

Proverbs - Chapter 12

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[v.1](#) - To learn something, we have to have a desire to have knowledge and a desire to learn. If we do not care to learn anything, we can go to schools and classes for years and never come away with any more knowledge than we started with. However, when we are willing to be taught, there is no end to what we can learn.

However, part of being taught is being willing to accept correction when we make mistakes, and to learn from the wisdom of those teaching us. When we really have a desire for Godly wisdom and are willing to be taught by God, as well as being reprovved and corrected by God when we make mistakes, we can have a much closer walk with Him in our daily lives.

This passage states that one who hates being corrected or reprovved is brutish, much the same as a stubborn mule. The problem with accepting correction comes from pride (one of the things God says He hates), and most of the time, pride gets in the way of us being taught to learn anything.

[v.2-v.3](#) - Again, we have a comparison of a good and righteous man against one who is wicked. It states that a good man "shall be established", which means he will be successful. Solomon says that real and true success only comes from those who follow God. Note that he does not clarify the type of success he is speaking of. It may be financial, spiritual, or some other definition – it isn't totally clear on this.

However, both verses appear to speak to the character of the individual. Even if someone has "success" in this life as a result of cheating, lying, or taking advantage of others, it is only temporary – and at the expense of their character and reputation in the community. In the long run, evil actions only breed more evil actions. True success never compromises integrity.

Qualities that Promote Success and a Good Reputation

- * Godliness (righteousness)..... [10:7](#); [12:3](#); [28:12](#)
- * Hating what is false..... [13:5](#)
- * Committing all work to the Lord..... [16:3](#)
- * Using words with restraint; being even-tempered..... [17:27-28](#)
- * Loving wisdom and understanding..... [19:8](#)

- * Humility and fear of the Lord..... [22:4](#)
- * Willingness to confess and forsake sin..... [28:13](#)

Qualities that Prevent Success and Cause a Bad Reputation

- * Wickedness..... [10:7](#); [12:3](#); [28:12](#)
- * Seeking honors..... [25:7](#)
- * Hatred..... [26:24-26](#)
- * Praising oneself..... [27:2](#)
- * Concealing sin..... [26:13](#)

Other verses dealing with one's reputation are [11:10](#), [14:3](#), [19:10](#), [22:1](#), [23:17-18](#)

[v.4](#) - There is a line from a movie that I still think is funny. A woman is getting ready to marry into a Greek family, and she is talking with her fiancé's mother one day when they were alone. She is talking about how she wants to be a good wife and how she realizes the man is the head of the household.

The mother looks around to make sure her husband is no where in sight and says, "You're right – the man is the head of the household. But the woman is the neck – and she can turn the head any way she wants to."

That's not exactly what this scripture is speaking about. A virtuous woman is called a crown to her husband. She is the very thing that sets him apart as the head of his household. She defines him. A man with a virtuous wife is as happy as a king on a throne.

A virtuous woman is one who is pious, prudent, hard working, full of spirit, faithful to her husband, and is conscious of the needs of her family.

This scripture states that a non-virtuous woman is one who makes her husband ashamed. What a contrast! She is one who is worldly, lazy, silly, and one who ignores her husband and her family.

Husbands, if you have a Christian, good, virtuous wife, you are blessed!

[v.5-v.7](#) – Sometimes, we tend to pay more attention to our actions than our thoughts. However, scripture teaches us that God knows our thoughts. The Bible even teaches that we can, for example, commit adultery by allowing our thoughts to dwell and think on that type of

thing – the act was not committed, but we have still sinned by thinking about and considering it.

We need to keep our thoughts under the control of God. This verse states that the thoughts of the righteous are pure and righteous. However, the counsel of the wicked, who are often more than willing to offer their instruction and opinion, are deceitful and should be avoided.

While this verse compares the thoughts of the righteous and the wicked, the next verse looks at their words. Wicked people look to persecute and harm the righteous. Jesus himself experienced this.

READ [Luke 20:20-25](#)

As Christians, we are known by our words as well as our actions. This verse speaks about the righteous speaking up for those who are in need. It also refers to standing up for what is right. We, as Christians, must be willing to stand up for what is right, even if we stand alone.

Just as unkind words can hurt others, we may never know what good one kind word to someone in need may do.

In this section, we also learn that the success of the wicked will only be for a short time. They may seem to enjoy what appears to be success for awhile, but in the end, the Lord God will judge their wickedness and they will be destroyed.

In contrast, the righteous are shown to be on solid ground when their faith is in God. Just as the parable Jesus taught about the house being built on a rock as opposed to sand, we as Christians have a firm foundation when our faith is in Jesus Christ.

