

## Proverbs - Chapter 17

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[v.1](#) – This is a proverb to help us direct our priorities. A “dry morsel”, for example, could be a pack of crackers. A “house full of sacrifices” could be a table spread with all the foods you could ever desire. The “quietness” referenced here does not just mean a lack of noise, but a lack of strife, fighting, or arguments. What Solomon is saying here is that eating a pack of crackers in a calm and peaceful home is superior to eating a dinner of everything we could desire in a home full of strife and discontent.

The message here is that more emphasis needs to be placed on peace and love in our homes rather than on material possessions. In today’s world, this runs contrary to what most people think will bring them happiness.

We have to remember that success is not just having more things, but being content with the things we do have.

This also applies to churches. There are many churches that are financially strong, with buildings that are showplaces for the world to see. But inside, there is nothing but strife and disunity. A church, family, or individual at peace with what they have is much better than one in strife with everything they could ever desire.

[v.2](#) – We live in an era today where many people feel a sense of entitlement, just because of who they are, what family they come from, or how much money or possessions their family has. But Solomon’s caution in this proverb is that even a wise and hard-working servant will overtake a child that causes shame in the eyes of his father.

For example, if a father owns a business and has children, they would naturally want to pass that along to their child, especially if it is a thriving operation. They want their child to spend time working in the business to learn the operation, and what is required to have it continue to be profitable. However, if the child is unwilling to spend the time to learn the business, and simply believes it will be passed along to them eventually as some sort of “cash cow” for them to live their life at ease, Solomon states that they are sadly mistaken...because a hard working and wise servant may be left the business....one who had no family allegiance to the child.

When Solomon saw what a hard working and wise man Jeroboam was, he promoted him into management over the house of Joseph ([1 Kings 11:28](#)). Notice that he did not give this job to any of his own sons. He gave it to Jeroboam because he recognized his intelligence and diligence at doing his job. Just a few years later, the scripture states that Jeroboam was king over 10 tribes of Israel, while Solomon's favorite son, Rehoboam, was king over 2.

Look at the examples of this proverb from scripture. Joseph was a slave in Egypt, but ended up as a ruler of Egypt. Daniel was a captive in Babylon, but was eventually promoted to be over all Babylon and one of Nebuchadnezzar's chief people. David was a poor shepherd boy but was eventually a king, and has a family lineage that includes Jesus Christ. What did they all have in common? Wisdom.

[v.3](#) – Silver and gold are purified in intense heat, so they can be suitable for use. The heat burns away impurities and other base metals to leave pure gold or silver. Only the Lord can purify our hearts in the same way, sometimes through afflictions and trials.

While one who is skilled at working precious metals like this can refine gold or silver, only God can refine the heart. Scripture states that the heart is deceitful wicked, and that no one can fully know the impurities that are in their own heart. However, it goes on to say that the Lord God is the One who can search and know our heart like no one else ([Jeremiah 17:9-10](#)).

The Bible speaks of God refining His people to make them into what He wants them to be:

**[Isaiah 1:25](#) "And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin..."**

We know that although the trials He sends our way sometimes make our hearts heavy, they make our faith stronger.

**[1 Peter 1:6-7](#) "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations; that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."**

The Lord knows all about what is in our hearts at the very core of our being. He knows our worst fears, our greatest temptations, our weakest moments, and the sins that we just can't seem to forget. But He is the One who can refine our hearts, remove all the impurities, and make us pure and fit for His use.

Wisdom tells us that we should rejoice when these trials come our way, knowing that God is using these times to perfect us to be more in His image.

[v.4](#) – All throughout Proverbs, Solomon condemns things such as lying, speaking harshly, and an evil tongue. He praises speech that is Godly and gracious just as much.

But this proverb has a little twist. Notice that Solomon does not focus on the person having false lips and a naughty tongue, but rather to the person who is listening to them. Wisdom tells us that we will avoid, reject, and stay clear of the evil speech of others.

We hear things all the time that we view as horrible or even vulgar. We think the person making these kinds of statement is awful. However, if we remain and listen to it, we're just as bad as they are. There is no reason for us to remain and listen when we encounter speech that is anti-Christian. A wise person will ensure this is not made a part of our lives.

People continue their evil speech only when they have an audience to listen to them. Let's make sure we are not a part of it.

