

## Proverbs - Chapter 14 (part 2)

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May 2012

[v.21](#) – In our relationships with others, there are three parties that are always affected:

- God
- Those around us with whom we interact
- Ourselves

In short, this proverb states that if we are cruel, harsh, or selfish to others, we deprive them of our help and assistance when they may need it most, we bring shame on ourselves, and, most importantly, we sin against God. In contrast, the proverb states that we're happy if we're kind and gentle to others, not only because it is the right thing to do, but because it honors God.

Jesus said in [Matthew 22](#) that the first commandment was to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength. But He quickly followed this up with a commandment to love our neighbor as much as ourselves. When we love our neighbor, it also shows our love for God because He was the One who created our neighbor in the first place, and He was the One who crossed our paths at the precise moment we met.

When a lawyer who tried to tempt Jesus by asking Him, “...**And who is my neighbor?**” Jesus related the story of the good Samaritan ([Luke 10:25-37](#)). The Jews and the Samaritans despised each other, but Jesus showed this Jewish lawyer just how much love and compassion it took for this Samaritan to help an injured Jew – which was an inconvenience for him, and something that cost him money. The contrast between the kindness showed by this Samaritan versus the injured man's fellow Jewish countrymen who passed him by made it quite evident who was a neighbor to this wounded man.

Finally, notice that this proverb states that anyone who despises his neighbor sins – it is more than a character flaw – it is a sin. Regardless of what we have or ever will have here in this world, it is only by the blessings of God that we get to enjoy it. As we see people in need, let's be ready to help.

[v.22](#) – Make no mistake about it, our Lord hates sin. Sin cannot occupy the same place as Christ in our lives. Those who do evil as

well as those who do good will all come before the Judgment Throne of Christ one day. The sinner will be judged and the righteous will be rewarded.

But scripture makes it clear that even thinking about evil is a sin. The desire to commit a sin is the same as the act without the opportunity.

**Proverbs 24:9** “The thought of foolishness is sin...”

Jesus Himself even condemned the thoughts of desiring another woman as being adultery.

**Matthew 5:27-28** “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.”

Fantasies of sin are wrong; evil thoughts are wrong; imagining evil is wrong.

The Lord sees the thoughts and the hearts of all of us. Because we may not have committed the sin is not good enough – devising it in our hearts is just as bad before the Lord. It is foolishness for us to think we can devise sin in our hearts and skate away free just because we did not actually go through with it.

Haman hated Mordecai and devised a plan to wipe out the Jews, but he ended up hanging on the gallows he built for Mordecai ([Esther 7:10](#)). The scribes and Pharisees tried to ensnare Jesus in a trap when they brought the woman caught in adultery to Him, but they ended up leaving with their heads bowed in shame. Those who devise evil always err in the ways.

However, the proverb states that mercy and truth will come to them that devise good. Mercy and truth are both wonderful blessings, especially when they occur at the same time. One of the most beautiful verses in the Bible describes it this way.

**Psalms 85:10** “Mercy and truth are met together. Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.”

**v.23** – This is a fairly straightforward proverb; however, the term “penury” is rarely used today. So, for a clearer understanding of

exactly what this proverb states, take a look at how this is translated in the Contemporary English Version of the Bible:

**“Hard work is worthwhile, but empty talk will make you poor.”**

Now, this begins to make real sense. Hard work, no matter what kind, is worthwhile as long as it is honest. A person may start off putting french fries in the basket at McDonald’s and eventually work themselves up to manager of the place. They may never meet the world’s definition of rich – but it’s honest, hard work and it can provide them with an income to survive and pay their bills.

On the other hand, there are many former “white collar” workers today, some who were once making millions of dollars, who risked it all on some “get rich quick” scheme and lost everything they had. Some are even in prison now because they tried to get money without putting in the time and effort, such as those who tried to exploit changes in stock prices with insider information.

In this world, there is real and true way to honestly get rich quick. This proverb backs up the statement that hard and honest work is beneficial to us all. There is an old saying that “idle hands are the devil’s workshop.” The busier we are, the less time we have to allow evil thoughts and actions into our lives.

[v.24](#) – God never promised that all of His children would be rich. In fact, most of God’s followers are from the poorer class of people in this world. Look at who He called to be His disciples, and who He took the time to heal and to spend time with. Most of these were not from the affluent classes of the day, but were usually the poor and the outcasts of society.

