg for mercy. Rich people answer in a rude manner.

²⁴Even though a man may have many friends, he may still be ruined.^f But a true friend will be more loyal than a blood brother.^g

19¹It is better to be poor but honest than to be a fool who is perverse in speech.

²Indeed, enthusiasm without knowledge is not good. If one acts too quickly, then he will make mistakes.

³A person's own foolishness ruins his life. Nevertheless, in his mind, he blames the Always-Present One for it.

⁴Rich people are always finding more friends. But the poor man's friend deserts him.

⁵A witness who lies will be punished. An untruthful person will not go unpunished.

⁶Many people want to please a nobleman. And, everyone is a so-called "friend" to the person who gives away gifts.

⁷All the relatives of a poor person avoid him. Even his friends stay far away from him! He chases after

e 18:22 See Prov. 19:14; 31:10-31.

f 18:24 These so-called "friends" will feed upon him and exhaust his money, but they will *not* stand by him in his day of crisis or at his downfall.

g 18:24 literally, "but there is a loving one (= God?) who sticks closer than a brother (= a blood relative)". Compare Prov. 17:17; 27:10. Jesus Christ is "the friend of sinners" (Matt. 11:19; Luke 7:34).

them, begging. But they're gone!

⁸The person who gets wisdom loves himself. And, the one who possesses understanding will succeed.

⁹A witness who lies will be punished. An untruthful person will die.

¹⁰It doesn't seem proper that a fool lives in luxury, much less that a slave rules over princes!

¹¹A discrete person is patient.^a He will be honored, if he ignores a wrong that was done against him.

¹²A king's fury is like the roar of a lion. But his kindness is refreshing, like the dew on the grass.

¹³A foolish son will ruin his father. And, a nagging wife is as annoying as continual, dripping water.^b

¹⁴Houses and wealth are inherited from parents. But a prudent wife is a gift from the Always-Present One.

¹⁵Lazy people sleep a lot. And, an idle person will go hungry.^c

¹⁶Whoever obeys God's commands protects his life. Whoever despises God's ways will die!

¹⁷Being kind to the poor people is like lending to the Always-Present One. He will reward you for what you have done.

a 19:11 literally, "delays his anger" = controlling one's temper. Compare Prov. 14:29; 15:18; 16:32; Eccl. 7:9; James 1:19.

b 19:13 Their makeshift roofs often leaked. Compare Prov. 21:9,19; 25:24; 27:15.

c 19:15 Compare Prov. 6:11; 10:4; 12:24; 2 Thes. 3:10.

¹⁸Correct your son, because there is still hope.^d Don't help him to destroy himself.

¹⁹A person who is always getting angry will pay for it.^e Even if you bail him out, you will have to do it again and again.

²⁰Listen to advice and accept correction. Then, for the rest of your life, you will be wise.

²¹There may be many plans in the mind of a person, but it is the Always-Present One's purpose that will prevail.^f

²²People want others to be loyal. So, it is better to be poor than to be a liar.

²³Those who revere the Always-Present One will live. Such a person rests content and untroubled.

²⁴The lazy person may put his hand in the dish, but he won't even lift the food to his mouth!^g

²⁵Punish a person who makes fun of wisdom, and then simple-minded people will learn how to think. On the other hand, merely rebuke a smart person, and he will gain knowledge.

d 19:18 Compare Prov. 13:24; Deut. 21:18; Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21. When children are still young, they are capable of being reformed before it is too late.

e 19:19 literally, "One with a bad temper (= a hothead) will pay a fine." Compare Prov. 14:16-17,29; 15:18.

f 19:21 literally, "will rise." Compare Prov. 16:1,9; Num. 23:9; Ps. 33:10-11; Isa. 14:26-27; 46:10; Acts 5:39; Heb. 6:17.

g 19:24 literally, "but he won't even bring it back to his mouth!" See Prov. 26:15.

PROVERBS 19, 20

²⁶The one who assaults his father chases his mother away. He is a son who causes shame and brings disgrace.

²⁷My child, if you stop listening to correction, then you will stray away from what you have already learned.

²⁸A corrupt^a witness makes fun of fairness.^b And, bad people embrace what is evil.

²⁹People who make fun of wisdom will be punished. And, the backs of foolish people will be beaten.

20¹Wine is a mocker, and alcohol^c leads to brawls. Anyone who is led astray by these things is not wise.

²A king's fury is like the roar of a lion. Making him angry may cost you your life!

³Avoiding fights is the honorable thing for a man to do. But every fool gets involved in quarrels.

⁴A lazy farmer does not plow when he should plow.^d Therefore, at harvest-time, he is looking for

something, but he has no crop.^e

⁵Although good advice is within the human mind like deep waters, a person with insight can extract wisdom from there.^f

⁶Many people claim to be loyal, but it is hard to find someone who can really be trusted.

⁷The righteous person who lives an honest life is a blessing to his children after him.

⁸A king sits on his throne and judges people. He knows evil when he sees it.^g

⁹No one can say: "I am innocent!^h I have never done anything wrong!"

¹⁰The Always-Present One hates both of these things — dishonest weights and dishonest measures.ⁱ

¹¹Even a child reveals his character

a 19:28 Hebrew: *beliya'al*. Compare Job 34:18; Deut. 13:13; 15:9; 1 Sam. 30:22; 2 Sam. 20:1; 1 Kings 21:13; 2 Chr. 13:7; Prov. 6:12,19; Nah. 1:11; 2 Cor. 6:15.

b 19:28 or, "justice." Such a malevolent witness is determined to hurt somebody by his testimony.

c 20:1 Hebrew: *shekar*. This word refers to any intoxicating drink which was *not* made from grapes. The Greek term is usually *sikera* (compare Luke 1:15).

d 20:4 literally, "in the autumn." Usually plowing was finished in November or December.

e 20:4 literally, "but there is nothing." Compare Prov. 6:6-11; 13:4; 21:25-26. Compare Aesop's fable about the grasshopper and the ants.

f 20:5 literally, "will draw it out." A clever man will try to discover the hidden meaning by shrewd inquiries and guesses.

g 20:8 literally, "scatters all evil with his eyes" = clearly distinguishing good from evil. Compare Prov. 14:35; 16:10,15. Contrast Ps. 11:4; Hab. 1:13.

h 20:9 literally, "Who can say: 'I have cleansed my heart (completely)!'? (No one)." Compare 1 Kings 8:46; 2 Chr. 6:36; Job 9:30; 14:4; 15:14-16; Ps. 19:12; 51:5; 130:3; 143:2; Eccl. 7:20; Isa. 53:6; 64:6; Jer. 17:9; Rom. 3:19,23; Gal. 3:22; James 3:2; 1 John 1:8-10.

i 20:10 literally, "a stone and a stone; an ephah and an ephah" = differing weights and measures; that is, two standards for trading—one for the cheater and one for the public. The ephah was a dry measure; it was one-tenth of a homer (Ezek. 45:11). A bath (a Hebrew measurement) was its equivalent in size when measuring liquids. Compare Prov. 11:1; 16:11. See Lev. 19:36; Deut. 25:13; Mic. 6:10-11.

by his behavior. His actions show whether he is innocent and good or not.^a

¹²The Always-Present One has made both of these things—ears for hearing and eyes for seeing.

¹³If you love to sleep too much, then you will be poor. If you keep your eyes open, then you will have plenty of food.

¹⁴The buyer says: “Bad! This is bad!”^b But then he goes off and brags about what he purchased.^c

¹⁵There is plenty of gold, and there are many rubies. But there are only a few people who speak with knowledge.

¹⁶Take the coat of someone who promises to pay what a stranger owes!^d Keep it until he pays the stranger’s bills!

¹⁷When a person gets food dishonestly, it may taste sweet at first.^e But later, he will feel as

a 20:11 Since children are simple and straightforward in their actions, they do not yet have much sophistication in concealment and deception. Therefore, one can ascertain their real character and disposition early on.

b 20:14 claiming that an item is “no good”

c 20:14 that is, he is proud of his clever bargaining skills, after belittling and downgrading what was offered for sale.

d 20:16 literally, “Exact someone’s garment when he has been a guarantor (for) a stranger!” Compare Prov. 6:1; 11:15; 17:18; 22:26; 27:13. See Deut. 24:10-13. The judge tells the creditor to seize the goods which were guaranteed by one who was so weak that he foolishly pledged himself to pay for a stranger’s debts (that is, the actual debtor).

e 20:17 literally, “Sweet to a man (is) the bread of

if he has a mouth full of gravel.

¹⁸Get good counsel if you want your plans to work. If you go to war, then you’d better get the wise advice of others about how to wage war.