[v.5](#) – When you were in school, no doubt you knew of people considered to be bullies. These are the people who would make fun of people who were poor, handicapped, or less fortunate than they were...in short, anyone who was different. In many cases, it probably made you feel uncomfortable then, and it certainly should now.

This type of behavior is simply cruel and insensitive. Think about a football player for the opposing team who is injured in the game and has to be removed on a stretcher. Most of the time, even the opposing fans are on their feet, clapping in support of the fallen player, in hopes that they are not injured too severely. Can you imagine how this would look if they were to gloat or cheer about the injury to an opposing player?

In this world, some people are poor, some are handicapped, and some are less fortunate than others. I don't pretend to understand why this is, but I am sure that God allowed them to be this way within His perfect plan. When we mistreat them, laugh at them, or hurt them in any way, it offends God. We are all His creatures. The blessings we enjoy in this life are only due to His merciful kindness. We cannot boast of them as our accomplishments and we cannot gloat over others who do not have them. It is only by God's mercy and grace that any of us have anything at all.

This verse goes on to say that those who are glad with bad things happen to others will not go unpunished. As Christians, we are to be people of compassion. Jesus even told us that if our enemy strikes us on one cheek, offer him the other....instead of retaliating. Let vengeance be the Lord's....He's already promised to repay.

If you're blessed, thank God for His mercy. But don't despise or reject those who are not so blessed. If your enemy suffers, don't gloat in their misfortune, but rather pray for them and help them if you can. Ask yourself, "What Would Jesus Do?"

[v.6](#) – In this short verse, wisdom is given for grandchildren, grandfather, father, and a child. This is speaking of a large and happy family that carries through several generations.

In Genesis, God instituted the family with marriage between one woman and one man. That's where it all starts. He added children as a blessing to this union. And as these children grew and began to have families of their own, scripture makes a place for grandfathers and great grandfathers to have a role in their families.

The old adage of "The family that prays together, stays together" applies here. God will bless and walk with those who have good family relationships.

Fathers are to train their children. Children are to obey and honor their parents. Fathers are to provide an inheritance for their children. Grandchildren are to rise up and honor their grandparents.

Grandparents need to invest themselves in the lives of their grandchildren. They have wisdom and knowledge that they can share with them in their younger years that will help them when they are older.

Parents need to live a Christian example before their children and practice what they preach. Certainly, we need to tell them about the Lord, but if we profess to love Him as our Saviour, our lives, actions, and speech needs to show it.

Children need to honor their grandparents and view their parents as people God gave to them to help them in this life. One day, if they are blessed to have children, they'll want the same respect from them as well. Most importantly, the Bible commands that parents be honored and respected.

The family unit in this day and age is being destroyed little by little. But it is clear from scripture that the family is important to God.

[v.7](#) – Here again, Solomon talks about the words we say. He spends so much time on this in Proverbs that we should take this as being pretty important.

The words we say need to be compatible with our character and conduct. If the life we live does not support the words we say, we do ourselves a disservice and destroy our credibility.

This verse states that fools, who are known by their actions, just irritate others with their conceit and hypocrisy by trying to sound noble and wise. But what is far worse, as indicated in the comparison in this verse, is someone in authority who doesn't have a high regard to truth and honesty.

A leader or ruler in office is there for the guidance, security, and prosperity of those under their control. But dishonesty destroys the confidence of those in power. Think about what you're seeing right now with the political advertisements on TV. Looks almost like one side is trying to put this proverb to use against their opposition, doesn't it?

The truth is that all leaders are human, and will make mistakes, which even include lying. We've seen that before. There has only been one ruler who never came close to lying – The Lord Jesus Christ. He is truth, and all His words are true. We can depend on that.

[v.8](#) – All of us love to get gifts. We give gifts to each other because we want to. We give them to see the joy on someone else's face and to make them happy. That's why we do it.

On the other hand, sometimes gifts are given to get something in return. In this proverb, Solomon doesn't condemn gifts, but does make a point that they have the potential to be used for good or evil.

Phillip of Macedonia, the father of Alexander the Great made this statement: "There is not a fortress so strong, but it might be taken, if an ass laden with gold was brought to the gate."

Solomon teaches that wicked men use gifts as bribes ([17:23](#)), they can get you in front of important people (18:16), that they can help in winning friends ([19:6](#)), and that they can appease anger of an enemy ([21:14](#)).

But God Himself condemns giving gifts for evil purposes. Even the symbol for our judicial system has a blindfolded lady with a sword in one hand and scales in the other. Justice is executed without seeing the person or any gift they might bring to gain favor in order to be fair and impartial.

