

PROVERBS

WRITER

Solomon is given credit for writing chapters 1-29. Agur, the son of Jaken, wrote chapter 30, and Lemuel and his mother wrote chapter 31. Solomon was the son of David and Bathsheba (2 Sm 12:24). The name Solomon means “peaceful.” Nathan, the prophet, gave him the name Jedidiah, which means “beloved of the Lord” (2 Sm 12:24,25). Solomon spoke 3,000 proverbs and wrote 1005 songs (1 Kg 4:29-34; see 1 Kg 3:3-14). He also wrote Ecclesiastes, the Song of Solomon, and Psalms 72 & 127. The recording of his wisdom in proverbs came from God as wisdom for daily living in Israel (1 Kg 3:11,12).

Solomon began his reign around 970 B.C. His reign resulted in some great economic and national accomplishments for the nation of Israel. He built the temple (1 Kg 5,6). He also built the palace for the king (1 Kg 7:1-12). One of his greatest accomplishments was the economic development of the nation (1 Kg 10:14-23; 2 Ch 9:10-27). In reference to his political developments, the borders of Israel reached their greatest extent during his reign (1 Kg 4:21). After forty years of reign, his kingship came to an end (1 Kg 11:42). However, within five years after his death, Israel was divided into the northern and southern kingdoms.

Solomon was known as one of the greatest kings of Israel because he brought the nation to the zenith of its economic power (See 1 Kg 3:16-28; 4:29-34). However, he also introduced within the society of Israel a moral and religious culture that eventually led to the downfall of Israel. He had 700 wives and 300 concubines. He set a wrong example for the people by marrying foreign women who brought their religious beliefs into the culture of Israel. These wives turned his heart to idolatry (1 Kg 11:1-9), and thus he led Israel on a path to idolatrous religion (1 Kg 12:10). He was the greatest king of Israel who brought the nation to its greatest economic strength. But he was also the greatest polygamist and religiously compromising king who implemented the moral decay that eventually led to the division of the nation, and eventual captivity.

DATE

Since most of the proverbs were written by Solomon, they would have been written during his reign from 970 to 930 B.C. The collection of all proverbs into one book took place at a later date. The collection that we have in the Bible was finalized no later than 400 B.C.

BOOK

Proverbs receives its name from the nature of its content. It is a book of wisdom that was written in proverbs. A proverb is a moral truth or statement of wisdom that is written in a concise arrangement of one or two lines. It is an allegorical saying that conveys the meaning of a whole story or principle of social behavior.

Because each proverb expresses a principle of life and moral conduct, the book was not written in a narrative form. The proverbs were written as individual Hebrew parallelisms (See introduction to Psalms). The literary structure of a parallelism is that most lines of the proverbial statement are either antithetical or explanatory of one another. In Proverbs, the two-line statements of the proverbs were usually two contrasting thoughts. In this literary style, a proverb was a short pithy saying that expressed wisdom in reference to behavior from both a positive and negative perspective.

Proverbs is a book of wisdom that is directed to a great extent to young people (Pv 1:2,5). The collection of the proverbs was made for the purpose of providing the wisdom of God for the posterity of Israel from generation to generation. If the Israelites would behave themselves after the moral principles of the proverbs, their future would be guaranteed. The same can be said of every civilization of the world. If a person will allow the moral principles of Proverbs to guide his life, then his future will be bright because of his godly character.

We must interpret the Proverbs with the understanding that the wisdom was given on the foundation of our fear of God. In the context of Proverbs, the fear of God would be defined as obedience to God's commandments. The proverbs were given as wisdom for living in the present world according to the will of God. The proverbs are based on the principles of the law of God, and thus express wisdom in how to carry out these principles in one's daily living.

Wisdom For Godly Living

(1:1 – 9:18)

Outline: (1) Purpose and theme (1:1-7), (2) Turn from violence (1:8-19), (3) Focus on wisdom (1:20-33), (4) Rewards of wisdom (2:1-22), (5) Blessings of wisdom (3:1-35), (6) Supremacy of wisdom (4:1-27), (7) Advice on marriage (5:1-23), (8) Various warnings (6:1-19), (9) Adultery (6:20 – 7:27), (10) Excellence of wisdom (8:1-36), (11) Contrast of wisdom and foolishness (9:1-18)

Chapter 1

PURPOSE AND THEME

1:1-4 Proverbs of Solomon: In the history of Israel from the time of the kings, Solomon was the one to whom Israelites turned for wisdom. Thus the book begins with giving credit to Solomon for his wisdom, but not all the proverbs that compose the collection which we call Proverbs were written by Solomon. **Proverbs:** This is from the Hebrew word *mashal*, which means a

pithy saying or ethical teaching that expresses a truth concerning living. **To know wisdom:** This was the purpose for which the proverbs were collected into one book. This is a collection of inspired statements of wisdom that were given for the betterment of one's life, and thus the betterment of society. The impartation of wisdom in the book is for the purpose of guiding young people in godly behavior or ethical relationships in society. This is the wisdom that should be followed by all young people. If one unfortunately grew up as an orphan, or without godly parents, then this is the book to learn parental advice from God. **Simple:** This would be the person who is opposite the one who accepts and implements in his life the wisdom that is given in the book. The word does not refer to one who is mentally incapable of comprehending and applying the principles of wisdom. Reference is to the one who refuses to allow his life to be directed by wisdom from God. This is the person who is a victim of himself. Because in his folly, he does not seek guidance from others.

1:5-7 Hear and will increase learning: The first definition of the wise is to learn and apply wisdom continually. The wise person will seek sources for learning. He will not close his mind to learning or be arrogant in what he knows. He will allow himself to be challenged in what he thinks and how he behaves. Wise people listen more than they speak. **Fear of the Lord:** Fear of God is the foundation upon which learning takes place (Ps 111:10). This fear leads to listening to

God and obeying His commandments. Those who do not fear God will seek and respond to learning that will lead them away from God. As in Psalms, the phrase "fear of the Lord" means obedience to His will. **Beginning of knowledge:** Recognition of the existence and authority of God in our lives is the foundation upon which all learning should take place. **Fools despise wisdom:** This will be the definition of the fool in Proverbs. This is the person who rejects that which will better his life and help in his relationships with others. The fool, therefore, would never be reading from and learning the proverbs of this book. Fools reject and are indifferent to instruction that comes from God.

TURN FROM VIOLENCE

1:8,9 In order to avoid calamity in one's life, one must first seek the counsel of God, and then follow the instructions of one's parents. **Hear:** This is to obey or follow. **Instruction:** Compare Ex 12:26-28; Dt 6:6,7. **Do not forsake:** The assumption is that the father and mother have performed their duty as good parents. They have instructed their children in the ways of God and imparted wisdom to them in order that they be able to function well in society. **Ornament:** If a person continues to follow after the instructions of God and his parents, then his righteous behavior will attract the attention of others as adornments draw the attention of beholders.

1:10-19 In contrast to the righteous behavior of those who follow after God and parents, is the way of those who re-

ject wisdom. This is the way of the sinner. In Proverbs, this is the way of the fool. ***If sinners entice you:*** The appeal of the sinner is first to one's desire to be a part of the crowd. Our desire to be accepted by others often leads us to join with those who seek only evil. One of the first indications of a wise person is his confidence in himself to make judgments concerning right and wrong, before he considers joining with others in order to consider them his companions. One should never allow others to draw oneself away from wisdom and God. ***Come ... let us ... lurk:*** Those who are evil are aggressive in carrying out their schemes to cause harm to others for the sake of gain. The definition of an evil person is one who has no consideration for the labors of others, and thus seeks to steal and kill. The evil person is inwardly antisocial for he cannot cohabit with others. Social order can exist only when each citizen respects the rights and possessions of others. By inflicting others with theft and bloodshed, the wicked person reaps what he sows. Society will render to him that which he has inflicted on society. He will reap what he sows.

FOCUS ON WISDOM

1:20-33 In this context wisdom is personified, that is, wisdom speaks and acts as a person. Wisdom becomes the teacher. ***Chief place:*** Wisdom takes her place at primary places from which people can hear her instruction. ***Simple ones:*** These are not those who are intellectually challenged, but those who have no moral conscience. ***Scoffers:*** Those

who mock wisdom and are defiant or rebellious to the ways of God. ***Fools:*** Those who are defiant and against God's instructions. The simple ones are scoffers and fools. ***Turn you at my rebuke:*** They should repent and turn to the body of truth that was preached (See Jr 3:12-14,22; 4:1; see comments Mt 12:41). ***Laugh at your calamity:*** This is not a reference to one personally rejoicing in the calamity of others. It is wisdom being vindicated because of the calamity into which the simple, scoffers and fools have fallen because they have rejected wisdom. ***Comes as a whirlwind:*** The results of bad judgments and rejection of wisdom come quickly. They come as the destruction of a storm. ***Fruit:*** See comments Gl 6:7,8. ***Backsliding of the simple:*** Those children who turn away from the instruction of their parents will reap the consequences of their rebellion. ***Self-assurance of fools:*** Those who are arrogant in their own ways are on a path to self-destruction. Those who arrogantly think they know everything about what they are doing, will rebel against the instruction of their parents. ***Secure:*** Security, and thus happiness, comes only when a person is confident in his obedience to the will of God. And since the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, then one finds happiness in life only when one fears God and keeps His commandments.