¹⁹Gossips cannot keep secrets. So, don’t associate with a person who talks too much.

²⁰Whoever curses his father or his mother will die like a light that goes out in darkness.^f

²¹An inheritance that is received too quickly early in life will not lead to happiness in the end.

²²Don’t say: “I’ll pay you back for the wrong you did to me!” Wait for the Always-Present One; He will rescue you.

²³The Always-Present One hates dishonest weights. And, dishonest scales are not good.

²⁴The Always-Present One directs what an individual does.^g So, no human being can understand what his life is all about without God.

²⁵It is dangerous for anybody to vow something to God too quickly, after making a solemn promise, then reflecting upon it.

²⁶A wise king finds out^h who the

falsehood.” Compare Prov. 9:17.

f 20:20 literally, “His lamp will be put out in the apple of the eye (= the blackness) of darkness” (Prov. 7:9) = like a wick being snuffed out in pitch darkness. Compare Prov. 13:9; 24:20.

g 20:24 literally, “The steps of a person (are) from Yahweh.” Compare Eccl. 9:1; Jer. 10:23.

h 20:26 literally, “scatters” = winnowing

evil people are. Then he punishes them.^a

²⁷The Always-Present One looks into a person's feelings.^b God searches through a person's thoughts.^c

²⁸Loyalty and truth keep a king in power. He continues to rule by loyalty.

²⁹Young men are admired for their strength. Old men are honored for their experience.

³⁰Hard punishment will get rid of evil.^d And, whippings can purge the inner parts of the heart.

21¹Like streams of water, the king's mind is under the control of the Always-Present One. He can direct it anywhere He pleases.

²A person may think that what he is doing is morally right. But the Always-Present One examines people's motives.

a 20:26 literally, "And, he turns back the wheel on them" = driving the threshing-wheel to separate the chaff from the grain (that is, the bad part from the good portion (Isa. 28:27-28)) on top of bad people (Amos 1:3). It is denoting serious punishment (compare 2 Sam. 12:31; 1 Chr. 20:3). Compare Prov. 20:8.

b 20:27 literally, "The lamp of Yahweh (is) the breath of man." Or, "The spirit of man (= the human spirit, Gen. 2:7; Job 32:8; John 1:9) (is) Yahweh's lamp (= the conscience, or possibly referring to God's eyes (Prov. 5:21; 15:3; Matt. 6:23))." Compare 1 Cor. 2:11.

c 20:27 literally, "searching all the chambers of the belly." = exposing each person's motives

d 20:30 or, "Stripes (that) wound will clean out evil." Literally, "The blueness (= a bruise, contusion) of a wound is a cleansing of sin." = the sting of the conscience. Sometimes the scourge of truth must leave its mark, and the divine rebuke must go deep to accomplish its purpose.

³Do what is right and fair. That is more important to the Always-Present One than our offering sacrifices.^e

⁴Proud looks, arrogant thoughts, and evil actions are sinful.

⁵Those who plan and work hard will earn a profit. But those who act too quickly become poor.

⁶Wealth that comes from telling lies vanishes like a mist, like those who have a death-wish.

⁷The violence of evil people will trap them, because they refuse to do what is fair.

⁸Perverted people live dishonest lives. But honest people do what is morally upright.

⁹It is better to live in the corner of a roof^f than to share the inside of a huge house^g with a nagging wife.

¹⁰An evil person only wants to harm others. His neighbor will receive no mercy from him.

¹¹If you punish somebody who makes fun of wisdom, then a simple-

e 21:3 Compare 1 Sam. 15:22; Prov. 15:8; Ps. 50:7-15; Hos. 6:6; Mic. 6:6-8; Isa. 1:11,17; Matt. 12:7; 23:23; Rom. 12:1-2. And, King Solomon had offered tremendous numbers of sacrifices (1 Kings 8:5).

f 21:9 or, "attic." The flat roof of a house in the Middle East was often used for prayer, retirement or exercise during the day (Deut. 22:8; 2 Sam. 11:2; 2 Kings 4:10; Ps. 102:7; Acts 10:9) or a cool place to sleep at night in the summer months (1 Sam. 9:25-26).

g 21:9 literally, "a house of fellowship (= a house in common)," which was large enough for several families

mind^a person may become wise. And, whenever you merely teach a sensible person, he will obtain knowledge.

¹²God, who is always righteous, observes the home of each evil person. And, He brings about the ruination of these bad people because of their sins.

¹³If you ignore the poor people when they cry out for help, then you too will call for help but not receive an answer!

¹⁴A gift that is given secretly will calm down an angry person. A present^b privately^c given will quiet even great fury.

¹⁵When things are done fairly, righteous people are happy, but evil people become frightened.

¹⁶A person who strays away from common sense will end up joining the dead people.

¹⁷One who is devoted to pleasure will become poor.^d Whoever loves wine and rich food^e will never be wealthy.

¹⁸A bad person will be punished in place of a good person,^f and

a 21:11 or, "unthinking"

b 21:14 not necessarily a bribe

c 21:14 literally, "in the bosom"

d 21:17 Expensive luxuries (= living beyond one's means) will only lead to one's poverty. Compare Prov. 23:20-21; Amos 6:6.

e 21:17 literally, "and (olive) oil" = luxury (Matt. 20:2; 26:7-9). This oil was used in several expensive lotions and perfumes (John 12:5).

f 21:18 literally, "The evil one (will become) a ran-

the treacherous man instead of the morally upright one.

¹⁹It is better to live alone in a desert land than to dwell with a nagging, complaining wife.

²⁰A wise person stores up the best foods and olive oil. But a foolish person eats up everything he has.^g

²¹A person who tries to live right and be loyal will find life, righteousness, and honor.

²²A smart person can conquer a city full of strong men. He can tear down the fortress in which they place their confidence.

²³A person who is careful about whatever he says keeps himself out of trouble.

²⁴A person who has a stubborn, arrogant attitude is called "a proud man" and "a braggart."

²⁵The lazy person's desire for sleep will kill him, because he refuses to work. ²⁶All day long, the lazy person wishes for more and more. But the righteous person gives generously without holding back.

²⁷The Always-Present One despises the sacrifices offered by evil people, especially when they bring them with the wrong motives.

om for the righteous one." = They only bring upon themselves the suffering which they are trying to inflict upon the good people. Righteous folks will always win at the end.

g 21:20 literally, "swallows it all up" = spending everything and saving nothing. Compare Matt. 25:1-13.

PROVERBS 21, 22

²⁸A lying witness will die. But a truthful man will always be remembered.

²⁹An evil man bluffs his way through.^a But an honest person thinks carefully about whatever he does.

³⁰There is no so-called “wisdom,” or “understanding,” or “advice” that can succeed against the Always-Present One.

³¹One could get the horses ready for the day of battle,^b but the victory will belong to the Always-Present One!^c

22¹It is more important to have a good reputation^d than to possess great riches. Being honored is better than owning silver or gold.

²Rich people and the poor have one thing in common—the Always-Present One created them all.^e

a **21:29** literally, “A bad man hardens his face.” = always putting forth a bold expression

b **21:31** Compare Deut. 17:16; Ps. 20:7; 33:16-17; Hos. 1:7; Eccl. 9:11. The horse was a symbol of military power. These animals were used exclusively for war, not for agricultural purposes. Solomon had about 12,000 horses (1 Kings 4:26; 10:26-28). Nevertheless, his kingdom soon crumbled after his death.

c **21:31** Compare 1 Sam. 17:47; Ps. 3:8; 1 Cor. 15:57; 1 John 5:4.

d **22:1** Compare Prov. 3:4; 10:7; Eccl. 7:1; Acts 10:22; 16:1-2; 22:12; 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:7.

e **22:2** or, “Yahweh is the Maker of all of them.” It means that *all* people are on an equal footing with God, their Creator (Prov. 14:31; 17:5; Job 31:15), even though there are many cultural and social differences in the world.

³When a sensible person sees danger ahead, he avoids it.^f But a simple-minded person keeps on going, and he suffers for it.

⁴Revering the Always-Present One is the reward of being humble. It will bring you wealth, honor, and life.

⁵Thorns and traps are in the pathway of a perverse individual. But the person who protects himself will avoid those things.

⁶Train^g a child on how to live the godly way.^h Then, even when he is old, he will still live that way.ⁱ

⁷Rich people rule over the poor people. And, the borrower becomes a slave to the lender.^j

⁸A person who plants injustice will harvest trouble.^k And, the reign of terror will come to an end.

⁹It is the generous person who will be blessed, because he shares his food with the poor people.

¹⁰If you get rid of the person who makes fun of wisdom, then fighting will go away, and quarrels and insults will stop.