But no matter what our economic status, God always takes care of us and provides for our needs. And we need to remember that we don’t have to be wealthy to be wise. Wisdom always brings about progress and success, whereas folly usually brings decline and trouble.

A wise man, no matter how much wealth he has, knows how to use his wealth to benefit others and to bring honor to himself – a fool does not.

Jesus had an encounter with a rich young ruler which ended with Jesus telling him to give everything he had to the poor and to come and follow Him. The scripture states that he went away sorrowful, because he had a lot of wealth. What a sad statement.

Using wisdom to spend what we are blessed with wisely crowns a man with honor. In contrast, folly exposes fools to the shame of their own foolishness as they misuse whatever blessings God bestows on them.

We have a choice, no matter what our economic status. Let's make sure we choose wisely.

[v. 25](#) – Our judicial system has a practice whereby anyone taking the stand in witness for or against someone accused of a crime must attest to the fact they are telling the truth by placing their hand on the Bible and swearing to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth. There are consequences for someone who lies on the witness stand – they can be held in jail for perjury. (As an aside, it is amazing to me that while our judicial system uses God's Word as an instrument to hopefully ensure someone tells the truth, the other areas of our government seem to leave God out altogether!)

If one tells the truth about someone incorrectly accused, they can save them. On the other hand, someone can lie about the accused and send them to jail.

The proverb is a simple observation about witnesses. The power of a truth or a lie rests in the statement of the witness. A true witness can rescue an innocent person from lies or false charges. A lying witness can destroy the same person by deceitfully confirming the false charges against them – and this damage can be great.

When God gave His laws to the Israelites, even He required at least 2 witnesses for someone to be found guilty (see [Numbers 35:30](#), [Deuteronomy 17:6](#), [Deuteronomy 19:15](#)). Jesus Himself even reiterated this when He described how we should deal with those who do wrong against us ([Matthew 18:15-16](#)). One witness was never enough, because it would be too easy for someone who was angry or bitter to ruin the lives of someone else.

God's laws went so far as to say that if someone was found to have perjured themselves on the witness stand, the same punishment meant for the accused should be given to them. For example, if someone was accused of a capital crime that would mean death if found guilty, the one who perjured themselves would have to face death as punishment for their crime (see [Deuteronomy 19:16-21](#)). Lying was serious business in the eyes of God back then – and it still is today.

False witnesses have done tremendous damage to people through the years, and there are numerous examples of this in scripture. In the Old Testament, Potipher's wife falsely accused Joseph of rape, and it cost him time in prison, his job, and his reputation. But God eventually brought him out of this trial to rule over Egypt. Queen Jezebel hired two false witnesses to lie about Naboth so she could steal his vineyard for her husband, King Ahab. He was killed in battle and she was eaten by dogs.

As Christians, we are on the witness stand everyday for Christ. Our words, actions, and deeds are measured by the world every day. Since we are ambassadors for God, we need to ensure that everything we do as witnesses for Him is in alignment with His Holy Word.

[v.26-v.27](#) – I like the Contemporary English Version translation of verse 27. It reads as follows: "If you respect the Lord, you and your children shall have a strong fortress."

David was a shepherd boy long before he became a king – and even then, he knew where his strength and protection came from. While all of Israel, including their charismatic leader King Saul, hid in fear when the giant Goliath challenged them, David met him face-to-face – with no fear – with no reservations.

Later in life, David would write most of the book of Psalms. He was a man after God's own heart, yet human, and met trouble and tragedy throughout his life. Yet the Psalms talk about peace and security in the Lord. Even though he faltered, God was always there to pick him up, forgive him, and put him back on the right pathway – because he feared (respected) the Lord God.

In the second part of this proverb, notice the word "his" ("...and his children shall have a place of refuge.") God's children, those who trust in Him, will always have a place of refuge – a place to run for help where they can be safe and protected from harm. For me, that is a very comforting thought.

When we fully and completely trust in our Lord, no fear can shake us. The Hebrew children feared the Lord and not the king – and the Lord protected them from the fiery furnace. Paul was hated by Jews and Gentiles, and even when he knew that there were those lying in wait to imprison him, look at what Paul says:

**READ [Acts 20:17-27](#)**

Fear and respect of the Lord being confidence and assurance of a safe place of refuge with our Father.