Chapter 2

REWARDS OF WISDOM

2:1-5 The urgent appeal is that youth eagerly accept and treasure wisdom.

Because of their respect for God, they must apply the principles of wisdom to their lives. These words call for total commitment to the instruction of God. With the same zeal with which a person would give to find a hidden treasure, he should apply in seeking the knowledge of God. The best thing young people can do to live a great life is to study their Bibles.

2:6-8 If one truly seeks God, he will find Him (Compare Jn 17:3). If a person is sincere in his quest for God, he will come to understand the fear of God, and thus submit his life to the will of God. The result of one's quest for God, therefore, results in receiving wisdom, knowledge and understanding that become protection for those who seek to be preserved in life (Ps 58:11; 84:11).

2:9-19 There are great social benefits to following after the instructions of God. **Preserve you:** No greater moral instruction can be given than that which comes from God. God did not place within man the ability to establish his own moral standards of conduct. He gave man a conscience, but conscience must be controlled and guided. It must be controlled by a divine standard that is best for human coexistence. Though men may reject the wisdom of God and follow after their own counsels, such counsels will lead to social chaos. **Deliver you:** In order to be delivered from moral standards and practices that are evil, one must seek wisdom from God. **Rejoice to do evil:** Society will develop moral standards that conform to the desires of men, but man's standards are often contrary to

the will of God. Stealing from the rich may cause rejoicing according to the standards of some men, but it is evil in the sight of God. **Ways of darkness:** See 4:19; Dt 28:29; Ps 82:5; Is 59:9. **Crooked:** There are ways that seem right to men, but are crooked when measured with the standard of God's word. **From the immoral woman:** This is the woman who does not have the moral standards of God. One should not bring himself into a sexual relationship with those who do not live by the standards of God's word. The immoral woman is the adulterous woman who lures the young Israelite man away from his wife in order to commit adultery with him. Since Israel was located in the primary trading route of the ancient world, we can only imagine how many wives of traders passed through the farming communities of Israel, luring young Israelite men into committing adultery. The practice of committing adultery became so accepted, that many sections of Proverbs are directed toward the alluring dangers of immoral women. These women were adulterous women who sought to ruin young men by luring them into sexual immorality. **Flatters with her words:** One should not fall victim to the appeal of women who seek to lead one into sexual immorality (5:1-23; 6:20-35; 7:1-27; 9:13-18; Jr 23:10,14; Hs 4:14).

2:20-22 Dwell in the land: There is prophecy in this statement. If Israel continued in the way of God, the nation would continue to dwell in the promised land (Ex 20:12; Lv 25:18-24; Ps 37:9-11). However, being led by Solomon to

following after those who turned his heart from total commitment to God, he went after the gods of his foreign wives. As the leader of Israel, therefore, he condoned the practice of marriage to foreign women who eventually led to the extraction of Israel from the land of promise by the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities.

Chapter 3

BLESSINGS OF WISDOM

3:1-10 Do not forget my law: These verses are an urgent plea that the son not forget the instruction of his father (See Ex 12:26,27; Dt 6:4-6). Society must be preserved by the instruction of the parents. But the posterity of the parents, the next generation, must give heed to the parents' instruction. Societies are preserved, therefore, when one generation passes on to the next generation moral principles that guide society. **Length of days:** See 4:10; Gn 25:8; Ex 20:12; Dt 5:16; 22:7. **Write them:** Those who would reap the blessings of a godly life will study the word of God and commit its principles to memory. However, knowledge of the word of God is not fruitful in one's life if its principles do not mold one's heart (Compare Ex 13:9; Dt 6:8,9). **Do not lean on your own understanding:** When a succeeding generation rejects the moral principles of the parents, the generation will create its own moral principles. Wisdom is when one realizes that he cannot depend on his own moral principles. Wisdom is knowing that one must reach outside himself in order to discover those things that lead

to a better life. We cannot become a law unto ourselves. **Acknowledge Him:** Only the principles of God are eternal, and thus they are the only guarantee to a good life. **Direct your paths:** If one would trust in the word of God for guidance, God will clear the way (Is 40:3; 45:13). **Health:** The benefit of committing oneself to God is both preservation of one's health through a positive mental attitude, as well as God's blessings through fruitful crops. These were the promises of God to Israel if they remained faithful to Him while living in the land of promise. **With your possessions:** The godly person is not possessed by possessions, but uses his possessions to the glory of God (See comments 3 Jn 2). **Firstfruits:** In the farming community of Israel, the firstfruits were to be given to God as a thanksgiving for the whole harvest to come.

3:11-20 Do not despise the chastening: The reality of life is that the poor are not blessed with riches. There are always poor people in society. The rich are not always cursed with bad health and the loss of their riches. But the righteous must understand that riches do not define whether one is righteous before God. Those who are suffering from calamities of life must continue to understand that God has created and placed man in the best of all possible environments for the development of personalities for eternal dwelling with one another. For this reason, the righteous who understand the purpose of the world can rejoice in their trials (See comments Js 1:1,2). The righteous, therefore, do not complain of un-

fair treatment when they are allowed by God to undergo the calamities of life. They understand that God is in control of all things, and that eventually all calamity will cease to exist. **Whom the Lord loves:** Calamity may either be the result of living in an environment of wickedness, natural catastrophes, or the direct manifestation of God's love when He allows us to suffer the consequences of our own foolishness. Whatever the situation, we must assume that God continues to love us. **Happy:** Happy is the man who understands the purpose for the existence of the world, that it was created for the purpose of training people for eternal dwelling. **Wisdom ... understanding:** The experience of Solomon's life illustrated this fact. When he became king, he did not ask for gold and silver. He asked for wisdom and understanding. And through his wisdom and understanding he was able to amass great gold and silver. **She:** The personification of wisdom exalts wisdom as one who would bring great blessings to life. She brings wealth to those who follow after her. She has the power to prolong life and give one honor. She can lead one in a pleasant and peaceful life. **Tree of life:** Since the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, then those who wisely obey God's word will partake of the truth that gives eternal life. **Founded the earth:** The creation of the world was the result of God's wisdom and understanding. Out of nothing He created the best of all possible environments in which one could dwell. Sin brought chaos into the world, and thus through our grasping for and

retention of God's wisdom and understanding of this fallen world, He can bring order to our lives. When we realize that this fallen world will not continue, then we will prepare ourselves for a new heaven and earth that is yet to come.

3:21-35 This final section of the chapter focuses on things to do in order to enjoy life. All the principles that are set forth here are principles for human relationships within society. They are principles of wisdom that lead to one's peaceful cohabitation with others. If practiced, these principles will bring peace of mind, and thus make it possible to sleep in peace at night. These principles are the following: **Do not be afraid:** One should not fear while living in a society of wickedness. Fully trusting in God takes away fear. Fearing God more than man diminishes our fear of man. **Do not withhold good:** Pay your bills. Lend to those who need help. Do good to all men (Gl 6:10). If we do good, we will be happy (Jn 13:17). **Do not devise evil:** If one's neighbor dwells peacefully by you, do not generate strife with him. We must always work with a positive outlook on life. **Do not strive:** If one does not give you a reason to strive, then control yourself. One must not be contentious. We must be peacemakers, not troublemakers. **Do not envy:** If your neighbor is wealthy, do not covet his possessions. If he gains his wealth through evil means, then do not follow his means to gain wealth. We must be content with the things we have. **Abomination to the Lord:** When someone was an abomina-

tion to the Lord, he could not reside in His presence. Every abominable thing will eventually be destroyed (2 Th 1:6-9), for God detests that which is abominable. **The righteous:** These closing statements contrast the righteous and wicked. In the contrast, the righteous have a close relationship with God, for they have accepted His counsel. They shun those things that God considers to be detestable. As a result, they are blessed and enjoy the security of His grace. They will thus inherit what is prepared for them (Rm 8:18).

Chapter 4

SUPREMACY OF WISDOM

4:1-9 In this section of verses, the father, Solomon, seeks to instill within his son the wisdom that he received from his father, David. He seeks to pass on his posterity of faith as an inheritance that was given to him by his father. **Father ... mother:** It is significant that both parents join in their quest to pass on to their children the heritage of faith that was within their hearts. The greatest inheritance parents can give to their children is faith (See comments 2 Tm 1:5). **Get wisdom:** This was an injunction to act. Both wisdom and understanding can be acquired. However, one must make a conscious decision to seek both wisdom and understanding. The first thing to do to get wisdom is to pray for wisdom from God (See comments Js 1:5). **Her:** Wisdom is again personified to be an individual who would bring great blessings. If as an individual, she is acquired, then she has the ability to promote and bring

honor to the one who has attained and retained her (See 1:9; Ps 45:13; Is 61:10).

4:10-13 In this section, the path of wisdom is explained. This is the way of life that leads to blessing and a long life. It is a way of life where one is protected from unnecessary stumbling over his own embarrassments.

4:14-17 In contrast to the way of wisdom, the way of the wicked is filled with calamity. **Do not sleep:** The wicked are committed to their evil ways. They are restless until they have brought misery to the lives of others. They are selfish, and have little consideration for the lives of other people.