[v.8](#) – When it comes right down to it, our reputation is all we have. It determines people's impressions of us, right or wrong. And while we care what others think of us, we should be most concerned about what God thinks of us.

Solid reputations are ones that are built on Christian living and good conduct. And, in turn, this comes through wisdom and knowing what God's Word says about how we should live.

Those who have a perverse heart, ones who turn away from the way God has intended to go their own way (or rather to follow Satan), will be despised. Why? Because people soon find out they have no honor, are not truthful, and cannot be trusted.

As Christians, we serve Christ whom we can trust implicitly – we need never have any reservations whatsoever about putting our faith and trust in Him. If we are truly “Christ-like”, shouldn’t others be able to trust us as well in our daily interactions with them?

[v.9](#) – In our world today, spending has become almost out of control. This is true for various segments of our society, especially our government.

This verse speaks about one who is despised, not because of their actions or words, but because they live life very simply without a lot of luxuries other than someone called a servant to help them. While others may look down on these people, due to the way they live or their station in life, this scripture states that they are in much better shape than someone who enjoys all the extravagances of life only to let the basic needs of themselves and their families go by the wayside. They think these worldly possessions define them, but they do not.

Ref. Rich Man and Lazarus

[Luke 12:20](#) **“But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?”**

The things we accumulate or enjoy here on earth are simply there to make our life more enjoyable – and we should enjoy them. But if we reach a point where the things of this world matter more to us than our relationship with Jesus Christ, they have become a god to us and we need to make a correction in our lives.

[v.10](#) – This verse is much more than just about treating an animal with kindness and not cruelty – it is much more about how a good person will be merciful. The first part of the verse speaks about a righteous man regards even the life of his beast (oxen, cattle, horses, etc.) as something that is to be cared for. Not only is this animal likely one that he uses in his work, but it is also one of God’s creations.

A man’s beast is an animal that is under his care. The animal depends on the man for food, shelter, water, and care. God even took care of the animals when He destroyed the world by flood. He had them go

two by two into the ark so that they could be spared, and their species continued.

The verse also states that the wicked treat people as well as animals with such barbarity that even what they might consider to be mercy is actually cruelty.

v.11 – When God blesses us with strength, health, knowledge, and opportunities to get a job, do work, and earn a livelihood, we need to ensure we are honest in our dealings and approach our work with the wisdom God has given to us. This references one who tills the land (i.e., a farmer), who struggles against rain, drought, insects, heat, market prices, lack of help, equipment problems, and many other things in order to do his job. He may never get rich from this, but if he is able to make enough to support his family and get food for his family, he can be satisfied.

Even when Adam and Eve were exiled from the Garden of Eden, the fact that would eat bread, even while shut out from the Garden, was an example of mercy that God showed to them (although Adam would have to till the land to make anything grow).

Genesis 3:19 **“In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread...”**

In short, it is about staying busy and being content.

There is an old saying, *“Idle hands are the devil’s workshop”*.

When someone neglects their business, they can be easily led astray by idle companions into things they should not be involved in. When they reach a point where they are in need (i.e., hungry) and have no way to purchase what they need (i.e., food), they end up coming to the one who has worked to get what they have.

v.12 – A wicked person is always shown as someone who wants to do mischief, to cause trouble. The reference to “the net of evil men” can refer to the fact that they want the security of other evil and wicked people around them – strength in numbers, so that they cannot be attacked or reprimanded for the mischief they do or the trouble they cause.

In contrast, a good person is shown to be someone who bears fruit. This is someone who strives to live a good life and the results of this are evident to others – and that is his strength and his stability.

A good person, as shown here, desires to yield fruit for benefit of others and the glory of God, while the wicked desire only the praise and security (temporary) of others who are likeminded.

v.13 – While growing up, I used to watch Perry Mason on TV. He would always catch the criminal in a lie that usually proved his undoing. People that are dishonest and twist facts to support their own position will, in the end, be trapped by their own words. If you always tell the truth – plain and simple – this will never apply to you.

This verse also offers hope for the just. It states that “the just shall come out of trouble.” It does not say that there will not be trouble, but it does say that they will come through it. This can only be through the mercy of God.

We often wish we could escape troubles – the pain of grief, loss, sorrow, failure, etc. – even the small daily frustrations that constantly wear us down. God promises to be our source of power, courage, and wisdom, helping us through our problems. Sometimes, He chooses to deliver us from those problems. When trouble comes, don’t get frustrated with God. Instead, we need to humbly admit that we need God’s help and thank Him for being right there by our side.