¹¹A person who loves innocent thoughts and kind words will

f **22:3** literally, “he hides himself” = taking precautions. Compare Prov. 14:8.

g **22:6** or, “Initiate” = in the sense of dedicating

h **22:6** Compare Prov. 1:8; 4:11; 22:15; Deut. 6:4-7.

i **22:6** literally, “he will not stray from it.” Eph. 6:4; 2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15.

j **22:7** Compare Neh. 5:4-5; Matt. 18:25,34; Rom. 13:8.

k **22:8** Compare Prov. 11:18a; 12:21b; Ps. 109:16-20; Gal. 6:7-8.

have the king for his friend.

¹²The Always-Present One protects knowledge from being lost.^a But He overthrows the evil words of a treacherous person.

¹³A lazy person claims: “There’s a lion outside! I might get killed out in the street!”^b

¹⁴The words of an unfaithful wife are like a deep pit. Those who make the Always-Present One angry will fall into it.

¹⁵Every child is full of foolishness.^c But physical discipline^d can get rid of it.^e

¹⁶The one who gets rich by being cruel to the poor people will himself become poor. How? By having to give more and more “gifts” to the super-rich. And thus, he ends up in poverty!

More Wise Sayings

¹⁷Give attention^f and listen to

what wise people say. Retain what I am teaching you.¹⁸It will be good to keep these things in mind. Be ready to recite them.¹⁹I am teaching them especially to you now, so that you will put your trust in the Always-Present One.^g²⁰I have written down 30 wonderful sayings for you. They will impart knowledge and good advice.²¹I am teaching you true, reliable words. Then you can give true answers to anyone who asks you.^h

²²Do not exploit the poor people just because they are poor.ⁱ And, do not take away in court the rights^j of the needy people.²³Why? Because the Always-Present One will defend them in court. And, He will ruin those who are trying to ruin the poor man.

²⁴Don’t make friends with anyone who gets mad quickly. And, don’t associate with someone who has a hot temper.²⁵If you do, then you might learn to be just like him. Then you will be in real danger.^k

²⁶Don’t promise to pay what someone else owes. And, don’t put

a **22:12** literally, “The eyes of Yahweh keep (= guard) knowledge” (= the principles of wisdom, Prov. 1:7). Compare Prov. 5:21; 15:3; Job 31:4; 34:21; Jer. 16:17; Heb. 4:13.

b **22:13** A bum makes up all kinds of silly excuses to save his faulty conscience; he really doesn’t want to go to work.

c **22:15** literally, “Foolishness is bound up (= firmly fixed) in the heart of a young one.” Little ones are full of mischief and self-will which *must* be brought under control.

d **22:15** or, “punishment” as a deterrent to a life of crime

e **22:15** literally, “The rod of discipline will drive it far from him.” Compare Prov. 13:24; 22:6; 29:15,21. This verse is talking about corporal punishment.

f **22:17** literally, “Stretch your ear”

g **22:19** Compare Prov. 3:5-6.

h **22:21** Compare 1 Pet. 3:15.

i **22:22** = Might doesn’t make right. Compare Prov. 14:31.

j **22:22** literally, “crush at the gate”, where all their legal business was conducted. Compare Ruth 4:1-12; Job 5:4; 31:21; Ps. 69:12; Prov. 22:22.

k **22:25** literally, “and you would take a snare (= trap) to your soul” = becoming entangled in serious trouble. Compare Prov. 2:12-15; 4:14; 5:22; 12:13; 13:14; 29:6.

up a security deposit in which **you** will pay for what he owes. ²⁷If you cannot pay off what he owes, then **your** bed will be taken and sold.^a

²⁸Don't move the old stone-marker^b that shows exactly where a person's land is.^c These stones were set up by your ancestors.

²⁹Do you see a man who is inventive^d in his work? That man will serve kings, instead of working for ordinary people.^e

23 ¹If you sit down to eat with a ruler, take special notice of the meal that is in front of you. ²Control yourself,^f if you are a big eater. ³Don't crave his fancy foods. He might use that rich food to trick you. ⁴Don't wear yourself out trying to

a 22:27 literally, "Why should your bed be taken away from underneath you!?" that is, by a creditor (Exo. 22:25-27; Deut. 24:12-13; Neh. 5:11; Ezek. 18:12)

b 22:28 = the boundary-line marker set by the surveyor of the land. Doing so is the attempted, premeditated theft of land. It was a crime which was so easy to commit but hard to prove.

c 22:28 See Deut. 19:14; 27:17; Prov. 15:25; 23:10a.

d 22:29 literally, "prompt" = one who is unusually skillful, proficient, facile, and possesses dexterity, creativity, and ingenuity (compare Bezalel (Exo. 35:30-35) and Hiram (or, Hiram, 1 Kings 7:13-51)

e 22:29 literally, "He will not stand before obscure men." = A man of real competence will inevitably be promoted.

f 23:2 literally, "And put a knife to your throat". This was an expression in the Middle East which meant to severely curb one's appetite. Over-indulgence at such a time might endanger one's very life (see verse 3).

get rich.^g Be smart enough to know when to quit. ⁵Wealth can vanish in the blink of an eye.^h It truly sprouts wings for itself and flies away like an eagle into the sky.ⁱ

⁶Don't eat the food of a stingy person.^j Don't crave his fancy foods.

⁷Such a person is always worrying about how much the food costs.^k He may tell you: "Eat and drink!" But he doesn't really mean it. ⁸Thus, you will feel like throwing up the little bit that you've eaten.^l Then you will have wasted your kind words!^m

⁹Don't speak to a foolish person. Why? Because he will only ignore your wise words.

¹⁰Don't move the ancient land-marker.ⁿ And, don't take the fields which belong to orphans.^o ¹¹Why?

g 23:4 Compare Prov. 15:27a; 28:20b; John 6:27; 1 Tim. 6:9-10; Heb. 13:5.

h 23:5 literally, "Whenever your eyes light upon it, it's gone!"

i 23:5 Compare Jer. 17:11; Luke 12:21; 1 Tim. 6:17.

j 23:6 literally, "the bread of an evil eye." Compare Prov. 22:9; Deut. 15:9; Matt. 6:23; 20:15.

k 23:7 literally, "for as he thinks within himself, so is he." (compare Prov. 4:23) = whatever he was all along in his heart is what he was in the final act. He was *not* truly hospitable.

l 23:8 out of your disgust for the insensitive host

m 23:8 or, "your compliments (to your host)!" You owe no gratitude for the banquet which was so grudgingly bestowed.

n 23:10 the old stone that shows where someone's boundary is marked. That property line was put there by a surveyor a long time ago, and it must not be moved by a cheater. Compare Prov. 15:25; 22:28.

o 23:10 Widows and orphans were at the greatest risk of suffering damage by the fraudulent removal of their official landmark. Compare Isa. 10:2; Jer. 22:3; Zech. 7:10.

Because God, their Champion,^a is strong. He will plead their case against you in court.

¹²Remember what you were taught. And, listen carefully to the words of knowledge.

¹³Don't fail to punish a child. He won't die from a spanking. ¹⁴If you punish him with a spanking, then you will deliver him from death.

¹⁵My child, if you are wise, then I myself will be happy. ¹⁶I would be so thrilled, if you speak what is right.

¹⁷Don't envy sinners. Instead, always continue to revere the Always-Present One. ¹⁸If you do, then you will have hope for the future.^b Your wishes will come true.

¹⁹Listen, my child, and be wise. Keep your mind on what is right.

²⁰Don't be with^c drunkards^d or

with those who eat way too much food. ²¹Drunkards and gluttons will lose everything. They will sleep so much that they will end up wearing rags.

²²Listen to your father who gave you life. And, don't forget your mother when she is old. ²³Learn^e the truth and never reject it.^f Obtain wisdom, self-control, and understanding. ²⁴The father of a good child is very happy. The man who has a wise son is glad because of him. ²⁵Let your father and your mother be glad. May your mother be happy.

²⁶My child, pay close attention to me. And, watch closely what I do.