4:18,19 The contrast here between the righteous and wicked concludes the preceding explanation of their ways of life. The righteous bring light to life, and the wicked are a witness to darkness. The light of the righteous is as the morning light that indicates another great day. In contrast, the wicked are so engrossed in their way of life that they cannot figure out why they keep running into trouble. The truly foolish person is the one who constantly runs into trouble in life, but cannot determine that the reason he does so is because of his own foolish decisions.

4:20-27 This section of instruction is concluded with principles that lead to the abundant life. **Ear ... eyes ... heart ... body ... mouth ... lips:** The totality of one's being should be focused on God. We must seek God with all our heart, soul, strength and mind (See comments Mk 12:29:30). **Guard your heart:** In order to maintain the way of righteous-

ness, one must be on guard. He must take heed lest he stumble because of the influence of wickedness in this world. As a person thinks in his heart, so he eventually behaves. And thus one must thoroughly examine his heart in order to bring every evil thought under control. The advantage of one living in community with others is that it gives one the opportunity to discover the hidden characteristics of his heart as he encounters other people in a social context. In our encounters with different personalities, we have the opportunity to discover various hidden secrets of our hearts that must be revealed and corrected (See comments Mt 15:18,19; Mk 7:20-23). **Do not turn:** Once a person has committed himself to a course of life, he must fight to maintain that course. The first decision to make is to determine to do that which is right, regardless of the consequences. Righteous people use the word of God to determine that which is right.

Chapter 5

ADVICE ON MARRIAGE

5:1-6 These first verses deal with the fascination foolish people have with immorality. The writer urges the son to give heed to knowledge and not to sexual or emotional feelings. In this context, one may have the knowledge that something is immoral, but control of one's sexual urges must go beyond knowledge. A righteous person takes action not to commit an act of immorality. **Foreign woman:** In the historical context, and after the example of Solomon, the foreign, or "strange" woman, would be the one who

had no allegiance to Israel, but was promiscuous. In this case, she would be the wife of another man, and thus the sin about which the writer speaks is adultery (See 2:16-19). The adulteress woman presents herself in an appealing manner to her victim. But after the sin, there are bitter emotional results for those who commit the adultery. Solomon, as the son of David and Bathsheba, personally knew the result of a child being born out of an adulterous union. The son that was born as a result of the adulterous relationship between David and Bathsheba died (2 Sm 11,12; see comments Ps 51). **Wormwood:** This was a bitter plant. It is often figuratively used in Scripture to refer to the results of sin (Dt 29:18; Jr 9:15; Lm 3:19; Am 5:7; 6:12). **Two-edged sword:** Sin cuts going and coming, and thus it devours those who participate in it. **Sheol:** In death, one went to the abode of the dead, a place of departed spirits. In this context, death and Sheol were the result of sin. **Unstable:** Since adultery is centered around selfishness, both parties who participate in the sin manifest themselves to be untrustworthy. Their social instability is manifested by their unfaithfulness. Both parties who engage themselves in an adulterous relationship have revealed that they are untrustworthy people.

5:7-14 There are severe consequences for immorality. **Far from her:** In order not to sin in a relationship with another, the best advice is to stay away from the one with whom you are tempted to sin. In this case, the son refused the instruction of his teacher, and thus gave

himself in adultery to another. After the sin, he came to his senses, but it was too late. **Almost in total ruin:** If tried and condemned by the people, the punishment for adultery in Israel was stoning (Lv 20:10; Dt 22:22; Ez 16:40). At least in this case, the guilty parties were brought to disgrace before the people (See comments Jn 8:1-11).

5:15-23 Drink waters out of your own cistern: This was a proverbial statement that one should stay at home and receive emotional nourishment from his own wife (See Ss 4:12-15). Finding contentment in one's own marriage is the best guarantee against sexual promiscuity. Adultery would be one of the primary sins that would destroy the family structure of society. **Your fountains dispersed:** Reference here is possibly to bringing up children in the environment of a faithful marriage. **The wife of your youth:** God's plan for marriage was one man and woman in marriage for life. Monogamous relationships were the principle by which God intended that the world be populated. Polygamy was never in the plan of God, though God allowed such in the lives of some people. However, such people often paid the price for their polygamous relationships. **Loving deer and pleasant doe:** A man should be infatuated with his wife, so much so, that he has no desire to search for sexual satisfaction outside his home. He should cultivate a romantic relationship with his wife, and in doing so, not be tempted by any other woman who may approach him with flattering lips. **Eyes of the Lord:** The writer concluded by reminding those

who may be tempted to commit adultery that God knows even the thoughts and intents of the heart. There is no secrecy before God.

Chapter 6

VARIOUS WARNINGS

The historical context of Proverbs was a time when moral decay, after 500 years in the land of promise, had finally started what would eventually cause the end of the nation. This end would begin within five years after the death of Solomon when the twelve tribes would be divided, ten composing the northern kingdom and two composing the southern kingdom. The north would eventually go into Assyrian captivity a little over 200 years after the majority of the proverbs were written. The Israelites of the northern tribes were taken into captivity because of their alliance with the gods of foreign nations and their moral decay that was brought into Israel through the influence of foreign nations. The seeds of this downfall began in the days of Solomon, when he, as the leader of the nation, aligned the people with foreign nations and foreign wives. The book of Proverbs is seated in the historical context of this decay. This chapter of Proverbs, therefore, focuses on points of ethical and moral decay in the area of suretyship, indolence, discord among the tribal groups, and immorality. Throughout the Proverbs, therefore, the Bible interpreter must not forget that within less than twenty years after Solomon possibly wrote most of the proverbs in the latter part of his reign, Israel divided into

the northern and southern kingdoms. The northern kingdom, specifically, quickly digressed by following after the sins of Jeroboam their first king.

6:1-5 *Become surety for your friend:* What is stated here is not a condemnation of all surety. The civil laws of Israel made provision for making loans to others, but without interest (Ex 22:25,26; Lv 25:36,37; Dt 23:19,20). ***Friend ... stranger:*** What is under consideration here is loaning money out on a venture capital basis for profit, not charity. Such was not condoned in the law, for there are several rebukes against doing such among fellow Israelites (11:15; 17:18; 22:26,27). What is under consideration here is taking advantage of others in their hard times in order to profit from them. ***Shaken your hand:*** Made the agreement. ***Snared:*** Trapped by your own words of promise. ***Now do this:*** If possible, seek to cancel the debt immediately. The one who borrowed the money made an impulsive decision, and thus is urged to find release from the loan as soon as possible, lest it bring him into bondage. If a debt could not be repaid, then the debtor had to submit himself in servitude to the one from whom he had borrowed the money.

6:6-11 *You sluggard:* Linked to the social problem of those giving out loans for profit, were those who possibly gave the loans, and thus did not have to physically work for their survival. There were those in society who were lazy in reference to physical labor (See 10:26; 13:4; 19:15; 24:30-34). Thus the writer gave the example of the diligent ant that

worked continuously for survival. ***Ant:*** With diligence and foresight, the ant prepared for its existence through hard work. ***Like a prowler:*** The point was that if one does not work, poverty will pounce upon him as a prowler who secretly comes in and steals one's wealth.

6:12-15 *Worthless person:* Moral decay in society is the result of too many perverse people who have little concern for others. In this context, the worthless person is worthless because his perverse ways make him useless for the preservation of society. He is the one who is not constrained by moral and ethical norms that are necessary for the preservation of social order. His communication is twisted and malicious. His actions are wicked. ***Winks:*** He is not sincere. ***Speaks with his feet ... fingers:*** His restlessness reveals his insincerity and questionable motives. ***He sows discord:*** The evidence of a worthless person in society is that he generates disagreements and division through his malicious actions and speech. This is not the person who is speaking the truth, and by doing such causes division among those who have followed after error. This is the person who has little social skills by which unity can be maintained in a society where there is a great difference of opinion. He is a troublesome personality.

6:16-19 *Seven are an abomination:* Though sin is not limited to these seven, these seven are mentioned because they lead to the destruction of society. In the historical case of Israel, these sins led to the termination of the Israelites in the land of promise. ***Haughty eyes:*** Arro-

gance and pride, and thus one citizen exalting himself above others. **Lying tongue:** The loss of integrity, for one could not be believed. **Innocent blood:** The breakdown of security within society, both in the streets and in the courts. The life of the innocent is taken in order to preserve the life of the wicked. **Wicked imaginations:** Citizens plot and scheme against one another for selfish goals. When every imagination is toward evil (Gn 6:5). **Running to mischief:** Quick to find fault, thus having little mercy for one's fellow man. Devising schemes to the hurt of one's fellow man. **Speaks lies:** Loss of community because neighbors lose their trust of one another. Neighbor is set against neighbor for the sake of gain. **Sows discord:** The troublemaker who continually disturbs society by generating strife within the nation. National patriotism is replaced by patriotism to parties.