For ministers, God's instructs them to hate filthy lucre. Why? Because love or money, gifts, or the size of their congregation doesn't need to detract from the truth of God's Word and how it is preached.

The best gift any of us ever could receive is the gift of salvation from our Lord Jesus Christ, which scripture calls an "unspeakable gift". This verse states that a gift will prosper whoever it turns. Did the gift of salvation prosper you when you turned from sin to the Lord? Absolutely!

[v.9](#) – Covering a transgression, as referred to in this verse, is forgiving and forgetting personal wrongs that others do to us. This is one way we show love to each other and win friends.

Wisdom encourages us to gladly take opportunities to forgive and get past the wrongs someone else has done to us. That's because one who is wise realizes that the blood of Jesus Christ has already covered a multitude of transgressions in their own life, so with that in mind, it's much easier to forgive someone else.

When we seek to forgive, it stops the division between people. It silences talk about whatever issue is at hand. It protects the reputation of all parties involved. And, most importantly, it restores and promotes unity.

The opposite of this tact is also addressed in this verse. It speaks of one who continually repeats the matter until friends become enemies. If forgiving and forgetting a transgression is wise, this is the opposite....foolish.

Ones who are arrogant enough to continue promoting strife have forgotten how much Jesus Christ has forgiven them. They believe they need to take revenge on any word spoken against them. They remind others of their faults, without taking a look into the mirror to see their own. And in an attempt to justify their actions, they look to continue the strife instead of ending it.

If we all take this proverb to heart and use it every day, it will make our friendships, marriages, business relationships, and our churches better than they are today.

**v.10** – There is a difference between being intelligent and being wise. Solomon, the author of this book, was a very intelligent man. He knew a lot and many things. But to him, wisdom was much more important than intelligence.

When we started this review of Proverbs, we discussed the difference between knowledge and wisdom. Wisdom is all about knowing the proper way to apply the knowledge that we have or acquire.

So with that in mind, how do we handle situations when we are rebuked or corrected? Not just by God, but by others? The wise take the rebuke or correction meekly, and make the necessary changes going forward, all the while having love and respect to the one who corrected them.

This scripture states that this act of correction does more to correct someone who is wise, than 100 lashes with a whip would do for a fool. Instead of being a rod of correction to the fool, it only serves to harden their heart toward the one trying to help them.

We all come into this world helpless and ignorant of what the world is all about. As we grow and get older, we learn....and we make changes as we see they are necessary. All along the way, we have had those who tried to correct us when we were going down the wrong path. Sometime we took their direction, and sometimes we arrogantly ignored the sage wisdom that our elders offered to us...many times to our regret sometime later.

One who is wise doesn't need to be told they're doing wrong multiple times. When correction is offered, they take it in a spirit of love, make the necessary changes in their actions, and move forward....in better shape than they were before. A fool resists, rebels, and rejects correction and reproof.

God constantly seeks to correct and reprove us through His Word. As we hear it preached, study it, and meditate upon it, we should let it speak to our hearts. And when we're convicted of things we need to change, wisdom states that we will do it, instead of looking for a way to justify our actions apart from God. Remember, God is perfect....His Word is perfect....and in the light of His Word, our imperfections are revealed.

Be wise, and take reproof and correction with a Christian heart of love.

[v.11](#) – There are people in our history that are held up as heroes for rebelling against the status quo. Sometimes, things need to be changed, and it takes someone with courage to stand fast against things that are wrong in order to make them right.

However, when we rebel against God, the Maker of all that is in the world and the world itself, we rebel against the ultimate authority of the universe. Only people that are evil will seek to continually rebel against a Holy God.

Evil people hate authority. They resent being told what they can and cannot do, so they disobey and do what they want anyway. This verse states that they will eventually be put down by Almighty God for their rebellion and disobedience.

Rebellion against God is a terrible thing. It shows how willful and contrary man can be. God even compares it to witchcraft ([1 Samuel 15:23](#)). Rebellion against God in the Garden of Eden brought sin into the world. Rebellion had Satan cast down with 1/3 of the angels from Heaven. Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed because of their perverted rebellion against God. He did not tolerate it then, and He doesn't today. In every situation of rebellion in the Bible, God always got justice. All of the people involved met with terrible fates because of their actions.

