



Behold, I give you a wise and
discerning mind...

Reading from Proverbs 10:1–22:16

Introduction

Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892) famously wrote a book entitled *John Ploughman's Talk*. The title, he said, was appropriate, because a ploughman's task is to break up the fallow ground. In the same way, I pray that this booklet will turn-over the soil of our minds, attitudes, desires and lives.

This booklet has forty-six daily readings from Proverbs 10:1 to 22:16 (375 two-line proverbs in total). The title in our Bibles tells us that these are all proverbs of Solomon; the man renown for asking God for wisdom and being given it. Each day begins with a short introduction and ends with a short prayer.

You will notice that I have arranged the proverbs under headings, such as "Listening" or "Dishonesty." Yet, when you read Proverbs 10:1 to 22:16, the proverbs don't appear to be arranged in any order. They are gems of truth spoken in a seemingly indiscriminate way. Perhaps that suits the way life unfolds for us. Therefore, the danger of doing what I have done in this booklet is that we think of God's wisdom in *categories* or *parts*, and not in the *whole*. I confess that we don't need a concordance of wisdom, but to read and know the *whole* of God's wisdom in full. We don't dip into God's wisdom; rather it is a whole way of life in Christ, based on the fear of the LORD.

In saying that, I pray that God's wisdom would speak clearly through this booklet. For the believer, I pray that you will come to day forty-six having put into practice all that you have read in God's Word and so lived more faithfully to Him. For those considering God's ways, I pray that seeing God's wisdom would be the first step in drawing you to the God of heaven and earth.

God bless,
Graham Barnes

Wisdom and foolishness – part 1



Is wisdom inherited or acquired? Is wisdom something some people naturally have and others don't? Or is wisdom something learnt? The Bible says that wisdom can be learnt. Wisdom can be taught and acquired (Prov. 1:4). Its source is the LORD; "the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom (Prov. 9:10)." That makes sense if God is the Creator of every molecule who knows every fibre of our being and what is good for us.

These proverbs tell us that a fool causes grief to their family (Prov. 10:1). A fool thinks wrong doing is a joke (Prov. 10:23). A fool cannot help but speak foolish things (Prov. 12:23). There is no point wasting time listening to a fool (Prov. 14:7). Often the best thing to do is leave. In contrast, if we are wise, then we will be careful in how we live before the Lord and others (Prov. 14:8).

**A wise son makes a glad father,
but a foolish son is a sorrow to his mother.**

- Prov. 10:1

**Doing wrong is like a joke to a fool,
but wisdom is pleasure to a man of understanding.**

- Prov. 10:23

**Whoever works his land will have plenty of bread,
but he who follows worthless pursuits lacks sense.**

- Prov. 12:11

**A prudent man conceals knowledge,
but the heart of fools proclaims folly.**

- Prov. 12:23

A wise son hears his father's instruction,
but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.

- Prov. 13:1

The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life,
that one may turn away from the snares of death.

- Prov. 13:14

Every prudent man acts with knowledge,
but a fool flaunts his folly.

- Prov. 13:16

A scoffer seeks wisdom in vain,
but knowledge is easy for a man of understanding.

- Prov. 14:6

Leave the presence of a fool,
for there you do not meet words of knowledge.

- Prov. 14:7

The wisdom of the prudent is to discern his way,
but the folly of fools is deceiving.

- Prov. 14:8

Father God, we seek that Your Name be honoured. We desire to follow Your path of life. Help us to have nothing to do with anything that is foolish in Your eyes. We must guard our minds; we must leave the presence of a fool.

Let us take hold of life in You. Your wisdom is the precious fountain of life. This day, give us true wisdom that comes from fearing You.

We pray in Jesus' holy Name, Amen.

Wisdom and foolishness – part 2



The book of Proverbs is God's wisdom for living in a broken and sinful world. The foundation of wisdom is the fear of the LORD. Proverbs tells us that there is hope that a fool can change their ways (Prov. 8:5).

Lady Wisdom calls to us and says, "Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!" To him who lacks sense she says, "Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed. Leave your simple ways, and live, and walk in the way of insight." God invites us to hear His instruction on the right way to live (Prov. 1:2-4). Thus, wisdom can be acquired and we are wise to listen to the invitation and take hold of God's wisdom.

In these proverbs, we see that wisdom is more valuable than gold (Prov. 16:16). Fools are reckless and careless (Prov. 14:16); they neither know nor fear the Lord. In contrast, wisdom shines like a light in the company of fools (Prov. 14:33). May the Lord give us a heart-felt desire to seek His wisdom in all things.

**One who is wise is cautious and turns away from evil,
but a fool is reckless and careless.**

- Prov. 14:16

**The simple inherit folly,
but the prudent are crowned with knowledge.**

- Prov. 14:18

**Wisdom rests in the heart of a man of understanding,
but it makes itself known even in the midst of fools.**

- Prov. 14:33

The heart of him who has understanding seeks knowledge,

but the mouths of fools feed on folly.

- Prov. 15:14

A wise son makes a glad father,

but a foolish man despises his mother.

- Prov. 15:20

A king's wrath is a messenger of death,

and a wise man will appease it.

- Prov. 16:14

In the light of a king's face there is life,

and his favour is like the clouds that bring the spring rain.

- Prov. 16:15

How much better to get wisdom than gold!

To get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver.

- Prov. 16:16

Good sense is a fountain of life to him who has it,

but the instruction of fools is folly.

- Prov. 16:22

Lord God, the mouth of a fool feeds on folly. This day, help us to set a trap over our mouths, to turn away from evil and even put to death all that is unworthy of You within us.

Wisdom is better than gold. We ask today to set our minds on gaining Your wisdom.

We ask this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Wisdom and foolishness – part 3



If we fear the LORD, then our lives will be marked by a determination to seek His wisdom. These proverbs tell us to set our faces towards His wisdom. In contrast, a fool thinks only of earthly things and his dreams are unrealistic (Prov. 17:24).

The opposite of wisdom is folly. Folly may not look dangerous to us at the time, but we are warned that it would be better to meet an angry mother bear than to fall in with fools (Prov. 17:12)!

The world tells us to follow our heart's desire, but Wisdom tells us that such desires without a knowledge built on the fear of the LORD are not good (Prov. 19:2). May the LORD give us desires that are in line with His Word.

Wisdom guards us against gullibly protecting our neighbour. Such gullibility is not loyalty, and can lead to ruin (Prov. 17:18).

A fool would not buy wisdom, even if he was able to (Prov. 17:16). Fearing the LORD and obeying Him is the true source of wisdom and may the LORD give us grace to do this.

A servant who deals wisely will rule over a son who acts shamefully

and will share the inheritance as one of the brothers.

- Prov. 17:2

Let a man meet a she-bear robbed of her cubs rather than a fool in his folly.

- Prov. 17:12

Why should a fool have money in his hand to buy wisdom when he has no sense?

- Prov. 17:16

One who lacks sense gives a pledge
and puts up security in the presence of his neighbour.
- Prov. 17:18

The discerning sets his face toward wisdom,
but the eyes of a fool are on the ends of the earth.
- Prov. 17:24

Desire without knowledge is not good,
and whoever makes haste with his feet misses his way.
- Prov. 19:2

Whoever gets sense loves his own soul;
he who keeps understanding will discover good.
- Prov. 19:8

The terror of a king is like the growling of a lion;
whoever provokes him to anger forfeits his life.
- Prov. 20:2

The purpose in a man's heart is like deep water,
but a man of understanding will draw it out.
- Prov. 20:5

*Father God, by Your wisdom You laid the foundations of the earth
and nobody can question Your wisdom. You made us in Your image
to glorify and enjoy You forever.*

*We lay before You all the desires of our hearts this day. Help us to
put aside all that is selfish, wrong-hearted and against Your Word.
Please forgive us our wrong desires and create in us a clean heart
that loves You. Please answer this prayer, in Jesus' Name, Amen.*

Wisdom and foolishness – part 4



Wisdom cannot be bought or sold, but it is more valuable than a precious jewel (Prov. 20:15) and we pray to acquire it.

God has made it such, that whilst the young have strength and vigour on their side, the old have experience (Prov. 20:29). Three things mark out wisdom in these verses;

1) Wisdom wins out over strength, so that it is better to be wise than strong (Prov. 21:22).

2) The wise carefully guard their lives, whereas the wicked cover their sin, putting on a bold face rather than admit that they were wrong (Prov. 21:29). Their "glory in their shame (Phil. 3:19)." They have become unteachable, instead of humble before the Lord.

3) The wise are awake to danger and flee from it, but the simple are oblivious to danger and suffer for it (Prov. 22:3).

May the Lord humble us to confess our sin before Him and others.

May He give us a teachable spirit and a discerning mind to flee from all that would put us in spiritual danger.

**There is gold and abundance of costly stones,
but the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel.**

- Prov. 20:15

**The glory of young men is their strength,
but the splendour of old men is their grey hair.**

- Prov. 20:29

**Precious treasure and oil are in a wise man's dwelling,
but a foolish man devours it.**

- Prov. 21:20

A wise man scales the city of the mighty
and brings down the stronghold in which they trust.
- Prov. 21:22

A wicked man puts on a bold face,
but the upright gives thought to his ways.
- Prov. 21:29

The prudent sees danger and hides himself,
but the simple go on and suffer for it.
- Prov. 22:3

Gracious God, we are wrong to ever put on a bold face towards You or others, refusing to admit we were wrong. Please humble us so that we will confess our wrong words, motives and doings. We pray to know the forgiveness that Jesus Christ gained for us at the cross.

*May we never glory in anything that is shameful in Your eyes. Father, make us awake to dangers around us, especially subtle dangers. Sin is crouching at our door and its desire is to rule over us. The simple suffer, but trusting in Christ, give us alert minds that flee from it. Please answer this prayer, in Jesus' Name we pray,
Amen.*

Righteousness and Wickedness - part 1



Ill-gotten gain, at first glance, may look like a superb feast, but soon the food turns rotten, becoming infested with maggots! It is righteousness that delivers us from death (Prov. 10:2).

We see an example of this in the days of Micah: the judges of Jerusalem gave "judgment for a bribe", the priests taught, but only "for a price" and the prophets told fortunes in return "for money." In all this, they then had the gall to "lean on the LORD and say, 'Is not the LORD in the midst of us? No disaster shall come upon us (Micah 3:11).'" Yet, Micah also prophesied of a time when a Ruler would come from Bethlehem, whose coming is of old (Micah 5:2). Our righteousness before God is in Him, Christ Jesus (2 Cor. 5:21). In the end, the righteous will remain, but the wicked will fade (Prov. 10:30). In God's grace, He cares for the righteous and thwarts the wicked (Prov. 10:3). God will protect His land from impurity (Prov. 10:30).

**Treasures gained by wickedness do not profit,
but righteousness delivers from death.**

- Prov. 10:2

**The LORD does not let the righteous go hungry,
but he thwarts the craving of the wicked.**

- Prov. 10:3

**Blessings are on the head of the righteous,
but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence.**

- Prov. 10:6

The wage of the righteous leads to life,
the gain of the wicked to sin.

- Prov. 10:16

What the wicked dreads will come upon him,
but the desire of the righteous will be granted.

- Prov. 10:24

When the tempest passes, the wicked is no more,
but the righteous is established forever.

- Prov. 10:25

The hope of the righteous brings joy,
but the expectation of the wicked will perish.

- Prov. 10:28

The righteous will never be removed,
but the wicked will not dwell in the land.

- Prov. 10:30

The righteousness of the blameless keeps his way
straight,

but the wicked falls by his own wickedness.