ADULTERY

6:20-35 This section of verses deals with the social problem of adultery (See 2:16-19; 5:3-11; 9:13-18). **Father's commandment ... law of your mother:** The guard against adultery in a society is the fidelity of a mother and father who have taught their children by their example. The instructions of the parents should be bound to the hearts of the children (Dt 6:6,7). **Lamp ... light:** The commandment of God is a lamp that provides light to the path of righteousness (See Ps 19:8; 119:105). **Keep you from the evil woman:** Staying close to the commandments of God will keep one away from

the adulterous woman. **The precious life:** The adulterous woman would look for the young man who is at the prime of his sexual urges, and then entice him into sin. **Fire ... hot coals:** The answer to the two rhetorical questions of verses 27 & 28 is "No!" If one engages an adulterous woman in sexual immorality, he will be burned severely. Someone is always emotionally wounded when adultery is committed. **People do not despise a thief:** People can forgive a thief who is caught after he has stolen for the survival of his own family. If he is caught, he is to make full repayment of what he stole. But in the case of adultery, there is no forgiveness by the offended husband of the adulterous woman. Those who are offended by an act of adultery cannot be repaid for something they lost. **Destroys his own soul:** He has destroyed his integrity. He can no longer be trusted by society. He can make no restitution to correct his error. The offended husband will subsequently demand that the law be enforced, and thus the adulterers must be stoned according to the law (Lv 20:10; Dt 22:22-24).

Chapter 7

7:1-5 In the midst of moral decay, the Holy Spirit guided the writer of this chapter to give instructions to young men who might be tempted by the lure of a promiscuous wife to commit adultery. He was instructed to follow the commandments of God, and then realize the consequences of committing adultery. **Apple of your eye:** If one considers the word of God with great delight, then he will

understand the evils surrounding adulterous relationships (See Dt 32:10; Ps 17:8). **Write them:** This was more than inscribing the words on a piece of paper and attaching then to one's body as a phylactery (See Dt 6:8,9). Emphasis is on attaching the principles of God's word to one's heart, and thus behaving accordingly. **Immoral woman:** See comments 2:16. **Sister ... nearest kin:** As a person would cherish his sister and nearest relative, so he should cling to the word of God.

7:6-23 Young man void of understanding: The stage is set for an adulterous affair. It is first set with a young man who is very unwise. The other party in the affair is an immoral woman bent on unfaithfulness to her husband. **Simple ones:** Better, "empty-headed." The young men of this case would be the ones who have no moral sense, nor respect for the word of God and their fathers. The simple ones have no moral foundation upon which to make experienced decisions. They do not realize the consequences of their actions. **Near her corner:** Because the young man was inexperienced in wisdom, he made himself available where he should not have been. **He went:** This was his fatal decision that would change the course of his life. Adultery is not committed without life-changing consequences for both parties that are involved in the sin. **Attire of a harlot:** The adulteress had a plan. Though not a harlot by profession, she dressed herself in the fashion of a harlot in order to lure one who was aimless in reference to his morals. The adulteress

was thus rebellious in reference to the law of God, but the young man was careless in following after her lure. **Confident face:** She was persuasive. **Peace offerings:** The sacrificial meat of the offering had to be eaten the same day, or the following day after it was killed (Lv 7:16,18). She had thus prepared her dwelling for food and adultery. **Paid my vows:** She was legally inconsistent. He paid her vows according to the law, but at the same time was in the process of luring a victim into committing adultery, which act was punishable by stoning. Such is the nature of legalism. One feels he has a right to break some laws that are considered minor, in order to be able to break other laws. The legalist chooses which laws to obey and which to disobey. For example, the Pharisees of Jesus' time were cautious not to use the betrayal money that was given to Judas as a contribution to the temple, but at the same time, they were in the process of a scheme to murder Jesus. **Ox ... bird:** The end of both was the same. In innocence the ox went to the slaughter and the bird into the snare. So is the fate of those who may think an innocent act of adultery will not lead to fatal consequences.

7:24-27 The foolishness of some young people can be determined by their indifference toward the ill consequences of their immoral behavior. In order to protect oneself from the lure of immoral conduct, one should first take heed to the word of God. One should then not be deceived into thinking that there will be no consequences for violating the word of God. And then, one must understand

that immoral behavior leads to emotional wounds and the way of death. If one does not reap what is sown in this life, there is eternal death to face that is yet to come (See Rv 21:8).

Chapter 8

EXCELLENCE OF WISDOM

8:1-3 This is a beautiful narrative of the prize of wisdom as it is personified as one who is to be greatly desired. The young man in chapter 7 was lured into destruction by his deepest sense of sexuality. But with the same deep sense, one should be lured to wisdom, by which one escapes death and discovers life. Thus in this context, personified wisdom cries out to those who should be attracted to her appealing rewards (1:20-33). **High places ... paths ... gates:** Wisdom cries out from places where people are and can be contacted. She cries out to be heard through the elders who sit at the gates of the city. In contrast to the adulterous woman who lurked in the dark places of the city, wisdom cries out from the most conspicuous places of the city and country.

8:4-11 O men: The call of wisdom is not to any particular social class of society. From the huts of the poor in the country to the rulers in the palaces of the city, wisdom is available for acquisition. Its acquisition is not determined by either riches or fame. She is available to all who willing seek her, and thus all men may profit from her use in daily living. **Truth ... righteousness:** The foundation of wisdom is truth and righteousness. Neither perverse principles nor twisted

messages come forth from those who speak with wisdom. **Plain ... right:** If one is committed to receive wisdom, then it can be understood plainly and determined to be right for life. The principle is that those who seek wisdom will find it (See Jn 7:17). **Better than rubies:** That which a man possesses within himself is more valuable than that which he possesses outside him (3:13-17; compare Mt 6:19-21).

8:12-21 Find out knowledge: With wisdom one discovers things to know, and thus wisely uses knowledge about facts, things and events. Without wisdom, one's acquisition and use of knowledge is limited. **Fear of the Lord:** One who loves the word of the Lord will hate that which is evil, which things include arrogant attitudes and evil behavior. **Riches ... with me:** Solomon did not pray for riches. He prayed for wisdom and understanding (1 Kg 3:5-12). But when blessed with wisdom and understanding, he was able to gain the riches. The fruit of wisdom, therefore, gives one the mental equipment by which to deal with the affairs of this life in order to gain the sustenance of life. **Better than gold:** The one who seeks wisdom for financial gain, has missed the point. If riches are the motive for acquiring wisdom, then one has judged himself to be unwise. **I will fill their treasuries:** A filled treasury is the serendipity of wisdom, not its goal. We must keep in mind that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. Some of the richest people in the world would be considered fools in the sight of God, simply because they have no fear of God.

Riches, therefore, do not determine if one is wise. Some of the wisest people in the world are God fearing individuals who live in poverty because of social circumstances.

8:22-31 The personification in this section of scriptures defines the essence of wisdom. The magnificence of wisdom is so sublime that some have assumed that the writer transitioned in this context from speaking of wisdom to revealing the preincarnate Word of God (See Jn 1:1-4; Cl 1:15-18). However, there is no contextual reason to assume this simply because we are given no indication that the personification of wisdom in the preceding verses has changed to be taken literally as a divine entity of the Godhead in the context of these verses. The writer is contrasting the lure of sin in chapter 7, to the lure of wisdom in this chapter. Therefore, we must conclude that he has taken the personification of wisdom in chapter 7 to a new level. This new level is wisdom's existence in the mind of God before the creation of the world. **The Lord possessed me:** By assuming that the writer – without notifying us the readers – has transitioned to a description of Christ, some have erroneously argued that the word “possess” (Hb., *qanah*), should be translated “create,” as it is used in a few other passages (Dt 32:6; Ps 139:13). And thus, they conclude that Christ was created. However, there is no justification for either this translation in this context nor such an interpretation since there is no textual justification to transition from

the writer's personification of wisdom in the preceding verses of 1-21 to a personalization of Christ in verses 22-31. A consistent understanding of this context is that wisdom existed with God before the world was created, and thus existed before the existence of gold and silver. Thus wisdom is to be loved more than gold and silver (treasures) because it existed before either were created. **When there were no depths, I was brought forth:** The existence of wisdom could not be determined by the nothingness that “existed” before the creation of the world. When we observe that which has been created, we can see the wisdom of God. We can witness wisdom in the created world, as well as in the life that was created by God (See Rm 1:20). In this sense, therefore, wisdom was brought forth out of the mind of God through its manifestation in that which was created. In this context, therefore, wisdom was the master builder who designed the cosmos. And when we behold what has been created, we see the eternal existence of the wisdom of God (See Ps 8; 19).

8:32-36 These verses are the conclusion to what has just been presented by wisdom. Her invitation is that she should be received because of her benefits in life, and because of her existence before the creation of the world. **Love death:** See Dt 11:26-28; 30:19,20. Those who find wisdom through the fear of God and keeping of His commandments, will find blessing in this life, and in the world to come, eternal life.

Chapter 9

WISDOM AND FOOLISHNESS

This chapter concludes the first section of Proverbs. Within this chapter is a contrast made between wisdom (1-6) and foolishness (13-18). Both are personified in order that they make their invitations to those who seek either a righteous or wicked way of life.

9:1-6 House: In this context wisdom is personified as a hostess who makes her appeal to those who seek to be prudent. **Seven pillars:** The house of wisdom is strongly built. **Mixed her wine:** Wine that was mixed with spices. Everything was done to lure guests into the dwelling of wisdom. **Simple:** These are those unexperienced in society. Because of their naivety and lack of wisdom, they are easily led astray. In the contexts of chapters 1-9 we could assume that reference is to young people who are faced with many decisions and influences in their maturing years. **Come:** Compare Is 55:1-5; Mt 22:1-10. **Forsake:** A conscious decision must be made to seek wisdom.