²⁷A prostitute is as dangerous as a deep pit. And an unfaithful wife is like a narrow well. ²⁸These women will surely ambush you like bandits. And, they will cause many men to be unfaithful to their wives.^g

²⁹⁻³⁰There are those who linger over wine.^h They try out all the different kinds of alcohol.ⁱ So, they

e 23:23 literally, "Get" = invest, Prov. 4:5,7; 16:16; metaphorically, "Buy" (See the same Hebrew verb in Gen. 4:1.)

f 23:23 literally, "sell (it)."

g 23:28 literally, "and she increases the faithless ones among men." Compare Prov. 7:26. This kind of woman causes her victim to betray his God, his wife, his parents, and himself.

h 23:29-30 Compare Prov. 9:2; Ps. 75:8; Isa. 5:11,22; Hos. 4:11.

i 23:29-30 literally, "those going in to search out mixed wine." = those who frequent bars, taverns, or pubs. There were two ways of "mixing" wine.

a 23:11 or, "Redeemer" = Defender, the next of kin who was obligated to make justice happen; that is, to avenge the unrepresented ones. Hebrew: *Go'el*. Compare Lev. 25:25-26; Num. 35:11,12,19; Ruth 2:20; 3:2,9,12; Job 19:25; Ps. 19:14; 68:5; Jer. 31:11; 50:34.

b 23:18 literally, "for there is surely a hereafter." Compare Ps. 37:28-38; Jer. 29:11. The author of this proverb believed strongly in the moral government of the one true God and in a future life where all things would be rectified (Prov. 14:32).

c 23:20 = carousing

d 23:20 literally, "heavy drinkers of wine". These were men who met together regularly for the express purpose of drinking intoxicating liquors. Drunkenness is condemned throughout the Scriptures (Deut. 21:20; Prov. 20:1; Matt. 24:49; Luke 21:34; Rom. 13:13; 1 Cor. 6:10; Eph. 5:18; 1 Tim. 3:3). Liquor is poison. Don't touch it! The graveyard is full of fools who thought that they "could handle their liquor"!

have trouble. They are so sad. They fight. They complain. They have unnecessary bruises. They have bloodshot eyes. ³¹Don't stare at the wine's seductive, red color.^a It may sparkle in the cup. It may go down your throat smoothly. ³²But, later,^b it bites like a snake. It stings^c like a viper.^d ³³Your eyes will see weird sights.^e And, your mind will utter vile things.^f ³⁴You will feel dizzy,^g as if you are out in the middle of the ocean. You will feel as if you're sitting on the top of the swaying mast. ³⁵You will think: "They hit me, but I'm not hurt!^h They have beaten me, but I don't remember it. I wish I could wake up.ⁱ Then I would still get another drink!"^j

One way was to dilute its strength by adding water, thus weakening it markedly. The other way was to *increase* its potency by mixing in more intoxicating spices (Isa. 5:22; Prov. 9:2). The powerful liquors of today are far more dangerous than those of antiquity. It starts out with a little "social" drink, and then it escalates to full-blown alcoholism.

a 23:31 The red color indicates that the percentage of alcohol was more potent.

b 23:32 when the hangover sets in

c 23:32 or, "punctures", spreading its venom

d 23:32 literally, "an adder." = a poisonous snake; possibly the Cerastes, the deadly "Horned Snake"

e 23:33 = delirium. Compare Gen. 19:31,35.

f 23:33 = the very worst profanity. Compare Prov. 15:28b; Matt. 15:19.

g 23:34 literally, "And you will be like one who lies down" = becoming nauseous

h 23:35 His drunken condition has rendered him insensitive to pain.

i 23:35 This is the picture of a drunkard's confused musings after a night of heavy drinking. Yet his first conscious thought is to return to his addiction to alcohol!

j 23:35 Compare Prov. 26:11; 27:22; Isa. 56:12.

24 ¹Don't envy evil people. Don't desire to associate with them. ²In their minds, they plan cruel things. And, they are always talking about causing trouble.

³It takes wisdom to build a household. It will be made strong through insight. ⁴It takes knowledge to fill the rooms with all kinds of rare and beautiful treasures.

⁵A wise man has great power. And, a man who has knowledge gets stronger and stronger. ⁶So, you will need good advice when you go to war. If you have many counselors, you will win the war.^k

⁷A foolish person cannot understand wisdom. He has nothing to say in court.

⁸The person who makes up evil plans will be called "a troublemaker."

⁹Making foolish plans is sinful. And, making fun of others is hateful.

¹⁰If you give up when a crisis comes, then it shows that you have very little strength.

¹¹Deliver those who are being led to their deaths. Rescue those who are about to be killed. ¹²You may say: "Listen, we don't know anything about this!" But God knows what's in your mind,^l and He will

He wants to escape reality.

k 24:6 Compare Prov. 11:14; 21:22; Eccl. 9:16,18; Ps. 144:1.

l 24:12 literally, "weighs the hearts". Compare Prov. 16:2; 21:2.

notice.^a He is watching you, and He will know it! He will pay each person back for what he has done.

¹³My child, eat honey because it is good. Honey from the honeycomb tastes sweet. ¹⁴In the same way, the knowledge gained from wisdom is pleasing to you. If you find it, then you have hope for the future. Your wishes will come true.

¹⁵O evil one, don't ambush a righteous man's house. Don't rob his home. ¹⁶A righteous man may be hurt by trouble seven times,^b but he does not give up. But the evil people will be overwhelmed by a calamity.

¹⁷Don't be happy^c when your enemy is defeated. Don't be glad when he is overwhelmed. ¹⁸Otherwise, the Always-Present One will notice and be displeased. Then the Always-Present One may not be angry with him anymore.

¹⁹Don't fret over wrong-doers. And, don't be envious of the evil people. ²⁰Why? Because the evil person has no future. The lamp of the evil people will be snuffed out.^d

²¹My child, revere the Always-

Present One and respect the king. Don't join the rebels.^e ²²Such people will be quickly destroyed. These men can cause great trouble!

²³These are also sayings for wise persons:

It is wrong to take sides when you are the judge.^f ²⁴Don't say that an evil person is innocent. If you do so, people will curse you, and ethnic groups will hate you. ²⁵But things will go well for judges who convict the guilty. And, the judges will receive rich blessings from God.

²⁶An honest answer is like a kiss on the lips.

²⁷You should work outside and prepare your fields first. After that, you should start building your house.

²⁸Don't testify against your neighbor for no good reason. Don't say things that are false. ²⁹Don't say: "I'll get even with that man! I'll do to him exactly what he did to me!"

³⁰I passed by a lazy person's field.^g I went by the vineyard of a man who had no sense. ³¹And behold, thorns had grown up everywhere.^h The

e 24:21 radicals who want to overthrow the established government

f 24:23 literally, "to discern faces in judgment" = partiality in making judicial decisions (Prov. 18:5). God does *not* play favorites (Acts 10:34; James 2:1-13).

g 24:30 Compare Prov. 6:6-11; 10:26; 12:11,24,27; 13:4; 14:4,23; 15:19; 16:26; 18:9; 19:15,24; 20:4,13; 21:25; 22:13.

h 24:31 = willful neglect. Compare Prov. 15:19; Isa. 34:13.

a 24:12 If you neglect your known duty, it is still sin (James 4:17). We must not "look the other way" to hush up a clear-cut wrong (Eccl. 5:8).

b 24:16 literally, "may fall seven (times)" = an expression which means "often". Compare Prov. 6:16,31; 9:1; Job 5:19; Matt. 18:22.

c 24:17 or, "Do not gloat"

d 24:20 Compare Prov. 13:9; 20:20; Ps. 37:38; 18:28.

ground was covered with weeds.^a And, the stone walls^b had fallen down.^c ³²I reflected upon what I had just seen. From what I saw, I learned this lesson: ³³If you sleep a little; if you take a little nap; if you fold your hands and rest a little, ³⁴then you will soon be very poor, and your scarcity will come like an armed robber.

More Proverbs from Solomon

25¹These are more wise sayings of Solomon. They were copied by the men of Hezekiah,^d the king of Judah:^e

²God is honored for what He keeps secret. Kings are honored for what they can discover.

³No one can comprehend the height of the skies or the depth of the earth.^f And, no one can fully understand the minds of kings.

⁴Remove the impurities from silver ore. Then the pure silver can be used by the silversmith. ⁵If you remove an evil person from the king's presence, then the king's government will be

honest, and it will last a long time. ⁶Don't brag to the king. Don't act as if you are a great person. ⁷Why? Because it is better for him to promote you to a higher job^g than to publicly give you a less important position.

Just because you saw something, ⁸doesn't mean that you should take someone to court quickly.^h Otherwise, what would you do later when your neighbor proves that you are wrong!?ⁱ

⁹If you have an argument with your neighbor, don't tell other people what was said. ¹⁰If so, whoever hears it might accuse you of gossip. And, you might never be respected again.

¹¹The right word spoken at the right time is as beautiful as golden apples^j in the context of a silver bowl.

¹²A warning from a smart person is very valuable to someone who is willing to listen. It is worth as much as gold ear-rings or fine, gold jewelry.