- Prov. 11:5

*Lord Jesus, You are the Light of the world, exposing all within us.
Yet You promise that whoever follows You will never walk in
darkness, but will have to light of life. What a bountiful promise!
Lord, the righteous are delivered from death, provided for, blessed,
have life, see their desires come true, stand forever and have joy.
Forgive us for ever thinking that sin is pleasure. Instead, show us
more and more that true life is found in You alone, O God of
Wisdom. We pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.*

Righteousness and Wickedness - part 2



The promise of sin is abundant pleasure, freedom and happiness. The reality is that it is slavery. Jesus said, "everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin (John 8:34)."

These proverbs tell us that the "treacherous are taken captive by their lust (Prov. 11:6)." Paul tells us that in Christ Jesus we have been "set free from sin and become slaves of God." The fruit of our new slavery to God is sanctification leading to eternal life (Rom. 6:22)."

Righteousness is like "a tree of life." Have you observed how a righteous life reaches out, "capturing" others by it and thereby extending God's blessing to others (Prov. 11:30)? Jesus called His disciples to be fishers of men.

Peter quotes Proverbs 11:31 in 1 Peter 4:18, in order to reinforce the point that the righteous are saved in the midst of their suffering here on earth. Peter's conclusion is, "Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good (1 Peter 4:19)."

**The righteousness of the upright delivers them,
but the treacherous are taken captive by their lust.**

- Prov. 11:6

**The righteous is delivered from trouble,
and the wicked walks into it instead.**

- Prov. 11:8

**When it goes well with the righteous, the city rejoices,
and when the wicked perish there are shouts of
gladness.**

- Prov. 11:10

Whoever is steadfast in righteousness will live,
but he who pursues evil will die.

- Prov. 11:19

Be assured, an evil person will not go unpunished,
but the offspring of the righteous will be delivered.

- Prov. 11:21

The desire of the righteous ends only in good,
the expectation of the wicked in wrath.

- Prov. 11:23

The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life,
and whoever captures souls is wise.

- Prov. 11:30

If the righteous is repaid on earth,
how much more the wicked and the sinner!

- Prov. 11:31

A good man obtains favour from the LORD,
but a man of evil devices he condemns.

- Prov. 12:2

*Lord God, You have promised to deliver us through suffering,
therefore, let our trust in You be strengthened.*

*You promise blessings that come from righteousness. You say that
the desires of the righteous end only in good.*

*O God, give us desires that are pleasing to You. We submit all that
we are to You, in Jesus Name, Amen.*

Righteousness and Wickedness - part 3



The Scriptures everywhere testify to the fact that in the end the righteous will stand, but the wicked will fall. In these verses, once again righteousness is pictured as being like a tree, strong and healthy, bearing fruit that is good (Prov.12:12). Adding to this picture, the righteous are a joyful light (Prov. 13:9), a tent that stands upright (Prov. 14:11) and the wicked will bow before the righteous (Prov. 14:19).

Christ Jesus, who humbled Himself from glory to death, has been given a name above every other name, so that "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:10-11)." If we know the Lord, then let these proverbs encourage us to work out our salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12).

**No one is established by wickedness,
but the root of the righteous will never be moved.**
- Prov. 12:3

**The wicked are overthrown and are no more,
but the house of the righteous will stand.**
- Prov. 12:7

**Whoever is wicked covets the spoil of evildoers,
but the root of the righteous bears fruit.**
-Prov.12:12

**No ill befalls the righteous,
but the wicked are filled with trouble.**
- Prov. 12:21

One who is righteous is a guide to his neighbour,
but the way of the wicked leads them astray.
- Prov. 12:26

The light of the righteous rejoices,
but the lamp of the wicked will be put out.
- Prov. 13:9

Disaster pursues sinners,
but the righteous are rewarded with good.
- Prov. 13:21

The house of the wicked will be destroyed,
but the tent of the upright will flourish.
- Prov. 14:11

The evil bow down before the good,
the wicked at the gates of the righteous.
- Prov. 14:19

The wicked is overthrown through his evildoing,
but the righteous finds refuge in his death.
- Prov. 14:32

Father God, all Your promises find their Yes in Jesus Christ, our Saviour. These proverbs speak of righteousness being like a fruitful tree, of righteousness enduring and wickedness being destroyed. Lord, fulfil Your word, in Your time. Give us assurance and hope in Christ our Lord. Holy Spirit fill us with the fruit of righteousness that glorifies Him who is the name above all names. Amen.

Righteousness and Wickedness - part 4



In God's common grace, sin is often universally recognised (Prov. 14:34). These proverbs show us that righteousness shows blessings, such as exalting a nation, bringing treasure and preserving life. The upright know the King's Highway and so, turn aside from evil (Prov. 16:17). No power has been given to kings, unless it is given from above (John 19:11), and knowing this, the wise person is careful to do what is right before the king (Prov. 20:8). In contrast, the wicked come to trouble, their desires are evil and mercy has no place in their lives (Prov. 21:10).

Ultimately, sin undoes relationships, destroying true peace (Prov. 17:19). So too pride, or "making our door high," will only end in ruin (Prov. 17:19).

The promise in these verses is that LORD Himself provides protection for all who run to Him (Prov. 18:10). Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice... and no one will snatch them out of my hand (John 10:27-28)."

**Righteousness exalts a nation,
but sin is a reproach to any people.**

- Prov. 14:34

**In the house of the righteous there is much treasure,
but trouble befalls the income of the wicked.**

- Prov. 15:6

**The LORD has made everything for its purpose,
even the wicked for the day of trouble.**

- Prov. 16:4

An oracle is on the lips of a king;
his mouth does not sin in judgment.

- Prov. 16:10

The highway of the upright turns aside from evil;
whoever guards his way preserves his life.

- Prov. 16:17

An evil man seeks only rebellion,
and a cruel messenger will be sent against him.

- Prov. 17:11

Whoever loves transgression loves strife;
he who makes his door high seeks destruction.

- Prov. 17:19

The name of the LORD is a strong tower;
the righteous man runs into it and is safe.

- Prov. 18:10

A king who sits on the throne of judgment
winnows all evil with his eyes.

- Prov. 20:8

The soul of the wicked desires evil;
his neighbour finds no mercy in his eyes.

- Prov. 21:10

Our Father in Heaven, You are sovereign over kings and empires, large and small. Teach us to walk in Your ways. The wicked person shows no mercy to their neighbour, but You are the God of mercy and kindness. Lord, there is none other hope, none other hiding place, but You and we run to You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Laziness and work - part 1



The Bible has much to say about laziness and work. Work is something that is good, given by God. In the garden of Eden, God gave Adam the work of tending what was there (Gen. 2:15). We were made to work. Never forget that the Lord Jesus worked (Mark 6:3)! Although all our work is now frustrating because of the Fall, laziness is disobedience to God and its way is ruin.

These proverbs teach that laziness leads to poverty (Prov. 10:4). Laziness brings shame and the lazy person irritates others who see someone who is simply unwilling to work (Prov. 10:26). So too, all talk without action leads to poverty (Prov. 14:23).

In contrast those who are diligent find all that they need (Prov. 13:4). In the New Testament, Paul says to the church at Thessalonica, "we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living (2 Thess. 3:11-12)." Whatever work lies before us today, according to our abilities and opportunity, may we honour the Lord.

**A slack hand causes poverty,
but the hand of the diligent makes rich.**

- Prov. 10:4

**He who gathers in summer is a prudent son,
but he who sleeps in harvest is a son who brings
shame.**

- Prov. 10:5

Like vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes,
so is the sluggard to those who send him.

- Prov. 10:26

The hand of the diligent will rule,
while the slothful will be put to forced labour.

-Prov. 12:24

Whoever is slothful will not roast his game,
but the diligent man will get precious wealth.

- Prov. 12:27

The soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing,
while the soul of the diligent is richly supplied.

- Prov.13:4

In all toil there is profit,
but mere talk tends only to poverty.

- Prov. 14:23

The way of a sluggard is like a hedge of thorns,
but the path of the upright is a level highway.

- Prov. 15:19

Father God, in Your goodness You have given us work to do. Let us work quietly, giving thanks to You in all things. Idle hands and an idle mind delight the Devil, and so, Lord, help us to make the best use of the time that You have given us.

Lord, you don't look so much on the externals of our work, but You look at our hearts in that work. May we seek Your honour and to help others in all we do. We ask this in Jesus' Name and to Your glory, Amen.

Laziness and work - part 2



There is nothing like hunger as a motivator for work (Prov. 16:26)! The sleep of the labourer is sweet (Ecc. 5:12) and even the Son of God slept (Mark 4:38). But the sleep of the lazy person is their ruin (Prov. 19:15). Surely, we are to rest and take our sleep appropriately, according to our work and health, and not be a sluggard wasting the day.

The lazy person does not do their work at the appropriate time and so, in the fullness of time, they have nothing to show (Prov. 20:4).

So too, they come up with flimsy excuses (Prov. 22:13).

Again, Paul tells the Christians at Thessalonica to “aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one (1 Thess. 4:11-12).”

Amongst the disciples were fishermen (Mark 1:16) and a tax collector (Matt. 10:3), Lydia was a dealer in purple goods (Acts 16:14), Paul worked as a tentmaker (Acts 18:3) and others managed their homes (1 Tim. 5:14). All lawful work, whether paid or unpaid, that is done with the right motivation is pleasing to the Lord.

**A worker's appetite works for him;
his mouth urges him on.**

- Prov. 16:26

**Whoever is slack in his work
is a brother to him who destroys.**

- Prov. 18:9

Slothfulness casts into a deep sleep,
and an idle person will suffer hunger.

- Prov. 19:15

The sluggard buries his hand in the dish
and will not even bring it back to his mouth.

- Prov. 19:24

The sluggard does not plow in the autumn;
he will seek at harvest and have nothing.

- Prov. 20:4

Love not sleep, lest you come to poverty;
open your eyes, and you will have plenty of bread.

- Prov. 20:13

The desire of the sluggard kills him,
for his hands refuse to labour.

- Prov. 21:25

The sluggard says, "There is a lion outside!
I shall be killed in the streets!"

- Prov. 22:13

*Father God, please give us a right attitude to work, neither idolatry
nor laziness. We pray to redeem the time that You have given us.
Work is a gift from You, albeit frustrated by sin, and so we pray that
we will be diligent to use our minds, bodies and all that You have
given us in a way that pleases You.*

We ask this in our Saviour's Name, Amen.

Reputation and Integrity - part 1



Once lost, few things are more difficult to recover than a bad name. These proverbs teach us that the name of the righteous will endure (Prov. 10:7); that integrity is a guide all through life (Prov. 10:9); that discretion is more valuable than beauty (Prov. 11:22) and that obedience is blessed (Prov. 13:6). They remind us of the great value that the Lord places on integrity. The Lord Jesus said to His disciples that they were to be innocent as doves (Matt. 10:16). He calls us to absolute integrity in every part of our lives.

A fool reacts to every perceived insult, but the wise have learnt to ignore insults (Prov. 12:16). When the Lord Jesus was reviled, He did not revile in return. He trusted God the Father (1 Pet. 2:23).

Again, the fear of the LORD forms the foundation of all these behaviours. In God's kindness, even in a sinful world "good sense wins favour (Prov. 13:15)." This should encourage us to seek God's wisdom and not be afraid to live it out.