9:7-12 This interlude deals with those who reject wisdom, and specifically, the word of God. In the context of righteousness, this would be the one who rejects the way of God. **Insults for himself:** Unwise people are determined by their reaction to those who correct them. When corrected, they scorn those who correct them, for they think that they are right in all their ways. An example of this would be the religious person who is corrected by another with the word of

God. If the religious person is persistent and satisfied with his doctrine, he will scoff at the one who corrects him from the word of God. The same is true of the traditional religionist. Since he is comfortable with his traditions, he scoffs at those who would correct him with word of God. **Instruction to a wise man:** One is identified as wise by his reaction to correction. He accepts correction, realizing that through correction he gains greater wisdom. **Beginning of wisdom:** Wisdom begins when one is obedient to the Lord. Arrogance blocks one from receiving correction. Humility before the Lord prepares one for learning from others. **You alone:** One is individually responsible for his reception of wisdom (See Dt 24:16; Jr 31:30; Ez 18:4). Each person will be held accountable for his lack of knowledge of God, and thus his eternal destiny (At 17:30,31; 2 Co 5:10).

9:13-18 In this context foolishness is personified, and thus offers an invitation to all those who reject the fear of God. **Clamorous:** This woman is loud and diligent to invite like-minded people into her fellowship. She has no sense of shame in reference to her demeanor of life, and thus feels no guilt about inviting others to join her. **Stolen waters are sweet:** The wicked give the impression that life is sweet. They make this appeal to others in order to have companionship in the mire of their digression. Sin loves companionship in order to justify its existence. **Sheol:** The final end of those who live according to the lusts of sin is death and eternal separation from God.

Wisdom From Solomon**(10:1 – 22:16)**

Outline: (1) Concepts in contrast (10:1 – 15:33), (2) Parallel concepts (16:1 – 22:16)

Throughout this section of Proverbs there is no necessary order to the statements of wisdom that are given. There are 375 two-line statements of a mosaic of wisdom that are given for daily living. Some of the statements are antithetical (See 10:1–15:33). The greater number are given as parallelisms (See 16:1–22:16). Throughout the synonymous parallelisms, the Bible student should be aware of the fact that a specific thought is given in different words of the two lines. When dealing with the arrangement of the proverbs of this section, we will be frustrated if we seek to find some order. As these proverbs are arranged in our Bible, there is no specific order or classification for them in these chapters. They were random proverbs that were collected in order to preserve the wisdom of those who initially stated them.

Chapter 10**CONCEPTS IN CONTRAST**

10:1-17 These pithy statements of wisdom were a collection of sayings that came from Solomon in order to give instructions for daily living. **1** Children who follow the instructions of their parents, bring them joy. Children who rebel against the teachings of their parents cause their parents great disappointment, and thus disgrace the family name. **2** Wealth that is acquired through corrupt

means will not spiritually profit one's soul (Mt 16:26), but godly living will result in eternal life. **3** God will take care of His people (Mt 6:26,33), but turn His face from the rebellious. **4** Lazy people will reap poverty because they do not work for their food. **5** Lazy children who do not work with their hands cause embarrassment for their parents. **6** Wicked people will reap what they sow (See Lv 13:45; MI 3:7). **7** People forget the wicked when the wicked die (Ps 72:17), but the righteous live on in the hearts of those they influenced. They do so because people cherish memories of good people. **8** Wise people accept instruction, but those who speak too much will be the victims of their own mouths. If one speaks a great deal, he will eventually say something that is wrong, or start talking about things of which he knows little. **9** Righteous people will have the blessing of their neighbors, but the wicked will not have the support of the community. **10** The one who works with malice in his heart will continually cause trouble. Those who speak too much will eventually embarrass themselves with their own mouths. **11** People are drawn to the speech of righteous people. Social turmoil is the result of wicked speech because it stirs up strife. **12** Hateful people focus on the faults of others, and thus they generate discord. But loving people have mercy on others, and thus do not focus on the faults of others (1 Pt 4:8; see 1 Co 13:4; Js 5:20). **13** Wise people will speak those things that benefit society. Punishment is due those who do not speak or behave righteously. **14**

Wise people receive teaching because they always want to know more. Foolish people encounter problems in their lives because they reject counsel. **15** Rich men find security in their wealth, but poverty makes life unstable for the poor. **16** Righteous living will be blessed by God. The wicked, however, will reap the consequences of their wickedness. **17** Those who are receptive to instruction from God's word are on their way in life to eternal life. The way of the wicked is error, and eventually will lead to destruction. **18** When one tries to conceal resentment or anger in his communication with others, he is foolish. He is deceptive in his speech because he is concealing feelings in his heart that he needs to correct. **19** If one cannot control his great amount of speaking, he will eventually sin by what he says (Ec 5:1-3; Mt 12:36; Js 1:26; 3:2). He usually speaks about those things concerning which he knows little. **20** Those who speak consistently and without respect of persons, draw others to themselves and what they have to say. **21** Many are drawn to those who speak that which is right (See Ec 12:11; Jr 3:15). **22** When one is blessed spiritually and physically by working according to the will of God, there is no regret over what he leaves to others as an example of living.

10:23-32 The wicked will reap the consequences of their wrong doing. **23** Unrighteous people rejoice in their wicked deeds that they do to others. **24** The one who does wrong fears that he will get caught for his wrongdoing (See Jb 3:25; Is 65:4). **25** The wicked pass

away as a storm (See Is 17:13; Jb 21:18), but the influence of the righteous will continue in the lives of those whom they have influenced. **26** Lazy people irritate those who are doing the work. **27** Obedience to the will of God brings long life (Ps 55:23; Ec 7:17), but also eternal life. Wicked people reap a shortened life because they reap the whirlwind of their wicked deeds (Gl 6:7,8). **28** While the righteous look forward to the future (Rm 12:12), the wicked are fearful that they will reap what they have sown (Jb 13:3; Ps 112:10). The thief is fearful of getting caught. **29** When one is obedient to the will of God (His way - Ps 25:12; 119:27; see Jn 14:6), he is confident, not arrogant, that he is in a right standing with God. If the wicked do not reap what they sow in this life, they will be destroyed at the end of time (2 Th 1:6-9). **30** Obedience brings assurance (Compare 1 Tm 4:8). Disobedience will eventually lead to termination. For the Israelites, disobedience led to their termination in the land of promise (Lv 26:33; Dt 4:27; Is 22:17) **31** The righteous person will speak that which is right and fair (Compare Ps 37:30; Hb 13:15). People with hidden agendas will eventually be found out, and rejected (Compare Mt 3:10; Lk 13:7). **32** The righteous know the will of God because they seek His wisdom. But rebellious people are obstinate to the will of God, and thus they do not have the love of God in their hearts.

Chapter 11

11:1-11 The contrast between the righteous and unrighteous manifests the

blessings that come from righteousness. **1** God abhors the use of dishonest weights that are used to measure favorably to an unrighteous owner (Lv 19:35,36; Dt 25:13,14; see Ex 30:13; Lv 27:25; 1 Ch 23:29; compare Ez 14:10; Am 8:5; Mc 6:11). **2** Arrogance will lead one to embarrass himself (Lk 14:11; 1 Co 10:12), but others will see our wisdom when we conduct ourselves with humility. **3** People of integrity are guided by good moral principles, but perverse people have no principles. **4** Riches will not deliver one from death. A man will give all that he has in order to deliver himself from harm (Jb 2:4). **5** When one knows that which is right, he will be guided by his principles. Those who have no principles will unfortunately reap the consequences of their wicked beliefs. Their ways will be wicked because they are not according to the will of God. **6** Deliverance from harm is the result of walking according to the will of God. But those who follow after their own selfish lusts, will reap what they have sown (Gl 6:7,8). **7** The wicked will work all their lives to acquire that which is of this world. When they die, they leave everything for others to squander. **8** The righteous are delivered from the trouble that will entangle the wicked (Compare Lk 16:25). **9** Those who have no love of their neighbor will slander and deceive for the destruction of their neighbor. Through knowledge, the righteous escape the maliciousness of slanderous people. **10** The righteous use their prosperity for the benefit of the people. Since the wicked have used the people to gain their

prosperity, the people shout for joy when the wicked are gone. **11** When righteous people prosper, they use their wealth for the benefit of their community. But the influence of the wicked destroys the community, for they have exploited the community in order to gain their wealth.