Verse 27 goes on to say that the fear and respect of the Lord is a fountain of life. For this verse, the Contemporary English Version goes on to say, “...and a life-giving fountain that keeps you safe from deadly traps.”

This fountain of life is perpetual, and will never run out. It is an ongoing supply of those things that give us abundant life that is not dependant on the circumstances we're facing at any point in time. And if we maintain a fear and respect of the Lord, it will keep us focused on Him and away from the traps that Satan tries to set for us each day.

**v.28** – Keeping in mind that this book was written by King Solomon to his son, who would potentially become King one day, Solomon teaches him an important lesson – growing kingdoms are a blessing, but shrinking kingdoms are a problem.

Throughout the Bible, kingdoms grew when they put God first. When they rejected Him and turned their backs on Him, they experienced decline, trouble, and hardship. The fact is that this recipe for success has not changed.

In less than 300 years, America grew from a fledging start-up nation to one of the superpowers in the world. The population of America exploded as people from other countries wanted to come to America for the opportunities that it offered. At that time, we were more closely “one nation, under God” than we are today. Prayer was accepted in schools, churches were usually full, programming on television was much more tame than it is today, and sins and abominations toward God were frowned upon.

But think of where we are today. Prayer in schools is outlawed, churches are declining for the most part, it's hard to find anything acceptable to watch with your family on television, and these abominations toward God are now accepted as “alternate lifestyles”.

Is it any wonder why we're experiencing some of the problems in America today that we're facing? Could turning this all around be as simple as a nation returning to the God it once knew? I think so – it's been proven in the Bible.

Until people come to repentance as a nation, I fear that America will continue to struggle.

[v.29](#) – Being quick to get angry and having a hot temper will always get you into trouble. Part of being wise is exercising self-control and discipline. When we get angry and lose control, we say things we wished we had not said. Solomon’s simple, yet sage, advice is to slow things down, and if you have to get angry, do so slowly.

Anger is not always wrong. There are numerous examples in the Bible where God was angry with his people. But the Bible also states that God is slow to anger, and this gives us our holy example and pattern.

The Apostle Paul even told the people in the church at Ephesus to get angry but not to sin ([Ephesians 4:26](#)). Moses was angry with Israel when he came down from Mount Sinai only to find them worshipping a golden calf.

But anger is rarely helpful, if at all. It usually causes overreaction, acting without thinking, harshness, and getting priorities out of order. Therefore, if we are wise, we need to be very slow in allowing our anger to develop.

We need to control this emotion carefully. A lifetime of Christian testimony can be destroyed in one quick moment by anger. Let’s be sure to take it slow.

[v.30](#) – Envy has been called “the green-eyed monster”. It is a problem when we want what someone else has to such an extent that it consumes our thoughts and actions.

Notice that the proverb contrasts a sound heart to envy, so it is a warning to us about our affections. To better understand this, we first must understand what is meant by having a sound heart.

**[Psalm 119:80](#) “Let my heart be sound in thy statutes, that I be not ashamed.”**

So, according to the Bible, a sound heart is one that keeps God’s Word.

Scripture tells us that if we follow God, we will bear the fruit of the Spirit (listed in [Galatians 5:22-23](#)) – love, joy peace, longsuffering,

gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. It's easy to see that if these traits are present in our lives, there is little room for envy.

Envy is a terrible thing. The life of the flesh is literally contrasted against the rottenness of the bones.

**James 3:14-16 "But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work."**

The truth is that all of us have been blessed by God. We may not have every material want that we see around us, but if we have our trust placed in Almighty God, we have riches stored up in Heaven. Every material thing on this earth will one day pass away. Let's make sure we place our affections on things above, not on the things of this earth.

**v.31** – I think it is amazing that while Solomon, one of the wealthiest men who ever lived, speaks about taking care of the poor several times in Proverbs, this situation still exists today. He even states in this proverb that those who oppress the poor bring reproach on God.

The poor are, many times, defenseless and helpless in their condition. But we should also remember that the same God who created us created them – and if we take advantage of them in their situation, we reproach God. We do this by abusing His creation.