¹³A trustworthy messenger refreshes the spirit of his employer. He is like the coolness of snow in the summertime.^k

a **24:31** or, "nettles." Metaphorically, the bad habits were taking over his life.

b **24:31** = the fence

c **24:31** This is a figure depicting that the laws and rules of an inward life had disintegrated.

d **25:1** He ruled from 715 to 686 B.C.

e **25:1** There was a great spiritual revival during Hezekiah's reign (2 Chr. 29:30).

f **25:3** state secrets, which were inaccessible to ordinary people

g **25:7** literally, "(It is) better (that) he says to you: 'Come up here!'" See Luke 14:7-11.

h **25:8** Compare Prov. 3:30. Avoid plunging into litigation (Prov. 17:14; 24:28); there is always the risk of a failure.

i **25:8** literally, "embarrasses you!?" = being humiliated by a sound defeat. Compare Matt. 5:25. It is much better to settle minor disputes out of court than for either party "to air their dirty laundry".

j **25:11** = oranges? apricots?

k **25:13** literally, "on the day of harvest." Compare

¹⁴People who brag about gifts that they never give are like clouds and wind that yield no rain.

¹⁵You can convince a ruler with patience. And, a gentle word can get through to a hard-headed person.^a

¹⁶If you find honey, then don't eat too much. Too much of it will make you sick. ¹⁷In the same way, you shouldn't go over to your neighbor's house too often. Seeing too much of you will cause him to despise you.^b

¹⁸Anyone who tells lies about his neighbor is hurting him as much as a club, a sword, or a sharp arrow would hurt him.

¹⁹When you are in trouble, don't trust unreliable people. That would be like eating with a broken tooth or like trying to walk with a broken foot.

²⁰Don't sing happy songs to someone who is very sad. That would be like taking off a coat on a cold day or like pouring vinegar on top of a wound.^c

²¹If your enemy is hungry,

feed him.^d If he's thirsty, give him a drink of water.^e

²²Doing this will be like pouring burning coals on his head.^f And, the Always-Present One will reward you.

²³The north wind brings forth rain. In the same way, telling gossip brings dirty looks.

²⁴It is better to live on the corner of the roof than to share the inside of a huge house with a nagging wife.

²⁵Hearing good news from a far-away country is like having a cool drink when you are tired.

²⁶A righteous person who gives in to evil is like a corrupted spring or a dirty well.^g

²⁷It is not good to eat too much honey. In the same way, it is not honorable to praise yourself.

²⁸A person who does not control himself is like a city which has broken-down walls.

d 25:21 Compare Prov. 20:22; Exo. 23:4-5; 2 Kings 6:21-23.

e 25:21 Compare Matt. 5:44.

f 25:22 = "Killing him with kindness" will cause him to burn up with shame. Compare Ps. 140:10. See Rom. 12:20. These feelings are the pangs of conscience which an enemy would experience when he received such undeserved treatment. Hearts are softened by kindness, just as metals are melted by hot coals. According to Lev. 16:12, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest would fill his censer with hot coals. Then he would put some incense upon it. This would produce a sweet-smelling fragrance.

g 25:26 It was not healthy to get water from such a source. It is a sad day when one learns of betrayal. So much promise and so much disappointment! Contrast Prov. 10:11a.

Prov. 13:17; 17:2; 26:1. King Solomon had a summer palace in Lebanon (1 Kings 9:19; Song of Songs 7:4), not far from the snows of Mount Hermon (which had an elevation of more than 9,000 feet).

a 25:15 literally, "And a soft tongue will shatter a bone." Compare Prov. 14:29; 15:18; Luke 18:1-8.

b 25:17 literally, "Otherwise, he will become full of you and hate you." = wearing out your welcome

c 25:20 or, "upon natron." Hebrew: *nater*, which was probably nitrate of potash (= saltpeter, sodium carbonate (Jer. 2:22)). There will be a strong chemical reaction when acidic vinegar is poured onto this substance.

26¹Just as it does not snow in summer or rain at harvest-time,^a neither should a foolish person ever be honored.

²Undeserved curses won't harm anybody.^b They are like aimless sparrows that fly all around, or swallows that dart but they never land.

³A whip is used to train a horse, and a halter is for a donkey. And, a rod is for the backs of fools!

⁴Don't give a foolish person a foolish answer.^c If you do, then you too will become just like him.

⁵Sometimes, you **should** disprove a foolish person's foolish line of reasoning. If you don't, then he will think that **he** is truly smart.

⁶Don't send a message through a foolish person. That would be like cutting off your own feet or like drinking poison.

⁷A wise saying spoken by a fool does no good. It is as useless as both legs of a paralyzed person.

⁸Giving honor to a foolish person doesn't do any good. It would be like somebody tying a stone to a slingshot.^d

a 26:1 In Palestine, it hardly ever rains from the early showers of the spring to the month of October.

b 26:2 Compare 2 Sam. 16:8,12; Neh. 13:2.

c 26:4 literally, "according to his folly." = You must not lower yourself by stooping to the fool's level. Don't answer his silly questions, as if he were a sensible person. Compare Prov. 23:9; Matt. 7:6.

d 26:8 In order for the rock to be propelled from

⁹A wise saying spoken by a fool is like a thorn bush in the hand of a drunk.^e

¹⁰Someone might hire a fool or a vagrant. That employer would be like an archer who shoots at anything he sees.

¹¹A dog eats whatever it throws up. That is like a foolish person repeating his own foolishness.

¹²Some people think they are so smart. There is more hope for a fool than for him!

¹³The lazy person says: "There's a lion in the road! There's a fierce lion in the streets!"^f

¹⁴The lazy person is like a door that turns back and forth on its hinges.^g He stays on his bed and turns over and over.^h

¹⁵The lazy person may bury his hand in the dish. But, he is too tired to lift up the food to his mouth.

¹⁶The lazy person thinks that he's smarter than sevenⁱ people who give sensible answers.

¹⁷A passer-by who interferes in

the sling-shot, it must lie *loosely* in the pouch, ready to come out when the slinger so chooses. It would be pointless for him to tie the rock into the pouch!

e 26:9 that is, A wise proverb wrongly applied does harm to the man himself or to others. One must be very careful when using sharp objects!

f 26:13 just another excuse for him not to leave his house to go to work

g 26:14 but it doesn't go anywhere

h 26:14 = He doesn't ever do any actual work. Compare Prov. 6:9-10; 24:33.

i 26:16 Seven" is the number of completeness (Prov. 6:31; 9:1; 24:16).

somebody else's quarrel^a is like one who grabs a dog by the ears.^b

18-19 A person shouldn't victimize his neighbor and then say: "I was only joking!"^c That is like a crazy man shooting deadly arrows that are on fire!

20 Without wood, a fire will go out.^d And, without gossip, tension will stop.

21 Charcoal and wood keep a fire going. Similarly, a quarrelsome person starts an argument.

22 The words of a gossip are like tasty morsels of food. People take them all in.

23 Smooth words from an evil mind are like a shiny coating over a clay pot.

24 A person who hates you may disguise his words. But, he plots deceit in his mind. 25 His voice may sound kind, but don't believe him. Why? Because his mind is full of many disgusting thoughts.^e 26 He hides his hatred with deceptiveness. Nevertheless, his evil will become plain to everyone.

27 Whoever digs a pit for other

people will fall into it himself.^f Whoever tries to roll a big rock onto others will himself be crushed by it.

28 A liar hates the people whom he victimizes. And, false praise can ruin people.

27¹ Don't brag about what will happen tomorrow. Why? Because you don't really know what will happen then.^g

² Don't praise yourself; let somebody else do it. Let the praise come from a stranger and not from your own lips.

³ Stone is heavy, and sand weighs a lot. But the resentment of a foolish person causes more trouble than both of them.

⁴ Fury is cruel. Anger is overwhelming. But no one can withstand jealousy!

⁵ It is better to correct someone openly^h than to "love" him and never show it.ⁱ

⁶ The slap of a friend can be trusted to help you. But the many kisses of an enemy are nothing but lies.

⁷ When someone is full, not even

a 26:17 In reality, it is none of his business. Compare Prov. 20:19.

b 26:17 The sure way to get bitten by a dog was to seize its ears! The dogs in Palestine were not pets; they were wild scavengers.

c 26:18-19 It was *not* fun for the person who was hurt by the lie!

d 26:20 Compare Prov. 22:10.

e 26:25 literally, "for there (are) seven abominations in his heart." Compare the seven demons in Matt. 12:45 and in Mark 16:9.

f 26:27 Compare Prov. 1:18; 28:10; 29:6; Eccl. 10:8-9; Ps. 7:15-16; 9:15-16; 10:2; 57:6; Esth. 5:7-14; 7:1-10.

g 27:1 literally, "Because you do not know what a day may bring forth." Compare Prov. 16:9; 19:21; 25:14; Isa. 56:12; Luke 12:19-20; James 4:13-16.

h 27:5 literally, "Better (is) frank rebuke" = tough love. Compare Prov. 15:31; Gal. 2:14; Eph. 4:15.

i 27:5 literally, "than hidden love."

honey tastes good.^a But when he is hungry, even something bitter tastes sweet.