Psalm 34:19 “Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.”

v.14 – In this verse, we are assured that good words from our mouths will result in a good accounting, or reputation, for us. From the words we say and use in our conversations, we gain an inward peace, knowing that the words we speak are not done in anger or in an attempt to hurt or injure anyone.

As a pastor, I truly have to be cognizant of this fact each time I speak. Right or wrong, a minister is held to a higher standard of conduct. I know I have never spoken the “king’s English” and many times I stumble over what I really want to say. (My first Sunday here at Powhatan comes to mind!)

However, I do strive to ensure that I bring a message God has given to me to the people I speak to – I try to preach “to” them, not “at” them – and there is a difference. I have found that many times, I may not feel that I covered exactly what I wanted to in a sermon, but somehow God uses these words to touch a heart. I have also found that many times, the sermon may have been just for me – and no one

else. While we teach others, we ourselves can learn, and feed on this bread of life that we break to others through our words.

But the second part of this verse speaks to the work we do. The words of our mouths are backed up and validated or disproved by the work of our hands. The verse states that the “recompense of a man’s hands shall be rendered unto him.” In other words, we reap what we sow.

Romans 2:5-6 “But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds.”

v.15-v.16 – The biggest obstacle to wisdom is found in the first part of this section – “the way of a fool is right in his own eyes.” He thinks he is right in all that he does, so he seeks no advice, direction, or feedback. Even when his conscience tells him differently, he is guided by what he sees and thinks is right. This scripture calls this type of person a fool.

It’s like driving somewhere and you get lost and fail to stop for directions. You could have saved yourself a lot of time, gas, and frustration if you had just stopped and asked how to get to your destination. But you continue on and get lost even more, further and further from where you need to be.

This verse also gives the biggest asset available to us to obtain wisdom – counsel. Asking for advice, direction, or counsel when something is unknown is prudent and is wise. In our last chapter, v.14 stated “where no counsel is, the people fall.”

That’s why our various committees and boards are so important to me in our church. They provide counsel and direction from a variety of sources that help me in my role as pastor. Someone who always has their ear open for advice, not just from others but primarily from our Lord, is wise.

Verse 16 again speaks about a fool (an unwise person). When someone hurts or embarrasses us, the natural reaction is to retaliate. That is exactly what this type of person would do. However, in the end, this solves nothing and only encourages trouble.

A person who is unwise will let their anger overtake them. How many people have you known through the years that got angry over something, never let it go, and it virtually ate them up inside?

In Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, He stated that the meek would inherit the earth. Meekness (not weakness) is wisdom. A wise person bridles his tongue, not saying what the world would expect him to say, and turns it over to God. When they do respond, they do so in a positive way – and it achieves positive results.

Reference: Jesus' Discourse with the People Bringing the Woman Caught in Adultery

[Proverbs 15:1](#) "A soft answer turneth away wrath...."

[v.17-v.19](#) – These three verses deal with the tongue. The words and speech of the wise are compared with those who are unwise. Look at the differences between the words spoken truthfully and the words that are lies:

Truthfulness

- * "He that speaketh truth showeth forth righteousness." ([v.17](#))
- * "...the tongue of the wise is health." ([v.18](#))
- * "The lip of truth shall be established forever." ([v.19](#))

Lies

- * "...a false witness is deceit." ([v.17](#))
- * "...like the piercings of a sword." ([v.18](#))
- * "...a lying tongue is but for a moment." ([v.19](#))

Always telling the truth brings righteousness, health (closing wounds, healing hearts, mending feelings), and it will last forever.

Lies, on the other hand, are deceitful, deadly, and they will be found out.

Telling the truth, and ensuring that our words are truthful, applied in Jesus' time, today, and in the future. God doesn't change – and when scripture says that lying is one of the things He hates, He still hates it today. God's Word is truth – it has stood the test of time, and we can depend on it. The Holy Scriptures need to be our guide as to the words we say.

[v.20](#) – Again, this verse speaks of one who is deceitful and looks to cheat and deceive others. This is evil, and as Christians, we are to have no part of it.

We, on the other hand, are encouraged to seek the counsel of Godly people we trust, and try to live peaceably with all people. Not only will this positively affect our reputation, but we will also have joy in our lives. Again, remember what Jesus said in His Sermon on the Mount – **“Blessed are the peacemakers.”**

[v.21](#) – This verse, on the surface, can be a little misleading. While it states that “there shall no evil happen to the just...”, we all know from experience that hard times and misfortune comes to good people. The difference here is that people who have Christ in their hearts can see opportunities in their problems, and with God’s help, move past them. Many times, we face trials and tragedies that, without God’s help, we would not be able to make it through.