**The memory of the righteous is a blessing,
but the name of the wicked will rot.**

- Prov. 10:7

**Whoever walks in integrity walks securely,
but he who makes his ways crooked will be found out.**

- Prov. 10:9

**The integrity of the upright guides them,
but the crookedness of the treacherous destroys
them.**

- Prov. 11:3

Like a gold ring in a pig's snout
is a beautiful woman without discretion.
- Prov. 11:22

The vexation of a fool is known at once,
but the prudent ignores an insult.
- Prov. 12:16

Righteousness guards him whose way is blameless,
but sin overthrows the wicked.
- Prov. 13:6

Whoever despises the word brings destruction on
himself,
but he who reveres the commandment will
be rewarded.
- Prov. 13:13

Good sense wins favour,
but the way of the treacherous is their ruin.
- Prov. 13:15

A wicked messenger falls into trouble,
but a faithful envoy brings healing.
- Prov. 13:17

A servant who deals wisely has the king's favour,
but his wrath falls on one who acts shamefully.
- Prov. 14:35

*O God, there is none like You. You are the God of holiness,
integrity and righteousness. We desire to live lives innocent as
doves in all things, and so honour Your Name, Amen.*

Reputation and Integrity - part 2



Solomon was a careful observer of human behaviour and nature. He understood that integrity is never in part; it must consume the whole. So too, he came to see through the false promises of sin, such as unjust gain, which promises us easy happiness, but in the end brings trouble to a household (Prov. 15:27). Sin is always like that in the end.

Solomon reminds us that in God's sight integrity is a jewel of great price. Poverty is never a disgrace. The Son of Man had nowhere to lay His head (Luke 9:58). Better to be amongst the poor of society, but known for godly integrity, than someone who lives against God's ways (Prov. 19:1). So too, talk about love is one thing, but faithfulness in love is what matter (Prov. 20:6). Wickedness has a tendency to outdo itself. God, in His sovereignty, often turns wickedness back upon the wicked such that they become a ransom for the righteous (Prov. 21:18). An example of this is was when the wicked Haman was hanged on the gallows he had for Mordecai (Esther 7:10).

Whoever is greedy for unjust gain troubles his own household,

but he who hates bribes will live.

- Prov. 15:27

**Righteous lips are the delight of a king,
and he loves him who speaks what is right.**

- Prov. 16:13

**Grey hair is a crown of glory;
it is gained in a righteous life.**

- Prov. 16:31

Better is a poor person who walks in his integrity
than one who is crooked in speech and is a fool.
- Prov. 19:1

Many a man proclaims his own steadfast love,
but a faithful man who can find?
- Prov. 20:6

The righteous who walks in his integrity—
blessed are his children after him!
- Prov. 20:7

Steadfast love and faithfulness preserve the king,
and by steadfast love his throne is upheld.
- Prov. 20:28

The wicked is a ransom for the righteous,
and the traitor for the upright.
- Prov. 21:18

A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches,
and favour is better than silver or gold.
- Prov. 22:1

Father God, there is mystery in Your ways, and yet we trust that You are sovereign and good in all things. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Help us see through the false promises of the Devil and our own selfish hearts. We desire to walk in Your ways, even if that means poverty. Thank you for Christ Jesus, our Saviour and Lord. To You be eternal praise, Amen.

Listening - part 1



Surely one of the fruits of pride is an unwillingness to listen to others. A stubborn, unteachable person is a difficult person who often finds himself or herself alone. Often such an attitude goes hand in hand with being harsh to others, a headstrong ego and a talkative spirit. They do not like to be shown where they are wrong (Prov. 15:12). But where the fool enjoys the sound of their own voice, the wise person listens and obeys (Prov. 10:8). The fool thinks that they are always right, but the wise listen to others (Prov. 12:15). May God temper our egos with a true godliness that comes from above! May we be listeners, willing to swallow our pride and humble enough to be corrected.

**The wise of heart will receive commandments,
but a babbling fool will come to ruin.**

- Prov. 10:8

**Whoever heeds instruction is on the path to life,
but he who rejects reproof leads others astray.**

- Prov. 10:17

**Where there is no guidance, a people falls,
but in an abundance of counsellors there is safety.**

- Prov. 11:14

**The way of a fool is right in his own eyes,
but a wise man listens to advice.**

- Prov. 12:15

Poverty and disgrace come to him who ignores instruction,
but whoever heeds reproof is honoured.
- Prov. 13:18

The simple believes everything,
but the prudent gives thought to his steps.
- Prov. 14:15

A fool despises his father's instruction,
but whoever heeds reproof is prudent.
- Prov. 15:5

A scoffer does not like to be reproved;
he will not go to the wise.
- Prov. 15:12

Without counsel plans fail,
but with many advisers they succeed.
- Prov. 15:22

The ear that listens to life-giving reproof
will dwell among the wise.
- Prov. 15:31

Whoever ignores instruction despises himself,
but he who listens to reproof gains intelligence.
- Prov. 15:32

Gracious God, please forgive us our stubborn wills and unteachable spirits. Forgive us where we take offense instead humbly receiving correction. At the cross You have claimed us, now please do the painful work of creating godliness within us by removing the dross, for the sake of Your holy Name, Amen.

Listening - part 2



Who we listen to reveals a lot about who we are: evil listens to evil (Prov. 17:4) and a fool is unchanged by discipline, but those with understanding will heed a rebuke (Prov. 17:10). To listen requires humility and a willingness to admit that God's ways are right and good.

A fool freely expresses his opinion on issues, even when he is ignorant (Prov. 18:2). Likewise, a foolish person casts judgment before listening (Prov. 18:13). The Lord Jesus warned us against hypercritical or wrong-headed judging: "Judge not, that you be not judged (Matt. 7:1)." May this make us cautious to express our opinions. May the Lord give us a teachable spirit, willing to learn and listen to His Word and the wise rebuke of others.

**An evildoer listens to wicked lips,
and a liar gives ear to a mischievous tongue.**

- Prov. 17:4

**A rebuke goes deeper into a man of understanding
than a hundred blows into a fool.**

- Prov. 17:10

**Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire;
he breaks out against all sound judgment.**

- Prov. 18:1

**A fool takes no pleasure in understanding,
but only in expressing his opinion.**

- Prov. 18:2

If one gives an answer before he hears,
it is his folly and shame.

- Prov. 18:13

An intelligent heart acquires knowledge,
and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.

- Prov. 18:15

Listen to advice and accept instruction,
that you may gain wisdom in the future.

- Prov. 19:20

Cease to hear instruction, my son,
and you will stray from the words of knowledge.

- Prov. 19:27

The hearing ear and the seeing eye,
the LORD has made them both.

- Prov.20:12

Plans are established by counsel;
by wise guidance wage war.

- Prov. 20:18

Father God, please give us an attitude that is open and ready to listen, even to rebuke. The fool closes his ears, but the wise listen and are changed.

Lord, You discipline those that You love, for their good. We pray that the peaceful fruit of righteousness that comes from listening to Your rebuke would be seen and shown in our lives. In Christ's Name we pray, Amen.

Justice and goodness - part 1



Justice and goodness find their source in God (Gen. 18:25). Therefore, the wise who fear Him are to desire and work for justice and goodness in this life too. When justice is not upheld, the wicked are let off and the righteous are condemned. But the LORD sees such abominations and will one day hold all corruption to account (Prov. 17:15).

In this world, injustice tends to have the greatest impact upon the poor (Prov. 13:23). God's perfect justice will not come until the new heavens and new earth. Yet, even now God shows special care for the vulnerable, such that He maintains the widow's boundaries (Prov. 15:25).

In Romans 12:9, Paul tells Christians: "Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good."

**The thoughts of the righteous are just;
the counsels of the wicked are deceitful.**

- Prov. 12:5

**A man is commended according to his good sense,
but one of twisted mind is despised.**

- Prov. 12:8

**The fallow ground of the poor would yield much food,
but it is swept away through injustice.**

- Prov. 13:23

**Do they not go astray who devise evil?
Those who devise good meet steadfast love and
faithfulness.**

- Prov. 14:22

The LORD tears down the house of the proud
but maintains the widow's boundaries.

- Prov. 15:25

It is an abomination to kings to do evil,
for the throne is established by righteousness.

- Prov. 16:12

If anyone returns evil for good,
evil will not depart from his house.

- Prov. 17:13

He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the
righteous
are both alike an abomination to the LORD.

- Prov. 17:15

To impose a fine on a righteous man is not good,
nor to strike the noble for their uprightness.

- Prov. 17:26

When wickedness comes, contempt comes also,
and with dishonour comes disgrace.

- Prov. 18:3

Father God, Christ Jesus felt anguish when He saw the Pharisees concerned for small details of their law, but neglecting the weightier matters of the law: justice, mercy and faithfulness. Help us stand for justice and goodness. To speak up for the mute. Thank you that Jesus bore injustice for our forgiveness. We pray in His Name, Amen.

Justice and goodness - part 2



These proverbs tell us that Lady Justice is to be blind (Prov. 8:5); so let the case be heard, not the person. Doing what is right is more important to the LORD than offering sacrifices to Him (Prov. 21:3). The greatest injustice committed was the crucifixion of God the Son. When the Centurion saw all that happened, "he praised God, saying, "Certainly this man was innocent! (Luke 23:47)." Yet through this injustice we are forgiven.

These proverbs remind us that we should withhold our judgment until all sides have been heard, otherwise we might naïvely side with the first person who speaks (Prov. 18:17). We cannot undo the muck of our sin or give ourselves pure hearts. Yet, the LORD's promise in Ezekiel 36:26 is, "I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh."

**It is not good to be partial to the wicked
or to deprive the righteous of justice.**

- Prov. 18:5

**The one who states his case first seems right,
until the other comes and examines him.**

- Prov. 18:17

**What is desired in a man is steadfast love,
and a poor man is better than a liar.**

- Prov. 19:22

**A worthless witness mocks at justice,
and the mouth of the wicked devours iniquity.**

- Prov. 19:28

Who can say, "I have made my heart pure;
I am clean from my sin"?

- Prov. 20:9

A wise king winnows the wicked
and drives the wheel over them.

- Prov. 20:26

To do righteousness and justice
is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.

- Prov. 21:3

When justice is done, it is a joy to the righteous
but terror to evildoers.

- Prov. 21:15

Thorns and snares are in the way of the crooked;
whoever guards his soul will keep far from them.

- Prov. 22:5

Whoever sows injustice will reap calamity,
and the rod of his fury will fail.

- Prov. 22:8

He who loves purity of heart,
and whose speech is gracious, will have the king as his
friend.

- Prov. 22:11

*Father, we thank You for Your Son who willingly endured such
injustice for our sakes. Keep us from hasty judgments or biased
judgments. We ask to be fair-minded in all things. We pray this to
the praise of Your glory, Amen.*

Dishonesty - part 1



The Bible gives us many examples of dishonesty, such as Jacob's sons comforting him when he thought that Joseph was dead, whilst the whole time they knew that he had been sold, alive, to Egypt (Gen. 38:35). Dishonesty is an abomination to the LORD as it goes against His holy character.

The seventh commandment says, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour (Deut. 5:20)." So too, the Lord Jesus warned us not to take an oath by anything in heaven or earth. He said, "Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil (Matt. 5:37)." In contrast, those who "wink the eye" are up to no good and cannot be trusted (Prov. 10:10). Truth is eternal; dishonesty will perish (Prov. 12:19). In His Parable of the Soils, the good soil are those who hearing the word, "hold it fast in an honest and good heart (Luke 8:15)." May we be that good soil.

**Whoever winks the eye causes trouble,
and a babbling fool will come to ruin.**

- Prov. 10:10

**A false balance is an abomination to the LORD,
but a just weight is his delight.**

- Prov. 11:1

**The wicked earns deceptive wages,
but one who sows righteousness gets a sure reward.**

- Prov. 11:18

**Those of crooked heart are an abomination to the LORD,
but those of blameless ways are his delight.**

- Prov. 11:20

Whoever speaks the truth gives honest evidence,
but a false witness utters deceit.

- Prov. 12:17

Truthful lips endure forever,
but a lying tongue is but for a moment.