Evil people who are rebelling against God today will one day stand in judgment by God....not as their Saviour, but as the one who will sentence them to eternity in Hell. Unless they submit themselves to



God's authority, they will be eternally separated from God. Our hearts should be burdened for them, and we should pray that God will help them turn from their rebellion to have a relationship with the Lord.

**v.12** – The male Kodiak bear can weigh almost a ton. When it stands up on its back legs, it is almost 10 feet tall. When it runs, it can reach speeds of up to 35 MPH (which I can't). It has teeth which can literally bite through steel bolts. It can climb trees. And it has claws that can dig deeply into the ground. So, knowing this, how can you escape this bear? It's much bigger than any of us, we can't outrun it, it can bite through anything we can get inside of, we can't out climb it, and even if we're underground, it can dig down and find us.

But the good news is that most bears, when they hear something, will retreat and go the other way. They won't bother anyone unless provoked or disturbed. However, Solomon uses a specific type of bear in this proverb – a mother bear who has been robbed of her cubs.

The mother bear, which is much smaller than the male, is much more aggressive and dangerous, especially when it comes to protecting her young. She will fight fearlessly and attack anything that threatens her cubs.

With this in mind, note that this proverb is stating it would be better for a man to face off with a mother bear robbed of her cubs than to encounter a fool in his evil. Both are dangerous, but the fool is more dangerous than the mother bear.

We know what bears look like and where they are likely to be found. So, if we're in an area where they are bears, we're on the lookout for them, and if we see one, we know how to avoid an encounter with them. We can spot fools as well. They show no respect for God, their conduct and speech are not Godly, they are arrogant, selfish, despise authority, and detest correction of any kind.

Bears and fools are dangerous....and we, as Christians, need to avoid them both.

**v.13** – When someone wrongs us, we want to immediately get even. We know it's wrong, but that's the human side of us. Nevertheless, we have to have discipline and not reward evil for evil.

As wrong as this is, it is even worse to repay evil for good. There are specific consequences for this action mentioned in this proverb – that evil will not depart from the house of the offender.

When someone despises or ignores the good done for them, don't take vengeance or retribution into your own hands. God will take care of this for you in the future.

When this happens, and it undoubtedly has happened to all of us, we feel used. It makes us feel like the person who has rejected our goodness and wronged us is a traitor to us.

The next time this happens, remember Jesus. One of his own inner circle of twelve, Judas, betrayed him with a kiss, the greeting of a friend. With one word or thought, Jesus could have taken care of Judas in the Garden of Gethsemane that night. But He didn't. Vengeance was in the hands of His Father God, and a few short hours later, Judas was dead.

If we are to be Christ-like, we need to reward evil for good instead of the other way around. Remember that Scripture states that Jesus died for us while we were still sinners. What an example of rewarding good for evil.

**v.14** – It always takes at least two people to fight. You can't fight against yourself, or against an unwilling party. Either party can end a fight before it starts by just walking away. But when the two get started, it always gets worse. This proverb refers to this time as when a small hole is made in a dam and it quickly gets worse until the dam breaks and the water comes rushing through.

Wisdom says that we back away from conflict at the first signs of strife. If we stay and trade words, comments, etc., a small confrontation can quickly escalate into a full-scale fight.

In Solomon's day, water was held by levees or dikes. People were aware that a small hole in the levee or dike would quickly become bigger from the erosion and pressure of the water against the earth. When it broke it was difficult to stop and it created lots of damage. They also realized that a dike or levee was much easier to preserve than repair. To keep them intact, even small breaches must be avoided.

Strife and contention grow the same way – quickly and violently – into major battles. As Christians, we have to take the “high road” and stop it before it starts. As some say, “Just let it go”.

Our Lord taught us to turn the other cheek when we were wronged. Paul tells us to try and live peaceably with all men. The strength and wisdom it takes to leave a fight, is far more Christ-like than staying to help it escalate into a sin.

In short, it is more difficult to stop a fight once it gets started, so it is better not to let it begin.

**v.15** – We live in a world that has sought to eliminate any absolutes. We’re more in an age of compromise today. The wicked are excused, and the just are criticized. This proverb states that the Lord hates both of these – those who justify the wicked, and those who condemn the just.

God has absolutes and He expects everyone to live by them. The Bible states that if we break one commandment, we have, in effect, broken them all.

Some today will say, “It’s OK as long as it doesn’t affect anyone else”, or “Let’s just agree to disagree”. But God’s Word and His absolutes do not allow that latitude. God says that right is right and wrong is wrong, according to His Word.