11:12-23 People with integrity benefit society, but those who speak lies and slander others destroy community. **12** Unwise people will speak against their neighbors for the sake of gaining advantage. **13** People who gossip lose the confidence of others because they speak to others those things that are told them in confidence (Lv 19:16). One is deemed trustworthy when he does not speak those things that were told him in confidence. If a person gossips about a certain individual, that individual will assume that he is being gossiped about to others by the person who gossips. **14** There is security in the counsel of many. Two heads of counsel are always better than one. **15** The one who needs surety for a loan is usually incompetent with money. Those who offer their guarantee for his loan will join him in his debt. **16** People admire a woman who conducts herself with integrity. Ruthless men, on the other hand, will not have the respect of others. **17** We are the victim of ourselves if we are harsh and mean to others. **18** We each reap what we sow, which is a principle of life (Hs 10:12; Gl 6:7,8). Do good and you will receive good from others. Do evil and you will reap the same. **19** Through righteous living we will reap the best of life, but if we live contrary to righteous moral principles, we will suffer the

evils of life. **20** If one would be a friend of God, he must live according to God's instructions. Otherwise, he is detested in the sight of God. **21** No matter how comfortable the wicked make themselves feel, they will receive the reward of their evil deeds. But the posterity of the righteous will be free from calamity that the wicked leave for their children. **22** A gold ring attached to a pig's snout is like a good looking woman attached to foolish behavior. **23** The righteous can be optimistic about the future, for they have planted seeds that will bring forth the fruit of righteousness. The wicked have only gloom in their future.

11:24-31 There are rewards for righteous behavior, but punishment for wicked deeds. **24** The one who gives freely will be given to, but the one who is stingy will not reap the blessings of others. **25** When one is generous with his blessings, others will be generous to him. Generosity encourages the same in the lives of others. **26** One is hoarding his grain if others must buy it to either plant their crops or feed their families. **27** Those who seek to do good to others will reap the good that others return to him. But if one searches for evil, he is sure to find it. **28** When one's focus in life is on his wealth, he is not concerned about the welfare of people. He will fall (10:2; Ps 49:6,7). The wealthy are often the most lonely people in the world. But the righteous will thrive with many friends. **29** Wicked behavior in one member of a family will bring calamity on the entire family. Foolish people bring themselves under the servanthood of the wise.

30 Righteous living will eventually result in eternal life. The fruit of the righteous is an appeal to others to also partake of the tree that gives life. **31** If righteous people reap good for their good deeds, then certainly justice is when the wicked reap evil for their evil deeds.

Chapter 12

12:1-8 One who leads a disciplined life will excel beyond those who do not exercise self-discipline. **1** One proves that he loves knowledge because he seeks it from all sources. But the stupid despise being corrected in the error of their way. **2** Condemnation awaits crafty people, but godly people can look forward with hope. **3** If one builds his life on wicked deeds, his foundation is unstable. On the other hand, the righteous have invested good in the community, and thus they have a solid social foundation. **4** When a wife conducts herself with integrity, she gains the pride of her husband (See 31:10-31). A disrespectful wife is an embarrassment to her husband. **5** When the righteous make plans, they are considerate of others. However, when the wicked make plans, they seek to deceive others. **6** The wicked speak in a way that brings ruin to the lives of others. The righteous put others before themselves, and thus rescue them from danger. A righteous person will speak in a manner that encourages others. **7** The posterity of the wicked comes to an end, but the descendants of the righteous continue (See Mt 7:24). **8** Society will speak well of good men, but they will despise those who deal unrighteously in the community.

12:9-14 Diligence in one's life will reap its benefits, both in prosperity and in acceptance by the community, for society despises a lazy person. **9** It is better to be a humble man with enough money to hire one servant, than to spend one's money in order to put on a face of being somebody, and have no money left for food. **10** Because there is kindness in the heart of the righteous, they have compassion for their animals (Compare Ex 20:10; Ps 36:6; 145:9). The nature of the wicked is revealed by their treatment of their animals. **11** The diligent person will always have food, but the one who runs after fantasies does not have good judgment. **12** Wicked men would rather steal from others, than work for honest wages. Righteous men work for their food. **13** Evil men are eventually found out, thus trapped by their double talk (Ps 7:15,16; 9:16). But righteous men are consistent in what they say and do. **14** That which a person sows, he will eventually reap. If he sows goodness, he will reap good (Is 3:10,11; Mt 25:35). If he sows evil, he will reap the same (Gl 6:7,8).

12:15-28 In order to discover those who are wise in society, we must identify the behavior of the foolish. **15** The self-centered and self-opinionated person looks to his own needs and considers his own beliefs as right. Wise people seek to learn from others. **16** When insulted, the wise man will maintain self-control. **17** The foolish are discovered by their lies. And if caught in a lie, they lose their integrity, and thus are not trusted by others. **18** Fools use words to hurt others.

Wise men use words to heal broken spirits. A wise person always seeks to say something good about other people in order to build them up. **19** Truth will endure forever, but lies endure only until they are discovered. **20** The result of a deceitful heart is behavior that hurts others. **21** The reward determines the character of individuals. Trouble manifests a fool and goodness manifests the righteous. **22** The Lord hates liars. However, He loves those who speak with truth. **23** The wise person is determined by his quiet spirit and use of chosen words. Fools are identified by their much speaking. **24** Those who are aggressive will lead the people, but no one will follow a lazy person. **25** Depression is the result of worry that is out of control. Anxious people need encouragement, not judgment (See Mt 6:34; 1 Pt 5:7). **26** A wise person will choose his friends well. He will not bring into close companionship those who will lead him contrary to his principles. **27** The hunter who will not cook his own food is lazy and hungry. The diligent person prizes his possessions because they are an indication of his hard work. **28** At the end of the journey of life, there is eternal life for the righteous, but eternal death for the wicked.

Chapter 13

13:1-12 Though righteous living is not a guarantee that God will bless one financially, such living does remove many obstacles that are encountered by the wicked who deal fraudulently with others. **1** Wise people are determined by

their willingness to listen to the advice of others. This listening starts in the home when children are trained to listen to their parents (Compare 1 Sm 2:25; 4:17). **2** The outcome of good living is that one enjoys the fruit of righteousness. The wicked, however, must reap the consequences of their evil dealings with others. **3** A wise person will be very cautious about what he says, and how he says it (See 18:21; 21:23; Ps 39:1; Js 1:26). **4** Zealous people will always be productive, and thus satisfied with their labors. However, lazy people will never acquire that which they want. **5** A righteous person will not listen to lies about others. He will shun the wicked who bring disgrace upon themselves by their slanderous attacks against others. **6** One guards his integrity by doing that which is right, but unrighteous deeds will result in the wicked being shunned by society. **7** Some people pretend to be rich, but actually they have nothing (Compare Lk 12:21,23; 2 Co 8:9). There are others who pretend to be poor, but actually they are rich. **8** The rich are fearful of kidnappings and theft, but the poor have no fear of the wicked since they have nothing. **9** The influence of the righteous will continue to shine and affect society positively (See Et 8:16; Jb 18:5,6; Ps 27:1). People rejoice when the wicked leave their presence. **10** The arrogant are self-centered, and thus easily engage in arguments with others. The wise, however, do not seek to contend for their position, but desire to hear the opinions of others. **11** If wealth is not earned by hard labor, then one does not have respect

for it. Inheritances are often spent by children who gave no labor in working for it. **12** When that for which one has hoped is not attained, then one's discouragement may digress into despondency. But when one's dreams are finally realized, one is invigorated to continue with expectation.

13:13-25 The zeal of life is based on dreams and accomplishments. When a person sets and attains goals, he is encouraged to be productive in society. **13** In order to lead, one must learn to follow the instructions of others. Leaders who do not know how to follow the instructions of others are harsh in their leadership of others. **14** The one who takes the advice of a wise person has an advantage over the one who arrogantly rejects instructions. His advantage is based on knowledge of how to perform tasks, whereas the arrogant have cheated themselves of many skills. **15** Good conduct and tact wins the support of others. But when one behaves wickedly with others, he will live a hard life. **16** A wise person takes action according to what he knows. He gathers as much information as possible before he makes a decision. But when a person takes action without consultation, he reveals that he has acted foolishly. **17** The nature of a message depends on the character of the messenger. A disappointing message can be presented in a favorable manner by the one who seeks to encourage the recipient. But a prideful person feels that the information he has for others is an opportunity to exalt himself. **18** If parents do not discipline their children while they

are in the home, the children will not discipline themselves when they leave the home. Their lack of self-disciplined life, therefore, will lead to their ruin. **19** When a zealous person fulfills his goals, he has a sense of self-satisfaction of a job well done. On the other hand, fools know no other life than unrighteous behavior. They are fools simply because they enjoy the way of laziness. **20** One's wisdom is determined by the friends he makes. Wise people gather around themselves those from whom they can source knowledge. Fools gather around themselves those over whom they can exercise control. In the end, the friends of the fool will lead him to destruction. Wise people accomplish great things because they surround themselves with people who know how to get things done. **21** Misfortune will be the reward for the foolish decisions that are made by fools. In contrast, those who do good to others will receive the same in return. **22** A good father thinks of the welfare of his children and grandchildren (Compare Ep 6:4; Hb 12:5-11). He thinks about the survival of his posterity. On the other hand, if the unrighteous do not spend all their wealth by consuming it upon themselves, it will be passed on to others. The children of the selfish, therefore, will be given a heritage of poverty. **23** A foolish poor person may have an abundant crop, but in his foolishness and lack of vision for the future, squanders it in living for the moment. **24** Parents discipline their children in order that the children discipline themselves when they leave the home (See 29:18; 22:15; 23:13). Undis-

ciplined people become lazy and indifferent. They become corrupt by seeking to take from the labors of others instead of working to provide for their own needs. Thieves were undisciplined children. **25** Those who plan for the future live well off their labors when the future arrives. But those who think only of consuming upon their own lust in the present, will be hungry when the future arrives, for they will have no food.