- Prov. 12:19

Deceit is in the heart of those who devise evil,
but those who plan peace have joy.

- Prov. 12:20

Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD,
but those who act faithfully are his delight.

- Prov.12:22

The righteous hates falsehood,
but the wicked brings shame and disgrace.

- Prov. 13:5

A faithful witness does not lie,
but a false witness breathes out lies.

- Prov. 14:5

Father of Truth, we twist the truth and turn things to suit us, and the ease with which we do that must alarm us. Holy Spirit please do not let us get our own way, but convict our minds, even though it cause us to feel ashamed. Please forgive us and help us live lives that turn away from dishonesty. We desire to live honestly before You and others. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Dishonesty - part 2



Psalm 25:5 is the prayer of those who fear the LORD: “Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long.” May we pray those words.

These proverbs show that a dishonest person often acts in a devious way, covering their true intentions (Prov. 16:30). Dishonesty is associated with secrecy and that should sound an alarm in our minds whenever we try to keep our actions secret (Prov. 17:23). If we are hiding something, then we are not living honestly before God or others.

The proverbs speak realistically about life, telling us that bribes commonly achieve their purpose in a fallen world (Prov. 17:8). Yet, fearing the LORD we must reject all such ways and realise that speaking the truth saves lives (Prov. 14:25). In Acts 5, Satan filled the heart of Ananias and Sapphira so that they lied not to men, but God. Twice it says that God’s judgment upon them for their dishonesty caused “great fear” to come upon all who heard of it (Acts 5:5; 5:11).

**A truthful witness saves lives,
but one who breathes out lies is deceitful.**

- Prov. 14:25

**A just balance and scales are the LORD's;
all the weights in the bag are his work.**

- Prov. 16:11

**A dishonest man spreads strife,
and a whisperer separates close friends.**

- Prov. 16:28

Whoever winks his eyes plans dishonest things;
he who purses his lips brings evil to pass.

- Prov. 16:30

A bribe is like a magic stone in the eyes of the one who
gives it;
wherever he turns he prospers.

- Prov. 17:8

A man of crooked heart does not discover good,
and one with a dishonest tongue falls into calamity.

- Prov. 17:20

The wicked accepts a bribe in secret
to pervert the ways of justice.

- Prov. 17:23

A false witness will not go unpunished,
and he who breathes out lies will not escape.

- Prov. 19:5

*Father God, we thank You that Jesus is the way, the truth and the
life. We thank you that all through Your Word You call us to reject
dishonesty and walk in truth. Let us strive for complete honesty in
all things.*

*Thank You for Jesus Christ, our Great High Priest who was honest
in every way.*

We pray in our Saviour's Name, Amen.

Dishonesty - part 3



People want a good deal. Driving a hard bargain may be the way of business, but it may not be pleasing to God. Telling a seller that his goods are poor quality so that he will drop his price, before boasting about the good deal you received is not pleasing to the LORD (Prov. 20:10).

These proverbs tell us that deceit may give short-term happiness, but in the end deceit will not satisfy (Prov. 20:17). A bribe may avert anger in the short term (Prov. 21:14), but in the end God's justice will find us out (Prov. 20:17).

Better is the honest life to which the Scriptures urge us in Jesus Christ. "Do not grow weary in doing good (1 Thess. 3:13)." May we never give people reason to mock God, because of our dishonesty. If ever you are unsure if something is a lie or not, then side with what will give you peace of conscience. Better to lose out, than gain a reputation for dishonesty. May we show the Holy Spirit's power in our lives by seeking to live lives of honesty.

**A false witness will not go unpunished,
and he who breathes out lies will perish.**

- Prov. 19:9

**Unequal weights and unequal measures
are both alike an abomination to the LORD.**

- Prov. 20:10

**"Bad, bad," says the buyer,
but when he goes away, then he boasts.**

- Prov. 20:14

Bread gained by deceit is sweet to a man,
but afterward his mouth will be full of gravel.

- Prov. 20:17

Unequal weights are an abomination to the LORD,
and false scales are not good.

- Prov. 20:23

The getting of treasures by a lying tongue
is a fleeting vapour and a snare of death.

- Prov. 21:6

A gift in secret averts anger,
and a concealed bribe, strong wrath.

- Prov. 21:14

A false witness will perish,
but the word of a man who hears will endure.

- Prov. 21:28

The eyes of the LORD keep watch over knowledge,
but he overthrows the words of the traitor.

- Prov. 22:12

Father, may we never give others cause to dishonour You by our dishonesty. Rather, let us give the highest attention to honesty in every area of our lives.

When we are in position to profit from even the slightest dishonesty, convict our consciences and lead us in Your paths. May we never give up doing good.

We pray to the glory of Your holy Name, Amen.

The power of the tongue - part 1



The tongue reveals what is in the heart and mind. Proverbs is full of wisdom and warnings about our tongues. The tongue is our glory. With it Adam named the animals and spoke with God (Gen. 2:19). With our voices we seek to give the highest praises to God. Yet it is also a restless evil. As James says, "every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue (James 3:7-8)." Surely, on that great Day we will be ashamed of how we have used our tongues. Too little we have praised our Lord and commended all that is good, and too much we have belittled and criticised. The sins of the tongue must be clear to us: saying things false about God, profaning serious things of God, crude joking, careless words, speaking about trivial and frivolous things, and words that puff up in pride whilst bringing others down. May we not be hasty in our speech, but careful, so that every word that passes our lips be "choice silver (Prov. 10:20)."

**The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life,
but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence.**
- Prov. 10:11

**On the lips of him who has understanding, wisdom is
found,
but a rod is for the back of him who lacks sense.**
- Prov. 10:13

**The wise lay up knowledge,
but the mouth of a fool brings ruin near.**
- Prov. 10:14

The tongue of the righteous is choice silver;
the heart of the wicked is of little worth.
- Prov. 10:20

The lips of the righteous feed many,
but fools die for lack of sense.
- Prov. 10:21

The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom,
but the perverse tongue will be cut off.
- Prov. 10:31

The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable,
but the mouth of the wicked, what is perverse.
- Prov. 10:32

With his mouth the godless man would destroy his
neighbour,
but by knowledge the righteous are delivered.
- Prov. 11:9

By the blessing of the upright a city is exalted,
but by the mouth of the wicked it is overthrown.
- Prov. 11:11

*Lord God, it is better to remain silent than to speak foolish, careless
and rash words. Please forgive us for when we have not controlled
our tongues. Forgive us for being hypocrites with our tongues;
praising You, then cursing others.*

*May we seek that our words encourage and strengthen others in
the truth. Let our words be honourable to You. Let our words bless
our Creator. In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

The power of the tongue - part 2



Once a word is spoken, it cannot be taken back. We can only ask for forgiveness. There is much in these proverbs about reaping what we sow with our words. Our words can entrap us (Prov. 12:13), or satisfy us with good (Prov. 12:14); they create a rod for our backs (Prov. 14:3), or they promote true knowledge (Prov. 15:2).

Amongst the most powerful of proverbs is this: "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger (Prov. 15:1)."

Gentleness is one of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:23). A gentle tongue brings life. In situations of tension and anger, answer with softness. May the Lord help us to take up with seriousness the truth of these proverbs.

**The words of the wicked lie in wait for blood,
but the mouth of the upright delivers them.**

- Prov. 12:6

**An evil man is ensnared by the transgression of his lips,
but the righteous escapes from trouble.**

- Prov. 12:13

**From the fruit of his mouth a man is satisfied with good,
and the work of a man's hand comes back to him.**

- Prov. 12:14

**Whoever guards his mouth preserves his life;
he who opens wide his lips comes to ruin.**

- Prov. 13:3

By the mouth of a fool comes a rod for his back,
but the lips of the wise will preserve them.

- Prov. 14:3

A soft answer turns away wrath,
but a harsh word stirs up anger.

- Prov. 15:1

The tongue of the wise commends knowledge,
but the mouths of fools pour out folly.

- Prov. 15:2

A gentle tongue is a tree of life,
but perverseness in it breaks the spirit.

- Prov. 15:4

The lips of the wise spread knowledge;
not so the hearts of fools.

- Prov. 15:7

Father, please forgive us for when we say things that are harsh, critical and biting. Many times our words have caused others to stumble. Our words have caused anger or resentment. Please forgive us in Jesus Name.

We are ambassadors of Christ Jesus and so we desire to use our words in a way that honours You. May we set a trap over our mouths that we might not sin against You. When we are frustrated or angry, let our words be gentle. Let them be a tree of life. In Jesus Name we pray and in the power of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

The power of the tongue - part 3



The Lord Jesus knew when to remain quiet (Luke 23:9), when to encourage those with faith (Mark 5:34) and when to rebuke those who were proud (Matt. 22:18). May we learn from Him and be careful with our words.

We underestimate the power of our words to destroy or to heal. A word of encouragement spoken at just the right moment to someone who is despairing is a soothing balm (Prov. 15:23). The mouth of the righteous carefully thinks over a situation, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil (Prov. 15:28).

These proverbs tell us that it is foolish to take offence and insist that others know exactly how they have hurt us. Even worse, we usually try to recruit others to our side in a dispute, but this only leads to greater division and sides being taken. Wisdom tells us to overlook an offense for the sake of love. (Prov. 17:9). May God give us the grace to overlook offence by looking to Christ.

**To make an apt answer is a joy to a man,
and a word in season, how good it is!**

- Prov. 15:23

**The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to
the LORD,
but gracious words are pure.**

- Prov. 15:26

**The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer,
but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things.**

- Prov. 15:28

The wise of heart is called discerning,
and sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness.
- Prov. 16:21

The heart of the wise makes his speech judicious
and adds persuasiveness to his lips.
- Prov. 16:23

Gracious words are like a honeycomb,
sweetness to the soul and health to the body.
- Prov. 16:24

A worthless man plots evil,
and his speech is like a scorching fire.
- Prov. 16:27

Fine speech is not becoming to a fool;
still less is false speech to a prince.
- Prov. 17:7

Whoever covers an offense seeks love,
but he who repeats a matter separates close friends.
- Prov. 17:9

Father, gracious words are good for others. We pray that the things that we talk about and the words that leave our mouths will be things worthy of praise. We take to heart the Bible's instruction that our conversation be seasoned with salt. Give us grace to overlook offense for the sake of love. Give us wisdom to guard our mouths from saying anything that could cause division amongst friends. We ask this in our Lord's Name, Amen.

The power of the tongue - part 4



James 1:26 says, "If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless." A hot-tempered man will find he ruins relationships and is alone. A wise person restrains their tongue (Prov. 17:27). Better to keep our mouths closed than to speak unworthy things (Prov. 17:28).

Stagnant water is putrid water, but the words of the wise are a life giving brook of bubbling water (Prov. 18:4). God is their source and may He give us such life giving words!

These proverbs warn us against being rash with our words. May we be especially serious in our words about, or to, God. Often we sing songs declaring our loyalty to Him, but we foolish unless we take with utmost seriousness the words that we sing or vow (Prov. 20:25). Ecclesiastes 5:5 says, "It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay."

**Whoever restrains his words has knowledge,
and he who has a cool spirit is a man of
understanding.**

- Prov. 17:27

**Even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise;
when he closes his lips, he is deemed intelligent.**

- Prov. 17:28

**The words of a man's mouth are deep waters;
the fountain of wisdom is a bubbling brook.**

- Prov. 18:4

A fool's mouth is his ruin,
and his lips are a snare to his soul.

- Prov. 18:7

From the fruit of a man's mouth his stomach is satisfied;
he is satisfied by the yield of his lips.

- Prov. 18:20

Death and life are in the power of the tongue,
and those who love it will eat its fruits.

- Prov. 18:21

It is a snare to say rashly, "It is holy,"
and to reflect only after making vows.