The day is coming when all will stand before the Lord God as our judge, and the books of our lives will be opened. There will be no plea bargains, mistrials, hung juries, pardons, or acquittals. The righteous will be given eternal life in Heaven, and the wicked will be cast into hell forever.

God’s absolutes have never changed and they never will.

**v.16** – This proverb states that fools will pretend to want wisdom, but their heart really isn’t in it. We see people today who “play church”. They carry their Bibles around, come to church, put a little money in the offering plate, and by outward appearances, appear to be doing all the right things. However, on the inside, their heart has no desire for wisdom, correction, or real instruction by God. They are content to live in their own little world, letting the world think they’re close to God, when in reality He is far from their heart.

God is the one, however, who sees past the outward person to the heart. He is the one who sees our deepest motives and thoughts...and He knows when we're serious about our relationship with Him and when we're not.

Timothy warned us of people like this in the last days.....people having a form of godliness but denying the power of God. They don't want to hear the sound doctrine of the Bible, but will seek to listen to people who will tell their "itching ears" what they want to hear.

We need to constantly seek the sound doctrine of the Bible, because of our respect for the Lord and a strong desire to have more knowledge of Him. Many people claim to seek the truth of God, but far fewer actually do.

**v.17** – A true friend never fails, no matter what. Friend help each other by sharing in successes, helping each other when one fails, providing encouragement to each other, and helping to oppose enemies ([Ecclesiastes 4:9-12](#)).

Such friends are hard to find. They are truly a blessing from God, and care must be taken to preserve these types of friendships.

Christians should all be these types of friends, because if we are truly Christ-like, our souls will be identical, and our desires and aims in relation to Christ will be the same. They are unified, and they give and accept reproof and correction from each other in love, because they know they we are all striving for the same thing and heading to the same place.

The best friend any of us have ever known is Jesus Christ. He has already done more for us than all of our friends combined. So, think about how much you love and care for the best friend you have. Do you love Jesus more?

**v.18** – This is a practical proverb for everyday life, especially in the economy in which we find ourselves. It is about someone taking on the financial responsibilities of a friend without understanding all the facts.

Remember when a business transaction was sealed with just a handshake? This is what Solomon is referring to. He is saying that there are some who are impulsive risk takers, and will, without thinking, make financial commitments that they cannot honor. They

are short-sighted and make promises today that they cannot follow through with tomorrow. The wise seek ways to reduce risk, but fools jump in before they understand all the facts.

A surety is a guarantor. The proverb states that a man void of understanding guarantees his friend's debts by shaking the hand of the creditor, and promises to pay the creditor if the friend does not. Helping a friend in need that is in financial stress is one thing....overcommitting ourselves by taking on excessive liability for someone else is another.

We see this in politics every time there is an election. Bribes are against the law to get votes, so the candidates make promises the people want to hear in an effort to garner their vote. Once in office, however, they find that they cannot live up to the promises they made. ("Read my lips – no new taxes.")

Consider the greatest story of a surety (guarantor) in the history of time. God was the creditor. We, as sinner, were the debtors. There was no way we could repay the debt or buy our freedom. God's holy nature required that we should die. However, Jesus stepped in the promised to be our surety. He took our debt upon Himself and paid the price with his precious blood ([Hebrews 7:22](#)).

The lesson is simple – don't become a surety for someone else unless you have all the facts and the amount is small and the situation is desperate.

[v.19](#) – The two clauses in this proverb are closely connected. The first statement condemns fighting as a sin. This doesn't mean just trading physical blows with each other....it can also mean fighting with words or actions. If we love to argue, fight, or quarrel, we must love sin....because that is exactly what we're doing.

[Ephesians 4:31-32](#) **"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be ye kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."**

The second statement promises destruction to the proud. The connection is that pride causes fighting ([Proverbs 13:10](#)). If we have pride in ourselves, we will be destroyed. The "gate" referred to here is

our estate, reputation, and influence. We are not to have pride in these things, because pride leads to destruction (Proverbs 16:18).

We need to take the words of John the Baptist to heart:

**[John 3:30](#) “He must increase, but I must decrease.”**

**v.20** – Whether it is a bad heart or an evil tongue, both will bring trouble our way. One alone is bad enough, but the two together are true evil. If we allow evil in our hearts, we will not find good things coming our way in life. If we allow our tongue to say evil things, we will fall into mischief because of it. This proverb warns us of the consequences for not ruling our spirit and our speech.