Chapter 14

14:1-19 Wisdom and foolishness are both identified by behavior. One cannot claim to be wise, and then act foolishly. **1** Wisdom directs one to develop a great family, whereas foolish behavior dishonors the home. Children who have no respect for their family will behave foolishly and selfishly. **2** The one who fears the Lord is obedient to God's commandments. But because the unrighteous love evil ways, they are intimidated by the good behavior of the righteous, and thus they despise the righteous. **3** One's foolish talk can get him into trouble. A disrespectful mouth will lead one to suffering punishment for harsh things that he says. Foolish speech always has consequences. **4** A strong ox will pull the plow that tills the soil. If there is no farming of the land, there will be no food for the home. **5** One who is trustworthy and holds to truth will bear witness to that which is true. One cannot represent the truth if he behaves foolishly. **6** One scoffs because his arrogant motives hinder him from determining that which is right. Because of his rebellious spirit,

it is difficult for him to accept advice from others. **7** A wise person will seek the companionship of those who have knowledge. Once a person perceives that someone is foolish, then he should separate from that person lest his acquaintance with the person turns into friendship. Friendship with foolish people is a formula for personal disaster. **8** A wise person will give much thought before he takes action. He will do so lest he acts on the counsel of foolish people (See Ep 5:15). **9** The foolish person will sluff off the error of his way as if it were nothing. He will not consider the serious consequences of his sins. **10** Only the person who is in sorrow can know the extent of his own suffering. Close friends can only perceive a person's sorrow from outside his heart. However, God knows the inner most parts of our hearts. **11** Wicked behavior will produce animosity in one's neighborhood. Such behavior will also generate animosity from within a home. Thus through a spirit of strife, the seeds are sown for the destruction of the family of the wicked. **12** The self-centered nature of man leads him to believe that he can establish his own moral standards. But the standards he establishes will lead him to destruction (Rm 1:28; 1 Tm 4:2). Only God's moral standards will lead one to life. **13** Laughter may cover one's inner pain, but the inner pain will eventually steal away one's joy. A pessimistic spirit will hinder one from discovering true joy. If one focuses on the faults of others, then he has no joy. **14** Those who are faithless will reap the reward of their apostasy (See Ps 44:18). But if one sows

good things, he will reap the same from those to whom he did good. **15** Those who are naive will be quick to believe everything that is told them. But the wise person will carefully ponder every word. **16** A wise person will fear God, and thus keep His commandments in order to be instructed in life. But those who are arrogant will trust in themselves. Because they are hotheaded, they will behave themselves into destruction. **17** One who easily loses his temper will often find himself in great trouble with others. He will say and do things that he later regrets. Because he is quick-tempered, he will be shunned by others who are always in fear that they may do something that will cause him to lose his temper. Quick-tempered people have few or no close friends. **18** If one behaves foolishly, he will reap evil consequences. If he reacts impulsively, he will reap isolation from others. **19** Those who do good will eventually be vindicated, and thus the wicked will be found out for who they are.

14:20-35 Riches and poverty are often the result of social behavior, not the circumstances in which one lives. The foolish are more likely to become poor, and those who are wise in the things of the world are likely to become rich. **20** The rich have friends because their friends think they can receive something from them. The poor, however, have true friends, for their friends know that they will receive no financial benefits from rich friends. **21** If one despises his neighbor because he is poor, then he brings shame on himself, and thus sins. But the one who helps his poor neighbor will be

blessed with a happy heart (Jn 13:17). **22** Those who do plan evil go astray. They go astray from the will of God and from the desire of the community. Thus the schemer of evil is always alone. **23** When one talks, but does nothing, his much talking will lead to poverty. One can talk, but he must take action in order to bring forth fruit from his planning. **24** Riches are the adornment of those who have wisely worked. But for the fools, only folly yields folly. **25** One who bears truth will deliver those who have fallen victim to the lies of the wicked. One is set free only when he accepts truth. **26** When one fears the Lord, he is obedient to His commandments. If one builds his house on obedience to the Lord, then he will give his children a posterity of faith (Compare Gn 17:7; Ex 34:7; Jr 33:20). **27** The secret to a happy life is discovered in obedience to the Lord. Through a knowledge of and obedience to the word of God, one can escape the many snares of evil in life. One can escape the bondage of error. **28** In order for a king to reign over the people, the people must be willing to follow. If a king does not win the hearts of the people, his reign is dictatorial, and thus, tyrannical. He does not reign, but dominates those who are under his bondage. **29** The person who understands the problems that people encounter in life will have mercy in reference to the faults of others. He will not be judgmental as the foolish person who is quick to react to the faults of others (Js 4:16). **30** The one who has a positive mental attitude about life, and is in peace with his neighbor, will not only live

longer, but will also enjoy the abundance of life. Angry people have more physical problems with their minds and bodies than those who are happy. **31** The righteous recognize and worship God. Because they are godly, they behave righteously toward all those whom God has created. They are thus benevolent toward the poor, realizing that the poor are also God's creation (Compare Dt 15:11). **32** Calamity will bring down the wicked who live without hope of life after death. But if the righteous succumb to death, they have hope of resurrection. **33** Wisdom is discovered in the heart of the discerning. It is not discovered in the behavior of fools. **34** Those nations that reject the moral principles of God have determined their doom. Only through the exaltation of God's principles in the civil laws of a nation will a nation prosper. The nation will prosper because God's social laws are best for man, for man cannot create social laws that do not in some way conflict with the laws of God. **35** The wise king will recognize good moral behavior in the lives of the people. But he must use the punishment of law in reference to those who are wicked.

Chapter 15

15:1-20 A wise person can be determined by how he speaks and how he behaves. **1** If one answers harshly in the midst of controversy, he will only intensify the discussion, which discussion will lead to an argument. **2** Wise people skillfully speak that which they know. But one who knows little will often seek to fake knowledge by speaking much.

Those who speak much do not necessarily know much. **3** God is omniscient. Neither the righteous nor the wicked can escape His presence. Being conscious of His presence, therefore, brings comfort to the righteous but fear to the wicked. **4** A gentle word to one who is in sorrow will calm their spirit. Perverse words, however, will bring one to sorrow. **5** Fools are identified by their rebellion against the instructions of their fathers. A wise son who does wrong is identified by receiving correction from his parents. **6** By honest living the righteous become rich. But those who have acquired their wealth through wicked means will eventually encounter trouble from those from whom they exploited in order to gain their riches. **7** Wise people will share their knowledge with others, but the foolish see no need to help others by sharing their knowledge. Those who share their knowledge of God, therefore, are wise. Those who do not, are unwise. **8** Though the wicked offer their sacrifices according to the law, their sacrifices are rejected because they offer them with an insincere heart (1 Sm 15:22; Is 1:11; Jr 7:22; Am 5:21-24). God's law is established in the life of a person who responds in worship (Rm 3:31). Worship is not inspired by a legal performance of ceremonies, but by one's need for God in his life. **9** Because the wicked seek that which is contrary to the will of God, they are detested by God. God, however, loves those who love to follow after that which is right in response to their worship of him (Rm 12:1,2). **10** Those who have a rebellious personality detest cor-

rection. However, because the rebellious do not accept correction, they will reap what they sow (Gl 6:7,8). **11** God knows the realms of Sheol and destruction ("abaddon"), and thus He knows the hearts of those who pattern their lives after wickedness (Compare Jb 26:6; Lk 8:31; Rv 9:2). **12** The proud person is conceited, and thus rejects those who would correct him. His pride will keep him from consulting the wise. **13** Happy people manifest their joy to others. But pessimistic people harbor anxiety that breaks their spirit. **14** Wise people are students. Those who are righteous, seek the knowledge of God, and thus are good Bible students (2 Tm 2:15). **15** Those who are continually afflicted become despondent. The despondent will feed off those who determine to be happy in affliction (See Js 1:1,2). One's happy spirit, therefore, is good emotional medicine for other people. **16** It is better to be poor than to have the turmoil in life that comes with great wealth. **17** It is better to enjoy a poor man's meal, than to have the anxiety that accompanies the rich man's feast. With the rich man's feast comes ulterior motives of the rich, but there are no strings attached to a meal with the poor. **18** A hot-tempered man will generate arguments. But one who is in control of himself will bring peace of mind to others. Peacemakers preserve society. **19,20** Children who do not listen to their parents bring them much grief. Their spirit of rebellion will eventually lead them into many troubles in life. But the way of righteousness is a highway without obstacles (Is 57:15; Jr 18:15).