- Prov. 20:25

Whoever keeps his mouth and his tongue
keeps himself out of trouble.

- Prov. 21:23

O God, You are the Ruler of all Heaven and earth. You see and judge the heart of all people, including every careless, rash and sinful word that we have said.

Lord Jesus, we believe Your words of life. As those who belong to You, help us to bridle our tongue. Help us never to speak unworthy words. Forgive us when we speak rashly. Every word matters and may our every word be honourable to You. We pray this to the praise of Your Name, Amen.

Anger, violence and the quarreller - part 1



When the LORD passed before Moses, He said, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness (Ex. 34:6)."

Not all anger is sinful. When we hear of wrongdoing we are rightly to be stirred to anger. The Lord Jesus looked with anger upon the hard hearts of some of His hearers (Mark 3:5). Yet, Ephesians 4:26-27 warns us: "Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil." Do not let your anger carry over to tomorrow. Deal with it now and give the devil no opportunity to get at us.

These proverbs tell us that hatred causes strife (Prov. 10:12) and that a hot temper and folly go together (Prov. 14:29). In Genesis, we meet Lamech, a controlling and brutal husband who boasted, "I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for striking me (Gen. 4:23)." How great that our Lord is gentle and lowly in heart! There are difficult proverbs, such as, "violent men get riches (Prov. 11:16)." Yet, in the end the violent man will have strife (Prov. 13:10). A righteous person shows regard for all of God's creation, but the wicked person shows cruelty disguised as mercy (Prov.12:10).

**Hatred stirs up strife,
but love covers all offenses.**

- Prov. 10:12

**A gracious woman gets honour,
and violent men get riches.**

- Prov. 11:16

Whoever is righteous has regard for the life of his beast,
but the mercy of the wicked is cruel.

- Prov. 12:10

From the fruit of his mouth a man eats what is good,
but the desire of the treacherous is for violence.

- Prov. 13:2

By insolence comes nothing but strife,
but with those who take advice is wisdom.

- Prov. 13:10

A man of quick temper acts foolishly,
and a man of evil devices is hated.

- Prov. 14:17

Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding,
but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly.

- Prov. 14:29

O Gracious God, You are holy, yet without diminishing Your holiness, You are slow to anger and gracious to us. We are to be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger. Help us keep these proverbs.

You created all things and we are to show regard for all of Your creation. Please replace our hot tempers with gentleness and self-control. Please replace our quarrelling with a spirit that is teachable and kind. We ask in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Anger, violence and the quarreller - part 2



A quarreller is someone who is prickly, difficult to get on with, judgmental and always thinking that they are right. They don't know how to back down from a disagreement. At heart, the quarreller does not trust in the Lord and His promises. The Israelites quarrelled with Moses and put the LORD to the test in the desert (Ex. 17:2). In 1 Timothy 2:8, Paul says, "I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling."

Being slow to anger calms an angry situation (Prov. 15:18) and the person who is slow to anger is worthy of more respect than the mighty (Prov. 16:29). History is full of men who accomplished great things, but who could not control their own spirits (Prov. 16:32). A gentle spirit is more valuable than strength. Quarrels can develop quickly and like the breaking of a dam wall, they are difficult to hold back once released (Prov. 17:14). Watch out that during a quarrel we don't lose perspective. When we are offended it is easy to become hardened and unyielding (Prov. 18:19). There are situations where choosing a lot may be the best way to decide a dispute (Prov. 18:18). May the Lord soften us when we are easily offended and give us gentle spirits.

**Better is a dinner of herbs where love is
than a fattened ox and hatred with it.**

- Prov. 15:17

**A hot-tempered man stirs up strife,
but he who is slow to anger quiets contention.**

- Prov. 15:18

A man of violence entices his neighbour
and leads him in a way that is not good.

- Prov. 16:29

Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty,
and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.

- Prov. 16:32

The beginning of strife is like letting out water,
so quit before the quarrel breaks out.

- Prov. 17:14

The lot puts an end to quarrels
and decides between powerful contenders.

- Prov. 18:18

A brother offended is more unyielding than a strong city,
and quarrelling is like the bars of a castle.

- Prov. 18:19

Father God, forgive us for being quarrelsome and difficult to get on with. We are also to seek the forgiveness of those that we have offended. Give us reign of our spirits, just as You are slow to anger. Christ Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." God, You are the great peacemaker and we pray to follow Your ways. Let us now resolve to live out who we are as Your children. We thank You for our Lord who is the Prince of Peace and we pray in His Name, Amen.

Anger, violence and the quarreller - part 3



At the time of Jesus' arrest, Peter tried to use violence to save Jesus, but our Lord said to him, "Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so? (Matt. 26:52-54)" Christ refused the sword, even though He had the power to use it. In these proverbs, we again see that anger and violence are like a prickle, causing trouble. An angry man, unable to control his temper, will need to be saved again and again (Prov. 19:19). Beware of him! So too, be careful with wine. It causes much strife and trouble (Prov. 20:1). Constant arguing is draining on mind, emotion and spirit, so much so that it may make someone want to live alone (Prov. 21:19). We pray to not irritate others in that way. The Bible tells us that in light of who we have become in Christ Jesus – "hidden with Christ in God" – we must put away "anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth (Col. 3:8)." Our new life in Christ makes all the difference to how we live!

**Good sense makes one slow to anger,
and it is his glory to overlook an offense.**

- Prov. 19:11

**A king's wrath is like the growling of a lion,
but his favour is like dew on the grass.**

- Prov. 19:12

A man of great wrath will pay the penalty,
for if you deliver him, you will only have to do it
again.

- Prov. 19:19

Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler,
and whoever is led astray by it is not wise.

- Prov. 20:1

It is an honour for a man to keep aloof from strife,
but every fool will be quarrelling.

- Prov. 20:3

The violence of the wicked will sweep them away,
because they refuse to do what is just.

- Prov. 21:7

It is better to live in a desert land
than with a quarrelsome and fretful woman.

- Prov. 21:19

Lord Jesus, we thank You that You put down the sword and willingly went to the cross for our sake. We are wary of angry and violent men. We don't want any part in their sin. So too, we do not want to be quarrellers; people who are hard to get on with and prickly. Instead, because we are holy in Christ Jesus and dearly loved by You, let us put on the cloak of kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forgiveness and love.

When we think of You and Your great kindness to us, we know that we must put on these beautiful things You give us. We pray this in Christ's Name and to Your glory, Amen.

Wealth - part 1



We have nothing that is not given to us from the Lord. Therefore, may our hearts lift to Him in gratitude and may we hold lightly the things of this world, using them to honour Him and bless others. On the verge of the Promised Land, Moses warned the Israelites, "Beware lest you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.' You shall remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day. And if you forget the LORD your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I solemnly warn you today that you shall surely perish (Deut. 8:17-19)."

Wealth is a test of where we stand before God. Wealth can be of some benefit in this life (Prov. 10:15), but on the Day of Judgment it will be worthless (Prov. 10:22). Do not hoard it or be hindered by it. The proverbs show us that righteousness is infinitely better than wealth (Prov. 11:4). The proverbs also show us that it is not wise to trust a complete stranger (Prov. 11:15), yet may we show kindness to strangers as is pleasing to the Lord (Heb. 13:2).

**A rich man's wealth is his strong city;
the poverty of the poor is their ruin.**

- Prov. 10:15

**The blessing of the LORD makes rich,
and he adds no sorrow with it.**

- Prov. 10:22

**Riches do not profit in the day of wrath,
but righteousness delivers from death.**

- Prov. 11:4

When the wicked dies, his hope will perish,
and the expectation of wealth perishes too.

- Prov. 11:7

Whoever puts up security for a stranger will surely suffer
harm,

but he who hates striking hands in pledge is secure.

- Prov. 11:15

Whoever trusts in his riches will fall,
but the righteous will flourish like a green leaf.

- Prov. 11:28

Whoever troubles his own household will inherit the
wind,

and the fool will be servant to the wise of heart.

- Prov. 11:29

Better to be lowly and have a servant
than to play the great man and lack bread.

- Prov. 12:9

One pretends to be rich, yet has nothing;
another pretends to be poor, yet has great wealth.

- Prov. 13:7

Lord God, please do not give us wealth if it is a millstone to us. Do not give us fruitless joys. Instead, we pray to have minds that seek first Your Kingdom and Your righteousness.

We have nothing if not from Your hand. Guard our hearts against greed and discontent. We seek that Kingdom which is eternal and whose King and Lord is Jesus Christ. Amen.

Wealth - part 2



In the Parable of the Rich Man, the rich man said, "I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.'" But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God (Luke 12:19-21)." Materialism is a subtle danger and it will always lure us away from God. The cure is a new heart in Christ Jesus, so that we trade the things of this earth for things eternal.

In these proverbs we see that poverty can cause difficulty in life, yet the rich man may face more threats (Prov. 13:8). We are warned against making money quickly; better bit by bit (Prov. 13:11). Work creates mess, but without it there would be no profit, just as a clean stable means empty storehouses (Prov. 14:4). Wealthy men often feel accountable to nobody and so speak roughly (Prov. 18:23). May we never fall into that way of speaking!

Always choose poverty with righteousness over wealth with injustice (Prov. 16:8). Such humility the Lord exalts.

**The ransom of a man's life is his wealth,
but a poor man hears no threat.**

- Prov. 13:8

**Wealth gained hastily will dwindle,
but whoever gathers little by little will increase it.**

- Prov. 13:11

**A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's
children,
but the sinner's wealth is laid up for the righteous.**

- Prov. 13:22

Where there are no oxen, the manger is clean,
but abundant crops come by the strength of the ox.

- Prov. 14:4

The poor is disliked even by his neighbour,
but the rich has many friends.

- Prov. 14:20

The crown of the wise is their wealth,
but the folly of fools brings folly.

- Prov. 14:24

Better is a little with righteousness
than great revenues with injustice.

- Prov. 16:8

A rich man's wealth is his strong city,
and like a high wall in his imagination.

- Prov. 18:11

The poor use entreaties,
but the rich answer roughly.

- Prov. 18:23

Father, You are wise in every area of life. Wealth is a trap that can cause us to speak roughly with others. It lures with promises of happiness, but we would rather poverty with righteousness than wealth with sin. Please disentangle us from anything, such as wealth, which would take us from You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Wealth - part 3



Only that which is eternal remains and the Lord Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35)."

The proverbs teach us that in a fallen world, friendship can be fickle so that the wealthy person has many friends, but the poor person has nobody to stand by them (Prov. 19:4).

They also teach us that often wealth hurts more than it helps. Greed leads to ruin (Prov. 20:21). Surely, there are few who can hold wealth as our Lord would hold it! We pray for Paul's attitude: "I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me (Phil 4:12-13)." Poverty can feed discontent, envy and coveting. Wealth can feed vanity, discontent, entitlement and pride.

Pleasure too, leads to poverty (Prov. 21:5). There is much to be said for simple living. Both rich and poor have this in common: the LORD has made each of us (Prov. 22:2). May that humble us and may earth's treasures never hinder us from knowing heaven's treasures.

**Wealth brings many new friends,
but a poor man is deserted by his friend.**

- Prov. 19:4

**Take a man's garment when he has put up security for a stranger,
and hold it in pledge when he puts up security for foreigners.**

- Prov. 20:16

An inheritance gained hastily in the beginning
will not be blessed in the end.

- Prov. 20:21

The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance,
but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty.

- Prov. 21:5

Whoever loves pleasure will be a poor man;
he who loves wine and oil will not be rich.

- Prov. 21:17

The rich and the poor meet together;
the LORD is the Maker of them all.

- Prov. 22:2

The rich rules over the poor,
and the borrower is the slave of the lender.