Jesus even taught that when we did something good for the least of those in this world, it is like we did it for Him. Jesus had a kinship and a connection with the poor of the world. He Himself was born into very humble beginnings, from His birth in a stable to not even having a place to be buried in when He was crucified. He never owned land, and never had a home to call His own while He walked this earth.

No matter how materially blessed we are, we didn't get there by chance. It always involved God's providence toward us that we are in the state we are. We need never forget we are only one of God's blessings away from being like the poor ourselves.

The crux of this proverb is seeing what Jesus has done for us and passing that along. The King of Kings came to this earth in such



humble beginnings for us. He became poor so that all who receive His gift of salvation could be rich and have abundant life.

When we pass that along to the poor with whatever help we can give to them, we honor our Lord.

**v.32** – In this proverb, Solomon uses the phrase “driven away” to mean death. Therefore, the proverb is talking about how the wicked are literally already dead in their wickedness, but that there is hope for the righteous.

The wicked are confident in life. The worst thought to them is death, so they do everything they can to avoid it or delay it. But death is a sure thing that will come to everyone. The Bible plainly tells us this fact.

The account of the rich man in Luke’s Gospel is a good indication of how many people that are rich feel about their wealth. It has become a god and an idol to them.

But, in contrast, the righteous have hope in death, because they have the promise of eternal life with Jesus Christ our Lord. As Paul said, to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. Paul was a workaholic. He started churches, was adamant about spreading the gospel of Christ, and yet he longed for the day when he would be face to face with Jesus Christ. He had a hope of something much greater – and that should be the sentiment of all Christians.

**v.33** – Again in this proverb, Solomon contrast wisdom and fools. A wise man who has wisdom is an understanding man, a prudent man, a man with knowledge and discretion. He doesn’t throw around his opinion at every opportunity, but keeps that wisdom in his heart.

However, a fool wants to share his every thought with everybody. He loves to hear himself talk because he thinks he always has something to offer. His pride and lack of discretion causes him to pour out his ignorance for everyone to see.

Think before you speak is a wise adage. The Bible speaks of controlling our tongue in many different areas. Think about how quickly our Christian testimony can be damaged with just one incident of letting our opinions take the place of true facts.

We need to be wise Christians, holding this wisdom in our hearts, and using it in a loving, Christian manner.

[v.34](#) – As I write my notes on this section, we will be voting on a marriage amendment in NC very soon. This is a statewide vote to determine if marriage is only legal to be recognized when it is between a man and a woman. The fact that we are even taking a vote on this issue shows how far we have fallen as a nation.

We have seen scandal in the highest office in the land in the last decade. We have seen a rise in homosexuality in our nation, and more of an acceptance of it than we have ever seen.

Abortions continue to be on the rise as a result of a federal law that made this “murder” of unborn children legal many years ago.

Spending is out of hand, with a federal budget deficit so large now that it will likely never be repaid.

With all of this occurring, is it any wonder why America is not the same nation she was even 50 years ago? Our standards have been lower, we've left God behind, and we continue to pay the price for it.

Many years ago, Solomon wrote this proverb stating that a nation is exalted by righteousness, and sin is a reproach to the people. I think our nation has left righteousness behind, and sin against God has increased.

When Israel, once a great nation following God in Biblical times, rebelled against God, they were punished. When they became a reproach to God, they were allowed to be punished.

We cannot pray in schools or hang the Ten Commandments anywhere, but we can teach Darwinism with no problem.

This is a good example of just how relevant the Bible is to us today. The answer to most of our problems was written by Solomon under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit many years ago. If we want our nation to be exalted once again, we must get back to righteousness before God.

[v.35](#) – The difference between a king and a servant is great – but wise conduct will earn the king's favor and foolish conduct will bring his

wrath. It is not a dislike of the servant that brings the wrath, but his unwise actions.

The rule of this proverb is simple. Wise conduct will bring about good things from those ruling over us, while foolish conduct will bring about wrath. And while this may look like discrimination, I feel that discrimination of character and conduct is a good thing.

In our lives, we know that every one of us will one day be judged by the Lord. We will all give an account of ourselves. Therefore, we need to be wise with the talents we've been given. We need to be wise and use our talents for the Lord, not bury them in the sand until He returns.