⁸A man who strays from his home is like a bird that strays from its nest.

⁹Perfume and ointment make a person happy. And, heartfelt advice from a friend is sweet.

¹⁰Don't forget your friend or your father's friend. Then you won't need to go to your brother's house for help when trouble comes your way. A nearby neighbor is better than a brother who is far away.

¹¹Be wise, my child, and you will make me happy. Then I can respond to anyone who criticizes me.

¹²When a sensible person sees danger ahead, he avoids it. But a simple-minded person keeps going and gets into trouble.

¹³Take the coat^b of someone who promises to pay what a stranger owes. Keep it as security^c until he pays the foreigner's debts.

¹⁴Don't greet your neighbor loudly early in the morning.^d He will think of it as a curse.

¹⁵A nagging wife is just like a constant dripping on a very rainy day. ¹⁶Stopping her complaints is

a 27:7 literally, "A satisfied soul (= person) tramples (= rejects) a honeycomb." Compare Prov. 25:16,27. Rich people possess too many luxurious things; they are usually not happy.

b 27:13 = get the collateral

c 27:13 = a deposit

d 27:14 = inappropriate and rude behavior

like stopping the wind. It is like trying to grasp olive oil in your right hand.

¹⁷Iron can sharpen iron. In the same way, people can help each other learn.^e

¹⁸The person who tends a fig tree will eat of its fruit. And, the person who takes care of his master will be honored.^f

¹⁹Just as you can see your own face in the reflection of a pool of water, so your own mind reveals what kind of person you are.^g

²⁰People will never stop dying and being destroyed. Similarly, people will never stop wanting more than they have.

²¹A crucible tests the purity of silver, and a hot furnace refines gold. And, a person is tested by the praise that he receives from others.^h

²²Even if you did grind up

e 27:17 literally, "And, a man sharpens his friend's face." = Intelligent conversation promotes mutual edification. A healthy exchange of ideas is valuable. The purest form of "information" is interaction because neither participant knows precisely what the other one is going to say. Novel syntheses can result.

f 27:18 Diligence will obtain a reward for a humble servant because the servant was protecting his superior's interests. Compare Matt. 25:21; Luke 12:42-44; John 12:26.

g 27:19 literally, "so the heart of man (corresponds) to man." Compare Prov. 4:23; 23:7a. Whatever attitude you project to others will generally determine how they respond to you, whether positive or negative.

h 27:21 literally, "by the mouth of his praise" = flattery? Compare Luke 6:26. Vain men seek praise. Weak men are inflated by praise. Wise men disregard praise.

a foolish person like some grain in a bowl, you could **not** separate his foolishness from him.^a

²³Be sure you know how your sheep are doing. Pay close attention to the condition of your cattle.^b ²⁴Riches will not last forever. Governments will not continue forever, either. ²⁵Whenever one brings in the hay, and the new grass appears, and the plants from the hills are gathered, ²⁶the lambs will provide your clothing. And, the price from some male goats will buy a field. ²⁷There will be plenty of goat's milk for food to feed you and your family. And, it will nourish your servant girls.

28¹An evil person runs away, even though nobody is chasing him.^c But righteous people are as brave as a lion.^d

²When there are flagrant violations within a country, there will be one ruler after another.^e But, when a nation is led by a man with

a **27:22** Stubborn sinners are incorrigible; even the heaviest punishments do not faze them. A fool's folly is his fundamental nature. Compare Prov. 20:30; 26:11; Jer. 5:3.

b **27:23** literally, "Set your heart to the herds." Diligence prevents losses.

c **28:1** A criminal's guilty conscience compels him to flee the pursuit of law officers. He is always imagining that they are about to catch up with him.

d **28:1** Compare Prov. 14:26a; Ps. 27:1. Good people have clear consciences, and they feel no compulsion to fear policemen.

e **28:2** literally, "(there will be) many rulers." = political instability. See 1 Kings 16:8-28; 2 Kings 15:8-15; Hos. 8:4.

knowledge and insight, it will have a stable government.

³Rulers who are cruel to the poor are like the pounding rain that destroys the crops.

⁴People who abandon God's teachings praise evil people. But those who obey the teachings resist them.

⁵Evil men do not understand fairness.^f But those who are seeking the Always-Present One understand it completely.

⁶It is better to be poor and honest^g than to be rich and dishonest.

⁷The one who keeps God's teachings is a wise son. But the one who hangs out with wild friends disgraces his father.

⁸Some people^h get rich by charging other people interest that is too high.ⁱ Nevertheless, their wealth will be given to those who are kind to the poor.^j

⁹If you reject God's teachings, your prayers are detestable to God.

¹⁰The one who misleads honest

f **28:5** or, "justice" = true religion. Compare Prov. 29:7; John 7:17; 12:39-40. Ignorance of moral truth is caused by an unwillingness to know it (Rom. 1:18-32).

g **28:6** literally, "walk in (= live by) one's integrity." A lack of money has nothing to do with one's moral integrity. Compare Prov. 19:1.

h **28:8** = loan sharks

i **28:8** = usury. This was prohibited in Exo. 22:25; Lev. 25:35-37; Deut. 23:19-20; Ezek. 22:12.

j **28:8** In time, these funds will pass into beneficent hands who will know how to use them better. Compare Prov. 13:22; 14:21,31; Eccl. 2:26; Luke 19:24.

people to do wrong will be ruined by his own evil.^a But innocent people will be rewarded with good things.

¹¹A rich man may think that he is smart. But a poor man who has insight knows that the rich man is wrong.

¹²When righteous people succeed, there is great joy. But when the evil people gain power, everybody goes into hiding.

¹³If you hide your sins, then you will not succeed. But, if you confess and abandon them, then you will receive mercy.

¹⁴The one who always respects God will be happy. But the one who makes his heart stubborn will get into trouble.

¹⁵An evil ruler over helpless people is like a roaring lion or a charging bear.

¹⁶A cruel leader lacks understanding.^b But the one who hates dirty money^c will live a long time.

¹⁷A man who is tormented by being guilty of committing murder^d will keep on running until he dies.^e Let no one protect him!

¹⁸People who live with integrity

a 28:10 literally, “will fall into his own pit (= trap).” Compare Prov. 26:27a.

b 28:16 Such a man does not perceive that his oppression of others will endanger his own government. Compare Jer. 22:13-19.

c 28:16 or, “dishonest gain.” Compare Col. 3:5.

d 28:17 literally, “pressed down with the blood of a soul” (compare Gen. 9:6; Exo. 21:14)

e 28:17 literally, “flees to the Pit (= Sheol).” See the instance of Cain in Gen. 4:9-16.

will be kept safe. But those who are dishonest will suddenly be ruined.

¹⁹The person who works his land will have plenty of food. But the one who chases after useless dreams will end up being very poor.

²⁰A truthful man will have many blessings. But one who is eager to get rich^f will get into lots of trouble.

²¹It is not good to show favoritism.^g However, a person will step over the line for a mere piece of bread.

²²A stingy person^h is in a hurry to get rich. But, he does not realize that poverty will overtake him.

²³In the end, one who corrects another will be more appreciated than one who gives false praise.

²⁴Someone might rob his father or his mother and say: “That’s not wrong!” But such a person is just like a man who destroys people.

²⁵A greedy person causes trouble. But the one who trusts the Always-Present One will prosper.

²⁶The person who trusts in himself is foolish. But the one who lives wisely will be delivered.

²⁷The person who gives generously to the poor people will lack nothing. But the one who ignores the poor

f 28:20 Compare Col. 3:5; 1 Tim. 6:6-11,17.

g 28:21 literally, “to regard faces” = the motive of partiality. Compare Prov. 18:5; 24:23.

h 28:22 literally, “A man with an evil eye” = greedy (Prov. 23:6; Matt. 20:15)

people will receive many curses.^a

²⁸When the evil people gain power, everybody hides. But, when the bad people perish, the good people thrive.

29¹Some people are still very stubborn,^b no matter how many times they have been corrected. But, they will suddenly be broken—and they won't recover!

²When righteous people are doing well, the populace is happy. But when evil people are in charge, the populace groans.

³A man who loves wisdom makes his father glad. But the one who frequents prostitutes wastes his money.