- Prov. 22:7

Whoever oppresses the poor to increase his own wealth,
or gives to the rich, will only come to poverty.

- Prov. 22:16

*Heavenly Father, godliness with contentment is much gain,
therefore we ask that You would forgive us our resentment and
discontent. Forgive us entitlement. Instead, we trust that You are in
control of all things and we rest ourselves in You. Your Word says
that the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil and when we
desire it, it leads us away from You and does us damage. May the
things of earth never hinder us from heaven.*

We pray in our Saviour's Name, Amen.

The path of life - part 1



Proverbs tells us God's way of living in a fallen world. They tell us the path of life. Moses commanded the Israelites "Choose life (Deut. 30:19)."

The LORD is the hope of the blameless (Prov. 10:29). Evil has a way of begetting evil so that that evil person searches for more ways to do evil (Prov. 11:27). Let that be a warning to us!

The proverbs warn us about the company that we keep. We tend to become like those that we spend time with, so choose your friends and what you watch carefully.

Wisdom can be acquired through the wise. But spending time with fools will lead to harm (Prov. 13:20). Beware of being wise in our own eyes (Prov. 14:12). So too, beware of the person who finds enjoyment in their folly (Prov. 15:21). You will not find life there.

**The way of the LORD is a stronghold to the blameless,
but destruction to evildoers.**

- Prov. 10:29

**Whoever diligently seeks good seeks favour,
but evil comes to him who searches for it.**

- Prov. 11:27

**In the path of righteousness is life,
and in its pathway there is no death.**

- Prov. 12:28

**Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise,
but the companion of fools will suffer harm.**

- Prov. 13:20

There is a way that seems right to a man,
but its end is the way to death.

- Prov. 14:12

The backslider in heart will be filled with the fruit of his
ways,
and a good man will be filled with the fruit of his
ways.

- Prov. 14:14

In a multitude of people is the glory of a king,
but without people a prince is ruined.

- Prov. 14:28

Folly is a joy to him who lacks sense,
but a man of understanding walks straight ahead.

- Prov. 15:21

The path of life leads upward for the prudent,
that he may turn away from Sheol beneath.

- Prov. 15:24

Lord God, You are holy and just. Your kingdom is forever. You have shown us the way of life and in Your presence there is fullness of joy. In every situation, let us seek what is obedient to You. These proverbs teach us that we will reap the fruit of our ways. The desire of our hearts is to walk in Your ways, to abide in Christ Jesus the True Vine and to bear fruit that is sweet to You. Help us walk the narrow way of the gospel. In Jesus' Name we pray, Amen.

The path of life - part 2



These proverbs caution us against ourselves. We have our plans and desires that we wish to see come true, but it is the LORD who is sovereign (Prov. 16:9). James says to us: "Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit" — yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that." As it is, you boast in your arrogance (James 4:13-16)."

There are situations in life that defy explanation, such as fool living in luxury (Prov. 19:10) and although there is much mystery (Prov. 20:24), we trust that the LORD wisely governs all things (Prov. 19:21). God is sovereign over all things, even casting a lot (Prov. 16:33). Therefore, in the mysteries of life may we learn to rest our souls in Him.

**The plans of the heart belong to man,
but the answer of the tongue is from the LORD.**

- Prov. 16:1

**When a man's ways please the LORD,
he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.**

- Prov. 16:7

**The heart of man plans his way,
but the LORD establishes his steps.**

- Prov. 16:9

**There is a way that seems right to a man,
but its end is the way to death.**

- Prov. 16:25

The lot is cast into the lap,
but its every decision is from the LORD.

- Prov. 16:33

It is not fitting for a fool to live in luxury,
much less for a slave to rule over princes.

- Prov. 19:10

Many are the plans in the mind of a man,
but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand.

- Prov. 19:21

A man's steps are from the LORD;
how then can man understand his way?

- Prov. 20:24

The way of the guilty is crooked,
but the conduct of the pure is upright.

- Prov. 21:8

One who wanders from the way of good sense
will rest in the assembly of the dead.

- Prov. 21:16

O Sovereign Lord, we often are bewildered and confused by life, but we trust that You are good and You are sovereign. In the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ we are assured of Your goodness through the bewilderments of life.

Lord, we do not know what tomorrow will bring and may that drive pride from our hearts. Humble us and fill us with gratitude and trust in You. Amen.

Slander and scoffing - part 1



When we slander others, the cutting is felt in four ways: we hurt our hearers by filling their ears with unworthy things, we hurt the person we have spoken poorly about, we hurt our own souls and we grieve the Lord God.

How is a believer to respond to slander? Christ Himself is our example: "When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly (1 Peter 2:23)." May the Holy Spirit give us grace at such times.

Slander is a sin that is easy to go along with and often only after we have spoken wrongly do our consciences show us that we have sinned. Often the proverbs tell us that there is wisdom in silence (Prov. 11:12). Rash words inflict wounds (Prov. 12:18) and start fights (Prov. 18:6). All sin ultimately is against God, so that to mock the poor is to insult God who made them (Prov. 17:5). May these proverbs cause us to rightly fear the LORD.

We are responsible and accountable for everything that we say. May we set a trap over our mouths, so that slander, belittling, rash or mocking words will never pass our lips. Let our every word be pleasing to God.

**The one who conceals hatred has lying lips,
and whoever utters slander is a fool.**

- Prov. 10:18

**Whoever belittles his neighbour lacks sense,
but a man of understanding remains silent.**

- Prov. 11:12

Whoever goes about slandering reveals secrets,
but he who is trustworthy in spirit keeps a thing
covered.

- Prov. 11:13

There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts,
but the tongue of the wise brings healing.

- Prov. 12:18

Fools mock at the guilt offering,
but the upright enjoy acceptance.

- Prov. 14:9

Whoever mocks the poor insults his Maker;
he who is glad at calamity will not go unpunished.

- Prov. 17:5

A fool's lips walk into a fight,
and his mouth invites a beating.

- Prov. 18:6

Father God, You have made all people in Your image, therefore we must guard what we say about others. A fool slanders and mocks, causing fights and trouble. Lord, Your word says that if we are Christians, then we must set our minds on things above. We are to put away all anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from our mouths.

If we have died with, and been raised with Christ, so that our lives are now hidden with Christ in You, then help us obey Your word. In Jesus' Name we pray, Amen.

Slander and scoffing - part 2



“And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. And they led him out to crucify him (Mark 15:20).” Jesus, the Son of God, was mocked, slandered and scorned; yet by His stripes we are healed. He prayed for the Roman soldiers, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do (Luke 23:34).”

When a scoffer is disciplined, then those who are wise learn from their punishment (Prov. 19:25). Be careful of saying too much to someone with a loose tongue. They will reveal secrets and cause trouble (Prov. 20:19). Arrogance, haughtiness and pride are sins of the heart and mind that all show themselves in scoffing (Prov. 21:24). The scoffer stirs up the mud of division, quarrelling and abuse (Prov. 22:10). The New Testament warns us, “Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone (2 Tim. 2:23-24).” Quarreling is below a Christian. May God forgive us this sin and may we seek not to quarrel with others.

**The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels;
they go down into the inner parts of the body.**

- Prov. 18:8

**Strike a scoffer, and the simple will learn prudence;
reprove a man of understanding, and he will gain
knowledge.**

- Prov. 19:25

**Condemnation is ready for scoffers,
and beating for the backs of fools.**

- Prov. 19:29

Whoever goes about slandering reveals secrets;
therefore do not associate with a simple babbler.

- Prov. 20:19

When a scoffer is punished, the simple becomes wise;
when a wise man is instructed, he gains knowledge.

- Prov. 21:11

“Scoffer” is the name of the arrogant, haughty man
who acts with arrogant pride.

- Prov. 21:24

Drive out a scoffer, and strife will go out,
and quarrelling and abuse will cease.

- Prov. 22:10

*Father God, when we scoff, mock, belittle and scorn our words are
poison words that will only cause strife and quarrelling. Please
forgive us our sin. Help us to speak only words that are honouring
to You. The Lord's servant is not to quarrel.*

*Jesus, thank You that You endured the Cross, knowing that there
was great joy to follow. You despised the shame of the Cross and
alive, You are now seated at the right hand of God the Father.
Let the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be
pleasing to You, O LORD, our Rock and our Redeemer. In Jesus'
Name we ask this, Amen.*

The fear of the LORD - part 1



The proverbs teach that there is no final wisdom apart from knowing and fearing the LORD. If God is the source of truth, justice and righteousness, then right living must be found in Him.

To fear the LORD means to humbly submit to Him, to love Him, to revere Him, to trust Him, to turn from anything dishonouring to Him and to obey Him.

Fearing the LORD prolongs life (Prov. 10:27). It helps to give us confidence in any situation in life (Prov. 14:26). It brings us to the source of life (Prov. 14:27) and fearing the LORD more valuable than wealth (Prov. 15:16).

Philippians 2:12-13 says to Christians, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure." May we take up those words this day and obey them.

**The fear of the LORD prolongs life,
but the years of the wicked will be short.**

- Prov. 10:27

**Whoever walks in uprightness fears the LORD,
but he who is devious in his ways despises him.**

- Prov. 14:2

**In the fear of the LORD one has strong confidence,
and his children will have a refuge.**

- Prov. 14:26

**The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life,
that one may turn away from the snares of death.**

- Prov. 14:27

The eyes of the LORD are in every place,
keeping watch on the evil and the good.

- Prov. 15:3

The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to
the LORD,
but the prayer of the upright is acceptable to him.

- Prov. 15:8

The way of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD,
but he loves him who pursues righteousness.

- Prov. 15:9

Sheol and Abaddon lie open before the LORD;
how much more the hearts of the children of man!

- Prov. 15:11

Better is a little with the fear of the LORD
than great treasure and trouble with it.

- Prov. 15:16

The LORD is far from the wicked,
but he hears the prayer of the righteous.

- Prov. 15:29

Gracious God, Jesus Christ offers us living waters and if we have drunk from Him, then we pray that we will continue to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. The fear of You is the beginning of wisdom.

Where the world goes in one direction, we pray to go in Your ways. We thank You for our Saviour and we bless Your holy Name. Amen.

The fear of the LORD - part 2



We tend to think that we are right all the time, but it is the LORD who weighs our actions and motives (Prov. 16:2). He tests our hearts like the crucible testing the purity of gold (Prov. 17:3). These proverbs tell us to commit all that we do to the LORD (Prov. 16:3). That means submitting ourselves to Him, in order to seek His will and all that would honour Him in every situation. Earlier in Proverbs we are told: "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths (Prov. 3:5-6)." Such submission brings peace of mind to us as well. The fear of the LORD does not drain us of life, but gives us life! Every Christian will be able to testify to the rest that comes from fearing the LORD (Prov. 19:23). This day may we turn away from our own thinking and commit our ways to Him.

**The fear of the LORD is instruction in wisdom,
and humility comes before honour.**

- Prov. 15:33

**All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes,
but the LORD weighs the spirit.**

- Prov. 16:2

**Commit your work to the LORD,
and your plans will be established.**

- Prov. 16:3

**By steadfast love and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for,
and by the fear of the LORD one turns away from evil.**

- Prov. 16:6

Whoever gives thought to the word will discover good,
and blessed is he who trusts in the LORD.

- Prov. 16:20

The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold,
and the LORD tests hearts.

- Prov. 17:3

When a man's folly brings his way to ruin,
his heart rages against the LORD.

- Prov. 19:3

Whoever keeps the commandment keeps his life;
he who despises his ways will die.

- Prov. 19:16

The fear of the LORD leads to life,
and whoever has it rests satisfied;
he will not be visited by harm.