A forward heart is contrary, perverse, hard to please, proud, rebellious, and wicked. They are arrogant, and do not know the favor of God or others in their life.

A perverse tongue is corrupt, wrong, hurtful, and unreasonable. They say the wrong things, at the wrong time, and in the wrong way. They hurt those closest to them with their words. They despise and speak out against any authority than challenges their position.

God hates both of these, and this proverb states that they will fall into mischief...and the worst part is that, so many times, they cannot see the error of their ways until it is too late.

The truth of the matter is that a forward heart produces a perverse tongue. It is almost impossible to have one without the other, because our mouth speaks from our heart ([Matthew 12:33-37](#)).

As related so many times in Proverbs, we must constantly guard our heart and thoughts, as well as the words our tongue says.

**v.21** – So many parents have lost their joy and faced sorrow and shame because of a disgraceful and troubled child. While all of us are born into sin, we have instructions in the Bible on how to raise children to be good and to have a right relationship with the Heavenly Father. Although our children may stray, and the effects of how they were raised may not show up until much later in life, that still does not remove our responsibility to raise them according to God’s Word to the best of our ability.

This proverb, however, is speaking to the parents who take no interest in the life of their child and allow them to do anything they want to do, to be left to their own devices. When this occurs, they have no foundation in Christ and are raised, according to this proverb, as a fool.

This is talking about parents who neglect their children, and do not train them up in the right way....and the results are terrible. The children, born into sin, just have their hearts get hardened the older they get.

The pain of a foolish child is great. So we need to be the best parents we can be. We do this by teaching, training, and being an example for them. And no matter how old they are, it is not too late. We can always pray and ask God to change their hearts.

[v.22](#) – Although Solomon wrote this proverb almost 3,000 years ago, medical research has confirmed what he already knew – those who laugh and enjoy life will live longer. Lower stress, lower high blood pressure, lower risk of heart disease.

Our health can be affected by more than just diet and exercise. A happy and cheerful spirit will improve our lives and our health, but a wounded spirit can ruin it.

Understand that this proverb is not saying laughing and having a cheerful spirit will eliminate all sickness and disease. God has given people knowledge to develop treatments and medicines that will help us to be healed. But the point of this proverb is that a cheerful heart will help us to overcome some difficult points in our lives.

Whether we have a cheerful or broken heart / spirit is a matter of choice. It is not dependent on fate or genetics. And it is also not the result of circumstances, because we can choose to have joy on top of the mountain or down in the valley.

Discontentment will ruin our health, because we tend to focus on what we do not have rather than our blessings. King Ahab, a man with much wealth, ruined his life because he could not have Naboth's vineyard. Amnon, one of the king's sons, lusted after his half-sister Tamar, and ruined his life because he took her by force.

If we are joyful, thankful, loving, peaceful, and forgiving, we will find the blessings of God and that "Balm in Gilead" that is soothing for our

troubled souls. It is our choice. Circumstances are not the issue. But the consequences of the choice we make are ours.

The Lord Jesus came to bind up the broken hearted ([Isaiah 61:1-3](#)). He is a glorious Savior and Friend, and those who find Him find happiness.

**v.23** – This proverb is talking about people in leadership positions who make judgments over others, and the integrity they need to carry out their job. They have to have good character. They may face attempts to buy their favor or to pervert their judgment. The wise refuse their offers, but the wicked take secret gifts in return for their decisions.

The gifts here are bribes, a payment to a corrupt person to induce them to act in favor of the giver by altering the law or perverting the judgment. By definition, bribes were secretive and, if discovered, could lead to severe prosecution for the giver and receiver. Therefore, they were hidden under the clothing to prevent discovery.

The wicked man is the one taking the bribe. They are the ruler, judge, or witness that is willing to pervert justice for the money given to them. Although giving and receiving of bribes is wrong, the implication here is that the one taking the bribe is more evil since they are held to a higher standard of justice. God condemns this and always has.

**Exodus 23:8 “And thou shalt take no gift. For the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous.”**

**v.24** – I recently heard a man talking to high school athletes asking them if they had set goals for their future. He stated that when he was their age, he had a goal to be recruited by a major college or university. He said he wrote it down and pinned it to the wall above his bed. He saw it every night and never forgot that he was pursuing that goal. As a senior, he had offers from 12 universities, ultimately choosing to go to Duke to play football.