⁴When a king is just, he stabilizes his country. But one who accepts pay-offs tears down his nation.

⁵Anyone who gives false praise to his neighbor is setting a trap for him.

⁶An evil person is trapped by his own sin.^c But a good person can sing and be happy.

a 28:27 Compare Prov. 11:24-26; 21:13; Isa. 1:15. "Curses" refers to the extreme bitterness of the poor people who were really suffering because their most basic necessities were being denied to them by those who were wallowing in luxury.

b 29:1 literally, "one who stiffens (his) neck." See Deut. 9:6,13; 2 Kings 17:14; Neh. 9:16. The hardening of the neck was a metaphor which was derived from obstinate work animals which would not submit to the yoke (Deut. 10:16; Jer. 2:20; 27:8). Contrast Christ's "yoke" in Matt. 11:28-30.

c 29:6 Deep sin becomes habitual, and the sinner is unwilling to break with his old immoral patterns. Compare Prov. 1:18; 12:3; 22:5.

⁷A good person is concerned about the rights of the poor people. But an evil person doesn't understand such a concept.

⁸Men who make fun of others^d stir up trouble in a city. But wise people calm tempers down.

⁹A wise man should not argue with a foolish man. The fool will only ridicule and be abusive, and there will be no rest.

¹⁰Murderers hate an honest man.^e But upright people try to protect him.

¹¹A foolish person loses his temper. But a wise person controls his anger.

¹²If a ruler pays attention to lies, then all of his advisers will become depraved.

¹³The poor person and the cruel person are similar — the Always-Present One sustains the lives of both of them.

¹⁴If a king judges poor people fairly, then his throne will last a long time.

¹⁵Discipline and correction impart wisdom. But, if a youngster is left undisciplined, then he will disgrace his mother.

¹⁶When evil people thrive, crime flourishes. Nevertheless, the righteous people will observe their downfall.

17Correct your child, and you

d 29:8 literally, "scoffers", those who contemptuously disregard God's teachings (Isa. 28:14)

e 29:10 Compare Prov. 28:17; Ps. 26:9. See the instance of Cain hating Abel (Gen. 4:1-8; 1 John 3:12).

will get peace of mind. He will bring delight to your soul.

¹⁸Where there is no message from God, people go wild. But the person who obeys God's teachings is blessed.

¹⁹A servant cannot be disciplined by just talking to him. He may understand what you want, but there won't be any response.

²⁰Do you see a person who is too quick to speak?^a Well, there is more hope for a fool than for him!

²¹Don't spoil your servant when he is young. If you do, later on, he will bring you grief.^b

²²An angry person stirs up trouble. And, a man with a hot temper will abound with rebellion.

²³A man's pride will ruin him. But a person who is humble will be honored.

²⁴The partner of a thief is his own worst enemy. He must testify in court, but he dares not say anything.^c

²⁵Being afraid of people is a dangerous trap. However, if you

a 29:20 literally, "hasty in his words" = speaking without thinking first. Compare Prov. 21:5a; James 1:19. For saying too many words, see Prov. 10:19 and Prov. 17:27-28.

b 29:21 literally, "(at) his latter end, he will be a successor." The servant boy will begin to think that he is a *son* legally, with all the rights and privileges of an heir (Prov. 17:2). See the example of Ziba and Mephibosheth in 2 Sam. 16:4.

c 29:24 literally, "but he does not tell (it)." He knew the identity of the offender but is unwilling to give evidence against him. Nevertheless, he was still held responsible for failing to come forward and testify. He was an accessory to the crime.

trust in the Always-Present One, then you will be safe.

²⁶Many people want to be heard by a ruler. But the fair treatment of each person comes from the Always-Present One.

²⁷Righteous people despise a dishonest individual. And, evil people can't stand those who are honest.

The Observations of Agur

30¹These are the words of Agur, the son of Jakeh.^d This is his message. The man declared to Ithiel—to Ithiel and to Ucal:

²"I am surely the most stupid man there is! I don't even have common sense. ³I have not learned true wisdom, but I do have knowledge about holy things. ⁴Who has gone up to heaven and come back down? Who can hold the wind in his fists? No one but God. Who can gather up the oceans in his robe? No one but God. Who has established the whole wide world? What is His Name? Yahweh! And, what is His Son's Name?^e Surely you know?!"

⁵"Every word of God can be

d 30:1 probably not a Jew. It means "obedient one."

e 30:4 Keil and Delitzsch ask if this author would have dared to ask such a question if he believed God (Hebrew: *'Elohim*) to be an abstract unity rather than a compound unity (= the Trinity). See Gen. 1:26. No human mind can fathom the exact nature of the Godhead.

trusted.^a He protects those who come to Him for safety.⁶ Do not add to His words.^b If you do, then He will rebuke you and expose you to be a liar.

⁷“I am asking for just two things from You, O God. Don’t withhold them from me before I die.⁸ Remove deceit and falsehoods far away from me. And, don’t make me either too rich or too poor.^c Just give me enough food for each day.⁹ If I have too much, then I might reject You. I might say: ‘I don’t acknowledge the Always-Present One!’ Or, if I am very poor, then I might steal. Then I would disgrace the Name of my God.

¹⁰“Do not say untrue things about a servant to his master. If you do, then he will curse you, and you will suffer for it.

¹¹“Some people curse their fathers. And, they do not thank their mothers.¹² Some people think that they themselves are so pure.^d

a 30:5 literally, “is tested” = flawless. Compare Ps. 12:6; 119:140.

b 30:6 See Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Matt. 15:6-9,13; Rev. 22:18-19. God’s Word is all-sufficient for our needs (Deut. 8:3; Matt. 4:4; Luke 4:4; Rom. 15:4; Eph. 6:17). No one should ever claim to say things that God *never* said! (Deut. 13:1-18; 1 Cor. 16:11; 2 Cor. 11:13-14; Gal. 1:6-9; Eph. 4:14; 1 Thes. 5:21; 2 Thes. 2:10-13; 1 Tim. 1:19-20; 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 4:2-4; Titus 3:10; 2 Pet. 2:1-3; 1 John 2:18-20; 4:1; Rev. 13:14).

c 30:8 literally, “Give me neither poverty nor riches.” = two extremes. Compare Job 23:12; Matt. 6:25-33; 2 Cor. 6:10; 8:9; Philp. 4:11-13; 1 Tim. 6:6-8; Heb. 13:5-6.

d 30:12 literally, “(are) pure (= perfect) in their

However, they are not truly free from sin.¹³ Some people have such a proud look! They look down on others.^e ¹⁴Some people have teeth like swords.^f It is as if their jaws are full of knives. They want to eliminate the poor people from the earth. They want to get rid of the needy from the human race.

¹⁵“Greed^g has two daughters— ‘Give me!’ and ‘Give me!’

There are three things that are never satisfied. There are really four things^h that never say: ‘I’ve had enough!’

¹⁶These things are: the cemetery; the childless mother; the land that never gets enough rain; and the blazing fire that never says: ‘I’ve had enough!’

¹⁷“Don’t make fun of your father. Don’t refuse to obey your mother. If you do, then your eye will be pecked out by the ravens of the valley! You will be eaten by vultures.ⁱ

¹⁸“There are three things that are too amazing for me. There are

own eyes.” Compare the Pharisees in the New Testament (Matt. 23:28; Luke 18:9,11; John 17:24).

e 30:13 literally, “Yes, their eyelids are lifted up.” = Giving snobbish, disdainful glances as if they are so superior to everybody else.

f 30:14 = They are cruel oppressors.

g 30:15 literally, “The leech”

h 30:15 Using numbers in this manner was a commonly accepted teaching device among the Jews (Prov. 6:16; Job 5:19; Amos 1--2); it emphasized the last number.

i 30:17 Hebrew: *neshet*. Literally, “the sons of the eagle.” Buzzards devour carrion; eagles do not. Here it refers to an unburied corpse (Jer. 16:4; Matt. 24:8). See also Lev. 20:9; Prov. 20:20.

really four things that I just don't understand: ¹⁹the way an eagle flies in the sky; the way a snake slides over a rock;^a the way a ship sails on the sea;^b and the way a man makes love to a virgin.

²⁰"This is the behavior of a woman who participates in adultery: She commits the sin and ignores it.^c Then she says: 'I haven't done anything wrong!'