- Prov. 19:23

O God, the fear of You must be with our whole heart. We pray for faithfulness and obedience to You from a heart of reverence. Foolishness will bring us to ruin and it often leaves us bitter against You. But may we never be hardened and put up our defences against You. Let bitterness never take root within us. May we be soft towards You, O Great God.

The Bible says that the fear of the LORD is clean. In a world that changes and will wither like the grass, we thank You that the fear of You is eternal. In Jesus' Name we pray, Amen.

The fear of the LORD - part 3



The LORD is our shepherd who guides us in His paths of righteousness for His Name's sake (Psalm 23:3). When others aggrive us, we are not to seek vengeance, but instead turn your mind and emotions to trusting the LORD for His deliverance (Prov. 20:22). This is what God's law says: "You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD (Lev.19:18)." These proverbs affirm the control of God, even directing the king's heart like water being directed by the hand (Prov. 21:1). This is a comfort to us! Those who are wicked will not stand before Him (Prov. 21:12). The LORD weighs the heart and sees all things (Prov. 20:27). Surely, there is nothing more hypocritical than mixing worship and wickedness (Prov. 21:27). Ezekiel saw a vision of worship in the temple, but God was not present at their worship because of their idolatry (Ezek. 8:1-18). Nonetheless, their empty worship continued! God hates such hollow and wicked worship, and may this be a warning to us.

**Do not say, "I will repay evil";
wait for the LORD, and he will deliver you.**

- Prov. 20:22

**The spirit of man is the lamp of the LORD,
searching all his innermost parts.**

- Prov. 20:27

**The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of
the LORD;
he turns it wherever he will.**

- Prov. 21:1

Every way of a man is right in his own eyes,
but the LORD weighs the heart.

- Prov. 21:2

The Righteous One observes the house of the wicked;
he throws the wicked down to ruin.

- Prov. 21:12

The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination;
how much more when he brings it with evil intent.

- Prov. 21:27

No wisdom, no understanding, no counsel
can avail against the LORD.

- Prov. 21:30

The horse is made ready for the day of battle,
but the victory belongs to the LORD.

- Prov. 21:31

The reward for humility and fear of the LORD
is riches and honour and life.

- Prov. 22:4

The mouth of forbidden women is a deep pit;
he with whom the LORD is angry will fall into it.

- Prov. 22:14

O Great God, when evil upsets us, give us patience to wait for You. We thank You for the great love You have for us. We pray that Your Word will not return empty to You, but that it would guide us and warm our hearts to You. We pray in our Saviour's Name, Amen.

Laughter, worry and hope - part 1



Triviality, folly and frivolity are unworthy things that we must avoid. But joy and laughter are good things in the Lord. The Gospels are full of rejoicing, such as when the Lord Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit that the things of the Kingdom, though hidden from the wise of the world, have been revealed to little children (Luke 10:21).

These proverbs speak of the disappointment of seeing our desires melt away so that we are left heart-sick (Prov. 13:12). Yet, they also tell us of the happiness we feel when our hopes come true (Prov. 13:19). We will surely experience both in this life. May our feet be firmly planted upon the Rock so that we are neither proud when things go well nor crushed when things fall apart.

A word of encouragement given in the right season can brighten a person weighed down with anxiety (Prov. 12:25) and we ask for such perceptiveness to do this.

Often a person can put on a brave front when on the inside their heart is aching (Prov. 14:10). Even laughter, which can be good, cannot cure an aching heart (Prov. 14:13). We must learn the lesson that even though our lives be full of joy, that joy may not last (Prov. 14:13).

The bible often warns us against envy. Envy begins in the mind when we see that others have a better life than we do, and we want what they have. Envy is the opposite of trusting God with a grateful heart. Nothing good comes from envy (Prov. 14:30). It kills us from within and comes out of a sinful heart (Mark 7:22). May the Lord make us grateful people who trust Him with our lot in life.

**Anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down,
but a good word makes him glad.**

- Prov. 12:25

Hope deferred makes the heart sick,
but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life.

- Prov. 13:12

A desire fulfilled is sweet to the soul,
but to turn away from evil is an abomination to fools.

- Prov. 13:19

The heart knows its own bitterness,
and no stranger shares its joy.

- Prov. 14:10

Even in laughter the heart may ache,
and the end of joy may be grief.

- Prov. 14:13

A tranquil heart gives life to the flesh,
but envy makes the bones rot.

- Prov. 14:30

O Lord, thank you that You are the God of joy. You are the God who delights in all that is good. Thank You that nothing in You is bitter or miserable.

Hide us in Your love – and then come what may, let us trust You.

May envy never gain a foothold within our lives. Instead, give us joy in You in all situations. May we rejoice in the Lord.

Give us perception to know when others are hurting and to speak to them words of healing.

We pray this in our Saviour's Name, Amen.

Laughter, worry and hope - part 2



These proverbs show that sorrow crushes our hearts (Prov. 15:13). For Naomi, the death of her husband and two sons was a bitter blow and she changed her name to Mara, meaning "bitter." She said, "the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me (Ruth 1:20)." A crushed spirit is a great burden (Prov. 18:14). Graciously, the LORD changed Mara's bitterness to blessing, ultimately in the Redeemer. Whilst sorrow is crushing, a joyful heart is like a healing medicine (Prov. 17:22)! It is good to have a glad heart – it cheers the face - and may we find joy in the little things of life that the Lord has given us.

In all of this, may the Lord not give us fruitless joys in life. May He drive us from them and instead give us eternal joys. Jesus Christ graciously calls to us, saying, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (Matt. 11:28)." The depth of His love is shown in the wounds that mark His hands and side.

**A glad heart makes a cheerful face,
but by sorrow of heart the spirit is crushed.**

- Prov. 15:13

**All the days of the afflicted are evil,
but the cheerful of heart has a continual feast.**

- Prov. 15:15

**The light of the eyes rejoices the heart,
and good news refreshes the bones.**

- Prov. 15:30

Better is a dry morsel with quiet
than a house full of feasting with strife.

- Prov. 17:1

A joyful heart is good medicine,
but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.

- Prov. 17:22

A man's spirit will endure sickness,
but a crushed spirit who can bear?

- Prov. 18:14

O Lord, please do not give us laughter that is shallow, frivolous and fruitless. The fool chases happiness, but we ask for joys that are solid, eternal and true in You. May we find joy in all that is good in You. Give us grateful hearts.

Lord God, when sorrows overwhelm us in life and the bitterness of a crushed spirit threatens to take hold within us, let us look to You, our Sovereign Lord, and to the wonder of the Cross. There every sorrow loses its edge and we find healing and strength. In Jesus' resurrection even death has lost its sting.

Thank You, Lord Jesus, that You call us to come and find rest in You. Your yoke fits us well and in You life finds meaning and purpose.

We praise Your holy Name, Amen.

Children and parents - part 1



God has created the family and blessed it. Many people have said that raising a child is a task greater than any other, and surely, our parents influence us for good and ill more than any other earthly relationship.

The Bible speaks much about this relationship on both sides: children are to honour their father and mother (Deut. 5:16) and obey their parents in the Lord (Eph. 6:1). The Lord Jesus "was submissive" to Joseph and Mary, and "his mother treasured up all these things in her heart (Luke 2:51)." In these proverbs, there are many warnings against bringing sorrow to our parents by foolish choices (Prov. 17:21).

On the other side, fathers are not to provoke their "children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Eph. 6:4)." See what a wonderful example Timothy's mother and grandmother were to him (2 Tim. 1:5)! Parents are to discipline their children. Do not "spare the rod." Discipline is to be in love and to be consistent (Prov.13:24).

In parenting, both smothering and permissiveness are not good. So too, mere moralism is never enough. We pray that the Lord will capture the hearts of our children and transform them for Him.

**Whoever spares the rod hates his son,
but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.**
- Prov. 13:24

**Grandchildren are the crown of the aged,
and the glory of children is their fathers.**
- Prov. 17:6

He who sires a fool gets himself sorrow,
and the father of a fool has no joy.

- Prov. 17:21

A foolish son is a grief to his father
and bitterness to her who bore him.

- Prov. 17:25

A foolish son is ruin to his father,
and a wife's quarrelling is a continual dripping of rain.

- Prov. 19:13

Discipline your son, for there is hope;
do not set your heart on putting him to death.

- Prov. 19:18

*Father God, we pray for Your blessing and grace in all that we do.
We are all sons or daughters and we ask to honour our father and
mother. Let us show care and compassion to them.*

*For parents, we pray to bring up our children in Your discipline and
instruction. Forgive us our many failures. Help us be neither weak
nor overbearing. We pray not to spare the rod out of a false view of
the child. Above all, may the Holy Spirit change the heart of the
child to love and trust You.*

*Every parent is a model as every moment is on display. Let our
children see us pray and read Your word; let them see what it is to
honour You in every situation.*

We pray this to the glory of Your Name in our families, Amen.

Children and parents - part 2

The Bible says much about honouring parents. Violence or harsh words towards parents is wicked (Prov. 19:26). Strong judgment will come to such a son or daughter (Prov. 20:20). Instead, honour and care are commanded for our parents. It pleases God when children and grandchildren return the care of their parent to them (1 Tim. 5:4).

God disciplines those that He loves as a father disciplines his children (Heb. 12:6). Christian parents must surely follow God's example, as He gives us grace.

Carefully watch the habits of child. You may see early buds, good or bad, that will later blossom into fruit (Prov. 19:26). If the bud is good, then encourage it, but if it is bad, such as temper, then nip it before it develops any further. Hold a clear view of what is sinful and what is not, and deal with it appropriately.

The proverbs tell us that we are not to leave a child free with no boundaries. Instead, parenting involves training up a child in the right way to live. There are no guarantees in raising children, yet the rod of discipline will help to steer a child away from folly (Prov. 22:15). Right corporal discipline is good for a child.

The task of raising a child is given, principally, to father and mother, and not others. We must seek to walk the path of biblical faithfulness – as God gives us grace - training up a child in His ways. To do that, we aim at the heart, because it is from the heart that behaviour flows. Let them see your love and trust in the Lord. Lead them in family devotions every day.

He who does violence to his father and chases away his mother

is a son who brings shame and reproach.

- Prov. 19:26

Even a child makes himself known by his acts,
by whether his conduct is pure and upright.

- Prov. 20:11

If one curses his father or his mother,
his lamp will be put out in utter darkness.

- Prov. 20:20

Train up a child in the way he should go;
even when he is old he will not depart from it.

- Prov. 22:6

Folly is bound up in the heart of a child,
but the rod of discipline drives it far from him.

- Prov. 22:15

*Father God, we thank You that You are our eternal and good
Father. Family is Your design and despite our brokenness, please let
us honour You in our families.*

*Let us not deflect away our responsibility to care for our parents.
Instead let us honour them. Let our words be gentle and never
curses towards them.*

*Let us not deflect away our responsibility to raise our children. Let
fathers not be absent or immature, but may they take up the task of
raising their children in Your ways, and let mothers find delight in
showing their children how to trust and love You.*

We pray this in Jesus Name, Amen.

Pride and humility



David's sang of God: "He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way (2 Sam. 22:28)." Peter commands Christians: "Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind (1 Pet. 3:8)." Repentance, or turning to God from our sinfulness, requires humility before God and others. It was only the humbled Tax Collector, who prayed, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" He was heard by God and justified. True prayer is always an act of faith by those who are humbled.

In these proverbs we learn that pride, arrogance and egoism will lead to our downfall (Prov. 16:18). Pride makes us feel good in a shallow way, but it is a deception. A haughty person is someone who is lifted up in their own eyes.

In contrast, humility is honourable (Prov. 16:19). Christians are commanded, as God's chosen people, holy and loved, to put on humility (Col. 3:5). Just as you put on your clothes each day, so put on humility.