This proverb states that a wise man will keep his eyes on the prize before him, and will not get sidetracked by every little thing. He has understanding as his guide and rule of conduct. He is focused on all aspects of life, with the sole purpose of keeping and living up to God's commands. He searches the Bible for wisdom, and he proves all things by what God says. He finds a way to be content in life no matter what situation he finds himself in.



But fools are the opposite. They can't stay focused on any one thing. They bounce from here to there with no firm direction in their life. They cannot focus on important matter. They get distracted, they are easily confused, and they are never content. They resent instruction and correction, so the things of God are usually ignored by them as they go their own way.

Timothy tells us that Godliness with contentment is great gain ([1 Timothy 6:6](#)). This is a simple rule but one that bears adherence. Godliness is living a prudent life and constantly seeking after wisdom with God as the bedrock of our faith. Contentment is appreciation for the friendship of God and trusting Him for all things, because He knows best.

The rule of this proverb is to seek wisdom every day and avoid anything that would distract us from this pursuit.

[v.25](#) – Here again, Solomon speaks about foolish children have on their parents. Fathers grieve when their children are foolish and mothers feel the bitter pain of seeing them take the wrong pathway.

Mothers endure the pain of bringing their children into the world, and they work long and hard to help raise their children to adulthood. But neglecting training them in the ways of the Lord can, in the end, bring much greater pain and suffering.

Training up children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, thought requiring sacrifice, can bring wonderful rewards. It will save parents from the pain and grief described here, and will bring joy and pleasure to see them living in the wisdom of God.

Parents have a responsibility to raise their children correctly, but children also have a command to honor, respect, and obey their parents. When the two work in unison, the results are wonderful. When they do not, parents are left in grief and pain, and children suffer the consequences of their actions.

With God as our Heavenly Father, we need to remember this proverb. How much grief or pain do we cause Him when we disobey, go our own way, or rebel against Him? Just as hurt as we are when our children do wrong, imagine how much we hurt our Heavenly Father when we disobey.

[v.26](#) – There are two related evils in this proverb that are involving civil government: (1) it is wrong when rulers punish just and righteous citizens, and (2) it is wrong when citizens rise up against leaders for doing their rightful job of enforcing justice. Both rulers and citizens are obligated to God to do right.

Note the opening word “also” in this proverb. This implies that it is a continuation of the previous proverb that spoke about wayward children giving pain and grief to their parents. Just as disobedient children disrupt the home and destroy parents, so too a breakdown in civil authority disrupts and destroys cities, towns, and nations.

When a government legislates laws that hurt upright citizens, the proverb states that this is “not good”. That phrase, “not good” is actually a figure of speech, which implies that this is a severe understatement. Rulers who punish just citizens is far worse than just “not good” – it is an abomination to the Lord ([Proverbs 17:15](#)).

Equity is fair and accurate judgment. When a ruler makes an equitable judgment, one party is found to be right and the other to be wrong. This proverb states that it is wrong for the party who is found to be wrong to retaliate against the ruler for rightfully doing their job.

Every citizen in every nation should respect the authorities that God has appointed. No matter how much we dislike them, God has put them in office over us. We just need to remember that there is no perfect authority among men. The only perfect authority is the Lord Jesus Christ.

[v.27-28](#) – Think twice, speak once! This is an adage this proverb is supporting. Again, it shows the traits of a person who is wise. A wise person doesn’t need to speak a lot in an attempt to show how smart they are. They speak only when they have something of substance to say. They choose their words carefully. They are calm, gracious, and careful about what they say, who they say it to, and when they speak.

Wisdom brings about an excellent spirit within us because wisdom says that we listen more than we speak, we study before answering, we are slow to anger, we realize our limitations, and we constantly measure ourselves not by what others think but by what God says.

The words of our mouths reveal our hearts. Critical, harsh, or negative words show a heart that is full of sin. Gracious speech reveals a pure heart.

Abraham Lincoln once made the statement, "It is better to remain silent and thought a fool, than to speak out and remove all doubt." The second verse implies that even a fool can be thought of as wise if they cut down on their hasty speech and do not talk as much. The fact that they are silent can give them impression that they are contemplating a matter or that they are searching for the right words before speaking.

The problem, however, is that the need to babble for a fool burns like a fire in their mouths. This second verse basically says, if you're a fool, close your mouth and don't talk and maybe no one will know it.