²¹"There are three things that cause the earth to quake. There are really four things that it cannot endure: ²²when a servant becomes a king; when a fool^d is full of food; ²³when a bitter woman gets married; and when a servant girl replaces her mistress.^e

²⁴"There are four creatures on earth that are small. Nevertheless, they are very clever: ²⁵Ants are a population that is not strong. Nevertheless, they store up their food in the summer. ²⁶Rock-badgers^f are not powerful creatures. Nevertheless, they can live among the rocks. ²⁷Locusts^g

a 30:19 literally, "the manner of a snake upon a rock" = slithering

b 30:19 literally, "the manner of a ship in the heart of the ocean" = navigation. The wake disappears.

c 30:20 literally, "She consumes (a man) and wipes her mouth." = casual sex

d 30:22 Hebrew: *nabal* (See 1 Sam. 25:1-34.)

e 30:23 See the example of Hagar and Sarah (Gen. 16:1-6; 21:1-18; Gal. 4:21-31).

f 30:26 or, "Hyaxes" (The Latin name of this species is *Hyrax Syriacus*); "conies"

g 30:27 or, "Grasshoppers"

have no king.^h Nevertheless, they all move out in formation.ⁱ ²⁸And, you can catch a lizard^j with your hands. Nevertheless, it sneaks into the palaces of a king.

²⁹"There are three things that strut proudly. There are really four creatures that walk as if they are very important: ³⁰Lions are the mightiest among the animals. They won't retreat from anything. ³¹Roosters and male goats strut about. And, so does a king—when his army is around him!

³²"If you have been foolish by being proud, or, if you planned evil, then cover your own mouth.^k ³³Churning cream produces butter. Twisting noses causes them to bleed. And, stirring up anger causes strife."

The Observations of King Lemuel

31 ¹These are the words of King Lemuel.^l This is the message that his mother taught him:^m

h 30:27 Compare Prov. 6:7; Joel 1:6-7 for their collective, organized actions.

i 30:27 literally, "in a swarm"; compare Joel 2:7-8; Rev. 9:3-11.

j 30:28 or, "a gecko". This could possibly be a spider.

k 30:32 literally, "(put your) hand to (your) mouth (in shame)" = curtailing oneself (Judg. 18:19; Job 21:5; 29:9; 40:4); the silence of humiliation after a sin has been committed.

l 31:1 Some scholars think that this unknown man was an Ishmaelite king of Massa (Gen. 25:14).

m 31:1 Compare Prov. 1:8; 6:20. The Queen Mother of a reigning king had considerable influence (1 Kings 1:11-13; 2:19; 14:21; 15:2,13;

²“O my son! O son of my womb! O son of my vows!^a ³Don’t waste your strength on women.^b Don’t waste your energy on those females who ruin kings.^c

⁴“O Lemuel, kings should not drink wine; they really shouldn’t. And, princes shouldn’t crave alcohol either. ⁵If they drink, they might forget the law. They might prevent all of the needy people from getting their rights. ⁶Give alcohol only to people who are dying.^d And, give wine to those who are very sad. ⁷Let them drink and forget their poverty. Then they won’t remember their misery anymore.

⁸“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves. Defend the rights of all those who have nothing.^e ⁹Speak up and judge fairly. Defend the rights of the poor and the needy people.”

² Kings 12:1). She was regarded with the utmost respect, even taking precedence over the king’s wife!

a 31:2 Like Hannah, she had dedicated her son to God (1 Sam. 1:11).

b 31:3 Harems were common then. Compare Prov. 5:9-11; 1 Kings 11:1; Neh. 13:26.

c 31:3 Compare Prov. 7:21-27. These women sapped a king of his intensity by their seductive sensuality. Young princes were hereby being warned not to surrender their lives, judgment, and conduct to the influence of these women.

d 31:6 Compare Job 29:13; 31:19; Ps. 104:15; Matt. 27:34; Mark 15:23. Perhaps this was mixed with a pain-killing drug. See also 1 Tim. 5:23 where wine was prescribed by Paul for medicinal purposes.

e 31:8 literally, “for the cause of all the fatherless sons.” In a theocracy, the king represented God as the defender of all the poor and needy people (Prov. 16:10; Lev. 19:15; Deut. 1:16; Job 29:12-17; Ps. 82:3; Isa. 1:17; Jer. 22:16).

A Worthy Woman

¹⁰It is hard to find an excellent wife.^f She is worth far more than rubies.^g

¹¹Her husband trusts her completely. With her, he has everything he needs.

¹²For as long as she lives, she is good to him; she doesn’t hurt him. ¹³She looks for wool and linen.^h She likes to work with her hands. ¹⁴She is like the merchant ships.ⁱ She goes far away to get food. ¹⁵She gets up while it is still dark.^j She prepares breakfast for her family. She also organizes her servant girls. ¹⁶She inspects a field and buys it.^k She plants a vineyard, using the money that she has earned. ¹⁷She goes about her work energetically.^l Her arms are strong. ¹⁸She makes sure that she makes a good profit.

f 31:10 literally, “Who can find a fine wife?” Hebrew: *’eshet chayil* = a woman of force (= character). See Prov. 12:4. Each of the last 22 verses of Prov. 31:10-31 begins with a different Hebrew letter and it is in Hebrew alphabetical order. This is called the acrostic style.

g 31:10 or, “jewels.” Compare Prov. 3:15; 8:11,35; 12:4 18:22; 19:14; 20:15. Contrast Eccl. 7:24. Ruth was an ideal wife (Ruth 3:11).

h 31:13 literally, “flax.” The fibers of flax were made into linen (Josh. 2:6; Isa. 19:9; Jer. 13:1).

i 31:14 Her shopping trips were not limited to her own immediate neighborhood. She was familiar with goods that came from the Mediterranean coast. She was always looking for bargains.

j 31:15 at dawn. For rising early in the morning, see Gen. 12:2; 22:3; Ps. 57:8; Jer. 7:13; 25:4; Mark 16:2; John 20:1. Contrast the lazy person of Prov. 6:9-10; 20:13; 26:14.

k 31:16 She shows good business judgment. Contrast Prov. 24:30-31. See the example in Matt. 13:44.

l 31:17 literally, “She has girded her loins with strength.” Compare Prov. 10:4.

PROVERBS 31

She works next to her lamp late into the night.^a ¹⁹She makes thread with her hands and weaves her own cloth. ²⁰She welcomes the poor people.^b She helps the needy people. ²¹She does not worry about her family when it snows. Why? Because they all have fine clothes^c to keep them warm. ²²She makes her own material.^d Her clothes are made of fine linen^e and other expensive material.^f ²³Her husband is highly respected at the town meetings. He makes decisions as one of the civic leaders. ²⁴She makes linen clothes and sells them. She supplies belts to the merchants.^g

²⁵She is clothed with strength and honor. She looks forward to the future with confidence.^h ²⁶When she speaks, her words are wise. And, she instructs with kindness. ²⁷She watches over the affairs of her family.ⁱ And, she is never lazy.^j ²⁸Her children will grow up and respect her. Her husband also praises her. ²⁹He says: “There are many excellent wives, but **you** are better than all of them!” ³⁰Being “charming” can fool you, and beauty is fleeting.^k But a woman who reveres the Always-Present One should be praised. ³¹Give her the credit that she deserves.^l She should be praised openly for what she has done!

a 31:18 literally, “Her lamp does not go out at night.” = She puts in long, hard hours.

b 31:20 She was sympathetic, tender, and charitable. Compare Prov. 14:21; 19:17; 22:9; Job 31:16-20. See the good example of Dorcas in Acts 9:36.

c 31:21 literally, “are clothed (with) scarlet.” This material was probably made of high-quality wool.

d 31:22 literally, “coverings”; possibly pillows or cushions

e 31:22 of a very expensive cloth. This was associated with nobility (compare Gen. 41:42; Prov. 7:16).

f 31:22 literally, “and purple.” This was associated with kings and the wealthy (Judg. 8:26; Song of Songs 3:10; Mark 15:17,20; Luke 16:19; John 19:2,5; Acts 16:14; Rev. 17:4; 18:12,16).

g 31:24 literally, “the Canaanite” = Phoenician traders, or a generic name for all traders (Isa. 23:8; Zech. 14:21). These multi-purpose belts were very valuable (2 Sam. 18:11; Dan. 10:5).

h 31:25 literally, “And she laughs at the day to come.” She is not worried about her family getting cold or looking shabby.

i 31:27 literally, “watches the ways of her household.” = She knows everything that is going on within her family unit. Compare 1 Tim. 5:14; Titus 2:3-5.

j 31:27 literally, “And, she does not eat the food of idleness.” Compare 2 Thes. 3:10.

k 31:30 Hebrew: *hebel*. Compare Abel’s name (Gen. 4:2; Job 14:1-2). Contrast 1 Pet. 3:3-5.

l 31:31 literally, “from the fruit of her hands.” Compare Prov. 12:14.