Our attitude is to be same as our Christ Jesus', who "did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. (Col. 2:6-7)." May God so work in us that we empty ourselves as He did in order to serve others.

**When pride comes, then comes disgrace,
but with the humble is wisdom.**

- Prov. 11:2

Everyone who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the LORD;

be assured, he will not go unpunished.

- Prov. 16:5

Pride goes before destruction,
and a haughty spirit before a fall.

- Prov. 16:18

It is better to be of a lowly spirit with the poor
than to divide the spoil with the proud.

- Prov. 16:19

Before destruction a man's heart is haughty,
but humility comes before honour.

- Prov. 18:12

Haughty eyes and a proud heart,
the lamp of the wicked, are sin.

- Prov. 21:4

Lord God, thank You that You are the God of the humble. It is not the strong in society who know You, but those who are lowly. You sent Your Son and He humbled Himself by becoming like us; God becoming man. Forgive us our pride and looking to Him, help us to put on humility that covers the whole of who we are.

Pride is a creeping sin within us. It captures us before we are awake to it. Please forgive us this folly. If ever we think we deserve more, then may we look at Jesus, God the Son, washing the feet of His disciples and may that question never trouble us again.

We pray in our humble Saviour's Name, Amen.

Kindness and friendship



Kindness is a sincere desire for goodwill towards others. It is showing tenderness to them, borne out of concern for their welfare. The Bible says that God is kind: "How precious is your steadfast love, O God! The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your wings (Psalm 36:7)." It says that, "Love is patient and kind (1 Cor. 13:4)." Kindness is the fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives (Gal. 5:22).

These proverbs teach us that kindness also benefits the one who shows it, whereas nothing is gained by cruelty (Prov. 11:17).

Kindness helps to win over those who are cynical or untrusting; it helps to soften hostilities. Kindness is a characteristic that we are to desire and pursue. In doing so, we find life (Prov. 21:21). A Christian is to show kindness even to their enemies. Jesus said, "love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil (Luke 6:35)."

Like kindness, friendship is a gift from God. True friends show love through thick and thin, and it is often at the moment of adversity that a brother steps up to help (Prov. 17:17). The friendship between David and Jonathan went from strength to strength. God was at its centre: "And Jonathan, Saul's son, rose and went to David at Horesh, and strengthened his hand in God (1 Samuel 23:16)."

May the Lord make us such loyal friends of others! In contrast, if we do not respond to the needs of the poor, then in our time of need we may find ourselves unheard (Prov. 21:13).

**A man who is kind benefits himself,
but a cruel man hurts himself.**

- Prov. 11:17

A friend loves at all times,
and a brother is born for adversity.

- Prov. 17:17

A man of many companions may come to ruin,
but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

- Prov. 18:24

Whoever closes his ear to the cry of the poor
will himself call out and not be answered.

- Prov. 21:13

Whoever pursues righteousness and kindness
will find life, righteousness, and honour.

- Prov. 21:21

Gracious God, without Your kindness shown to us in sending Your Son to atone for our sins, then we would be under condemnation. But if we have tasted of Your grace and experienced Your kindness in many ways, then let us show kindness to others.

We pray to be like Timothy who was genuinely concerned for the welfare of the believers at Philippi. True kindness cannot be faked.

It comes from knowing You.

So too, let our friendship be deep and sincere, genuinely seeking the welfare of others, especially the lowly.

Jesus, we look to You and thank You with all our hearts for Your kindness to sinners such as us. Amen.

Generosity and meanness - part 1



The words of Psalm 23 never run dry of comfort for a believer: "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want." What gracious generosity to supply all our needs! May we also bless others with the blessings that the LORD has given us.

These proverbs speak of things that seem counter-intuitive to us: a person may give away their wealth, yet paradoxically grow richer; whilst another person holds selfishly to what they should give away, yet ends up being in want (Prov. 11:24).

People tend to despise a person who holds tightly to their possessions (Prov. 11:26). Such a person often lives a lonely life. Jesus calls His followers to live differently: "Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them (Luke 6:30-31)." Whilst observing the comings and goings of the temple, Jesus praised a poor widow who put in more than all the wealthy, for they gave out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty (Luke 21:4). In the book of Acts we meet a Gentile man named Cornelius who was "a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God (Acts 10:2)." May we learn the lessons of generosity from this poor widow and Cornelius.

It is truly humbling to realise that God gives to us all that we have. So why should we hold tightly to it? May we be open-fisted in our generosity to the glory of God.

**One gives freely, yet grows all the richer;
another withholds what he should give, and only
suffers want.**

- Prov. 11:24

Whoever brings blessing will be enriched,
and one who waters will himself be watered.

- Prov. 11:25

The people curse him who holds back grain,
but a blessing is on the head of him who sells it.

- Prov. 11:26

Whoever despises his neighbour is a sinner,
but blessed is he who is generous to the poor.

- Prov. 14:21

Whoever oppresses a poor man insults his Maker,
but he who is generous to the needy honours him.

- Prov. 14:31

Lord God, You have been generous beyond measure to us. Teach us from these proverbs what generosity looks like. Above all, may we simply put into practice what we read.

Let our giving be generous and in a spirit of love. Let us remember what the Lord Jesus said, "when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."

Thank You, Lord Jesus, that though You were rich, You became poor for our sakes, so that by Your poverty we might become rich. We praise You for Your gracious generosity and pray that Your Name be blessed to the ends of the earth. Amen.

Generosity and meanness - part 2



The Apostle Paul wrote to the believers of Corinth: “whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work (2 Cor. 9:6-8).”

These proverbs teach us that generosity may open opportunities (Prov. 18:16). This must not be a bribe, but a legitimate use of generosity. A generous man attracts many friends (Prov. 19:6), but when poverty strikes, many may disown him (Prov. 19:7).

The LORD’s eye is especially keen to see who is generous to the poor. Such is His concern, that to be generous to the poor is to be generous to the LORD Himself (Prov. 19:17). May we replicate our Lord’s concern for the poor!

Ironically, a sluggard is never satisfied. His unsatisfied cravings lead him to be a complainer and whinger. In contrast, the righteous are generous with no limit (Prov. 21:26).

Wealth will do us no good, unless it be used in a way that pleases God. May we learn to be generous, trusting God and with thoughts only to His glory and blessing others.

**A man's gift makes room for him
and brings him before the great.**

- Prov. 18:16

**Many seek the favour of a generous man,
and everyone is a friend to a man who gives gifts.**

- Prov. 19:6

All a poor man's brothers hate him;
how much more do his friends go far from him!
- Prov. 19:7

Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the LORD,
and he will repay him for his deed.
- Prov. 19:17

All day long he craves and craves,
but the righteous gives and does not hold back.
- Prov. 21:26

Whoever has a bountiful eye will be blessed,
for he shares his bread with the poor.
- Prov. 22:9

O Eternal God, You are God of Heaven and Earth.

If we are in Christ, cleansed and sanctified in Him, may we never be mean in our generosity. Please forgive us such an ungrateful spirit.

Instead, when we think of the goodness and generosity of You, our Great God, may we overflow with joy and cheerfulness in giving.

Let our motive be Your glory and goodwill to others.

May Your grace abound within us. May it spill out into a generous and gracious spirit.

We ask this in Jesus' Name. Amen.

Husbands and wives



Marriage is a holy union; a covenant between a man and a woman, blessed by God. It is a creation ordinance, not a Christian ordinance, such as baptism. Jesus Christ honoured marriage by attending the marriage at Cana in Galilee (John 2:1-11). We are warned to never enter marriage lightly or carelessly, but with serious thought as to God's design and purposes for marriage. Both marriage and celibacy have their own unique blessings under God, and both are "gifts" from Him (1 Cor. 7:7).

An excellent wife, that is a wife of godly character, is the crown of her husband (Prov. 12:4)! The wisdom of a godly wife is greater than wealth and riches (Prov. 19:14). May God so bless our marriages and may husband and wife spur one another on to glorify Him in all aspects of marriage.

Every marriage is the coming together of two people with sinful hearts and therefore, every marriage will face troubles. The proverbs warn us against quarrelling in our marriages (Prov. 21:9). Quarrelling does little but increase tension. May we take seriously the marriage vows that we spoke and seek all the more to fulfil them.

The Bible has specific commands for husbands and wives. Husbands are to gently love their wives as Christ loves the church (Eph. 5:25). The highest standard! Wives are to lovingly submit to their husbands as to the Lord (Eph. 5:22). May we pray for our husbands and wives, grateful for the Lord's blessing and seeking to obey Him.

**An excellent wife is the crown of her husband,
but she who brings shame is like rottenness in his
bones.**

- Prov. 12:4

The wisest of women builds her house,
but folly with her own hands tears it down.

- Prov. 14:1

He who finds a wife finds a good thing
and obtains favour from the LORD.

- Prov. 18:22

House and wealth are inherited from fathers,
but a prudent wife is from the LORD.

- Prov. 19:14

It is better to live in a corner of the housetop
than in a house shared with a quarrelsome wife.

- Prov. 21:9

*Gracious God, thank You for Your design in celibacy and marriage.
Thank You that both are gifts from You. For those who are married
we ask for Your blessing upon their marriages. Let marriage vows
be taken seriously and let us be earnest to fulfil our word.
Teach us from these proverbs to better love our husband or wife.
Let Christ Jesus be the centre of all. Let forgiveness, love,
submission and grace abound. May our marriages be a reflection of
Christ Jesus, the great bridegroom who loves His bride with a love
holy and true.
We ask this for the glory of Your Name, Amen.*

Discipline and self-control



God's grace to us in Christ Jesus teaches us to, "renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age (Titus 2:12)." May God bless both self-control and discipline in order to grow us in Christ! A man who cannot control his temper, desires or tongue is a man unworthy of respect. These proverbs teach us that an unrestrained tongue will lead us into sin. The wise person is self-controlled; biting their tongue (Prov. 10:19). A fool will stubbornly get his back up when corrected, but a wise person heeds reproof and learns from it (Prov. 12:1). How we respond to discipline says much about us!

To forsake God's good ways, which are clearly set out for us in His Word, is wrong. Discipline helps to drive wickedness from us (Prov. 20:30). God disciplines those He loves and it is part of the evidence that we are His children. His discipline results in good: "For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it (Heb. 12:11)." May we submit to God's good discipline and may this result in increasing righteousness in every area of our lives.

It a tragedy when a person spends the brief days we have on this earth in undisciplined things of no eternal consequence; filling their minds with unworthy things, always making excuses, always joking and wasting the life that the Lord has given them. May these proverbs be a warning to us to diligently seek self-control in God.

**When words are many, transgression is not lacking,
but whoever restrains his lips is prudent.**

- Prov. 10:19

Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge,
but he who hates reproof is stupid.

- Prov. 12:1

The righteous has enough to satisfy his appetite,
but the belly of the wicked suffers want.

- Prov. 13:25

There is severe discipline for him who forsakes the way;
whoever hates reproof will die.

- Prov. 15:10

Blows that wound cleanse away evil;
strokes make clean the innermost parts.

- Prov. 20:30

Father God, we damage ourselves and our families when we lack self-control. Instead of biting our tongue, we react. Instead of overcoming desire, we fall. Instead of maintaining the blessed habits of reading Your word, praise and prayer we easily dismiss the very things that we need.

Please forgive us, and give us strength to turn aside from every temptation. We thank You that the Scriptures tell us that all temptation is common to man, but You are faithful and You will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able to bear. You will provide a way of escape so that we may endure it.

Thank You for Christ Jesus who sympathises with us in our weakness, yet He is without sin. In our moment of temptation please help us. In Jesus Name we pray, Amen.