In contrast, the wicked are without God’s wisdom, and as a result, are not equipped to handle the problems they face. Instead, they become filled with anger, resentment, and disappointment, leading them to further wickedness unless they turn to God.

[v.22](#) – Again, lying is listed as an abomination to the Lord – something He despises and hates – and as Christians, we are to be careful not to engage in this. Lying is not only against God’s commands, but it is also detrimental to those around us and always ends up hurting someone.

If our words and actions are truthful, we are said to be a delight to God – He is pleased with us.

[v.23](#) – Certainly, we are called upon to seek wisdom and use this in our everyday lives. However, we are not to use it as something to lord over others, seeming as if we know more than anyone else. We share our wisdom when it helps and edifies others, but we do not share it when it may be looked upon as a way to condemn us.

The foolish cannot avoid showing their true colors, either in their words or actions.

Competent people have a quiet confidence. Insecure or foolish people have a need to prove themselves. Wise people do not have to prove

anything. People may not notice those who are modest at first, but they will later respect them.

"If someone thinks you're a fool, it's better to keep your mouth shut than to open it and remove all doubt."

v.24 – In most businesses today, you can advance if you are willing to learn, ply your trade, and work hard and diligent. On the other hand, those that just put in the hours, are complacent with where they are at, and slough off at work, tend to not get the promotions, raises, or jobs opportunities the more diligent workers do.

This verse speaks about the fact that hard and diligent work will usually pay off, in that the diligent workers will ultimately be the managers of the ones who are lazy and slothful.

Jesus spoke about this in His parable of the talents. For each one that had taken the talents, and diligently put them to use, He told them, **"Thou good and faithful servant. Thou has been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many."**

As Christians, we need to realize that we work and labor diligently, not for what we will or can receive here on earth, but rather for the salvation given to us by Jesus' death on Calvary and the home in Heaven that is prepared for us. I think it's more than worth the effort!

v.25 – Heaviness in the heart – feelings and loads of care, fear, and sorrow. These are things we all feel, and all have to deal with occasionally. When these times come, these feelings sometimes overtake us to such a point that we become depressed, or are without any initiative to take care of things we need to on a daily basis. Our hearts literally stoop, fall or bend, under the weight of these things in our lives.

But the cure for this is also given in this verse – a good word. This can come from us, but when it does, it is the wisdom of God given to us that tells us the right thing to say at the right time. The Word of God, the gospel, is meant to make the hearts that are weary and heavy turn to happiness.

Matthew 11:28 **"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."**

v.26 – The first part of this verse states that the righteous are more excellent than their neighbor. Notice that it doesn't say "better". The righteous have in them good character and a good reputation. The word "excellent" is actually "abundant" in other translations. This could mean that the righteous actually has more abundance in this life than someone who is not righteous. This does not refer to material possessions or position, but rather to the actual worth of the person to others in this world.

In contrast, the way that seems right to the wicked ends up only seducing them and leading the further astray. They look for the praise of men only. They never seem to get where they want to go and attain all that they desire. They may sometimes hold positions of power and enjoy more financial success in this world than the righteous. However, the righteous is wiser, happier, and therefore, more excellent than the wicked.

v.27 – This is very much like v.24 which we looked at previously. It uses the example of a lazy person roasting meat that he did not go out and trap or kill himself – he took it from others. Instead of taking care of himself, he looks for someone else to do it.

In contrast, the diligent, hard-working person takes care of what he is able to grow or obtain. He knows that all things come from the blessings of God, and he takes comfort in that fact.

In summary, the diligent make wise use of their possessions and resources; the lazy wastes them. Waste has become a way of life for many people who live in a land of plenty. However, waste is a sign of laziness and also exhibits poor stewardship. We need to make good use of everything God has given us.

v.28 – Is death something that should be feared? Certainly, none of us want to die today, and we also want those that we love and care for to be around as long as possible. However, for the Christian, death is just a doorway to a new and better life. God has given us a job to do while here on earth, and if we are faithful, He has something much better awaiting us when He decides to call us home.

For the non-Christian, death is something to be feared. It's also a doorway to them, but they live in uncertainty and fear about what is on the other side.

Even if we fear death, God can help deal with those fears. He has already shown us that death is just another step into the continuing eternal life we started the day we gave our hearts and lives to Him. Death is certainly not the end – it's the first step into eternity. Where we decide today that we will spend it makes all the difference in the world as to whether death is something to be feared or anticipated.