15:21-33 Having a good mental attitude will bring great joy to one's life. It will also bring comfort to those who are discouraged. **21** The foolish rejoice in doing that which is foolishness. They think that life is centered around silly activities. Such activities may bring happiness for a brief period of time, but the happiness that is brought is only momentary. **22** In order to develop plans that will succeed, one must consult as many people as possible. With the consultation of many people, one will have confidence in reference to the outcome of one's plans. **23** An encouraging word that is spoken at the appropriate time will bring great comfort to those who are in distress. **24** The wise will stay on the path that leads to life, and thus they will escape the downward path that leads to death and Sheol. **25** God detests the exploitation of widows. **26** Since the wicked conceive unrighteous things in their hearts, they are despised by the Lord. **27** The wicked business dealings of the unrighteous person will bring trouble to his own house. A righteous official will refuse to accept bribes (Is 5:8; Jr 17:11). **28** A righteous person will put much thought into what he says. On the other hand, fools speak before they think (See 1 Pt 3:15). Their mouth is running before their brain is in gear. **29** Since the Lord cannot be present where there is a rebellious heart, then the wicked are not in God's presence. God answers the prayers of the righteous, and thus does not answer the prayers of the wicked. **30** One should present himself with a smile to all in order to bring joy to the hearts of

others. Good news stirs the morale of everyone. The righteous, therefore, have a responsibility to share their joy with others. **31** Those who humble themselves in order to listen to the advice of others will be at home with others who do likewise. **32** The one who does not listen to the advice of others will be the victim of his own stubbornness. **33** The fear of the Lord is not only the beginning of wisdom (1:7), it is the foundation upon which one continues to grow wise. The arrogant are not honored because they reject the instructions of those who seek to turn them from their way of error (See Mt 23:12; Lk 14:11; Js 4:6). The humble are honored because they accept instruction.

Chapter 16

PARALLEL CONCEPTS

16:1-9 God works in the affairs of man in order to bring about His eternal plan. **1** Man can make his plans, but he must keep in mind that God is in control of all things. And thus, one should make his plans according to the will of the Lord (Compare 1 Co 3:9; 2 Co 3:5). **2** A person may seek to determine his way according to his own abilities, but it is God who knows us better than we know ourselves (Ps 19:12). God thus evaluates and knows our motives. **3** If the Lord is the center of one's life, then what one plans will be based on the will of the Lord (See Ps 37:5; 90:17; 1 Pt 5:7). He will know the will of God, and thus plan according to the will of God. **4** God did not make men evil, and thus predestine them to destruction. The wicked have

individually chosen their course of life. The righteous receive eternal life as a result of their voluntary obedience to the will of God (Compare Jn 3:17; 1 Tm 2:4). **5** Though all men would join forces to determine a law unto themselves, they are arrogant, and thus cannot stand against the judgment of God that will be based on His law. Regardless of the number of men who may agree on a particular moral standard of living, it is not possible for man to develop moral standards of living that do not eventually lead to their own destruction (Jr 10:23). **6** Only through the atonement of God can sin be forgiven, for it is against God that sin is committed. It is the duty of man to depart from evil by following after the commandments of God. **7** When one obeys the Lord, the Lord will work all things together for good (Rm 8:28; see Jr 39:12). When we go to work for God, God goes to work for us. **8** A person must guard his integrity when dealing with those of the world with whom he must work in order to make a living (See Ps 37:16). He must avoid all fraud (Jr 22:13). **9** The righteous make plans, but they must keep in mind that the Lord is working in their lives (Compare Jr 10:23).

16:10-24 If a country would seek to be at peace from within, then its leadership must manifest an example of moral living. **10** Those who are in positions where they have authority over the lives of others must exercise great wisdom (8:15). **11** Corrupt leaders will lead an example for the population to deal corruptly in their business dealings (11:1). Righteous leadership sets an example of

moral good. The leadership of a nation, therefore, must lead by the example of their lives in order that the political and business world conduct themselves accordingly. Merchants must not possess weights that manifest corruptness (Dt 25:13; see Lv 19:35; Mc 6:11). Corrupt business dealings will lead to the downfall of a business. **12** If the leaders of a nation behave themselves immorally, the people will do the same (See Ps 72; Is 11:5). The moral fiber of a country can be destroyed by immoral leaders. **13** Leaders will gain the following of the people if they deal justly and honestly with the people, for honest citizens will follow those who are just and righteous. **14** Wise is the king who has by his side those who will temper his reactions to bad news. Hot-tempered leaders will make wrong decisions. **15** When the spirits of the king are bright, then he is favorable to all who are around him. **16** Those who focus their lives on acquiring wealth will often find themselves in situations where they are using people to acquire their wealth. It is best to focus on people, with one's financial dealings being secondary. **17** It is the purpose of the righteous to live according to the commandments of God, and thus stay clear of the path that leads to destruction (Is 35:8). **18** Pride indicates that a person is self-centered, and thus he will fall over himself as he deals with people (17:19; 18:12; Is 2:11-17; Jr 13:15). **19** It would be better to have a humble spirit among those who are oppressed, than to be arrogant and among those who oppress the poor. **20** Good things will come to

those who deal fairly with others. And thus the foundation for gaining happiness is to deal with others according to the will of God. **21** Those who are wise will be discerning with their words. And because they are discerning, others will accept what they say (See 27:9; Ps 19:10). **22** A person will enjoy the abundance of life if he seeks wisdom and understanding (10:11; 13:14). The only instruction that fools can give to others is foolishness. **23** Wise people think before they speak, and thus speak carefully chosen words. **24** As one would seek the honey of a honeycomb, so he should seek kind words that bring peace and comfort (15:26). If one speaks kind words, others will be drawn to him.

16:25-33 When men plan evil, only evil will result. **25** A man can plan according to his own devices without consulting the word of God, but his plans and life will only come to disaster (14:12). **26** Hunger will encourage one to work. Each man is responsible to work for himself in order to provide for his own food (See Gn 3:19; Ec 6:7; 2 Th 3:10). **27** A man's heart is wicked if he seeks the faults of others, and by knowledge of those faults seeks to destroy the reputation of others (See Ps 7:15; Js 3:6). **28** With the knowledge of others' faults, a perverse person seeks to destroy relationships for his own gain (6:14,19; Js 3:6). **29** Those who are evil and who live contrary to law, will seek to lead others down their own path to destruction (Ps 36:4; Is 33:15). **30** Through the body language of the eyes and lips, evil men seek to encourage others to follow in their way. **31**

The aged have gained respect if they have lived a righteous life (3:2,16; 4:10; 9:11; 10:27). **32** Hot-tempered people tear down what men of integrity build. If a person has a calm spirit, he is honored above those who are victorious on the battlefield (14:29). **33** The world functions according to the providence of God, for God is working all things according to His plans. In casting lots for decisions in Israel, God directed the outcome in order to preserve Israel. He did so in order that He might carry out His plan for Israel (See Nm 34:13; 1 Sm 14:41,42; Jh 1:7; See At 1:26).

Chapter 17

17:1-12 If we will submit to the will of God, He will mold our character according to His will. He can do this only if we know His will, which is the word of God. Those who do not study their Bibles cannot know the will of God. **1** It is better to enjoy one's meal in peace than to be in the midst of quarreling around a great feast (See 15:17; 1 Sm 1:5,6,13; 2:13). Peace with one's fellow man is more important than a good meal. **2** In a historical setting, Rehoboam was a disgraceful son, while Jeroboam inherited the rule of the northern tribes of Israel, but was not a son of Solomon (1 Kg 11:26 – 12:19). **3** As fire is used to smelt for gold and silver, God uses trials to refine the character of man (15:11; 24:12; Mt 3:2,3; 1 Pt 1:7; Rv 3:18; compare Js 1:1,2). **4** There are warnings against those who speak evil and give bad advice, but responsibility must also be placed on the one who gives heed to evil

pronouncements. **5** If one shows disrespect for the poor, he has forgotten that the poor are also the creation of God (14:31; 24:17,18). **6** Great grandchildren are a joy to their grandparents, and parents are the pride of the children. **7** Fools are not gifted with discreet speech. Rulers should speak truth, since falsehoods are not of the nature of their position. Officials are in their positions because they are to deal truthfully with the people. **8** Bribes are successful in persuading others to make prejudicial decisions (15:27; Dt 16:19; 1 Sm 12:3). Those officials who accept bribes do not have the people at heart. **9** If one keeps bringing up the faults of others from the past, then he is encouraging separation between friends (See Zp 2:3; 1 Co 13:4). **10** Though a fool receives lashes for his error, it is not his nature to learn by his mistakes. After his lashes, the fool will return to his foolish behavior. All a wise person needs for correction is to be informed of his mistakes by friends. **11** An official who has no mercy will be sent to correct those who are bent on rebellion. **12** Though meeting an angry she-bear would almost lead to certain death, dealing with the foolishness of a fool will certainly end in tragedy.

17:13-28 If one determines to live righteously, he will suffer from the hands of those who are bent on evil (2 Tm 3:12). **13** If sin could be categorized, one of the worst sins would be returning evil for those who do good to us (Compare 1 Sm 20:30; Lk 6:11). **14** Arguments have a beginning. The wise person knows when an argument is about to begin, and thus

knows how to detour the argument for the sake of peace. **15** Unjust judgments by officials are detested by the Lord because the Lord is just in all His judgments. **16** Fools believe that there is an easy road to wisdom. It was a custom of the day that wisdom could be acquired from teachers when an offering was brought (Compare 1 Sm 9:7,8). But because of the rebellious spirit of fools, it is difficult for them to learn (Compare Lk 24:25,45). No amount of money would bring them wisdom. **17** True love will continue regardless of conflict between two parties. True friends are never separated forever by disagreements. **18** One should not allow himself to be subject to a guarantee (surety) over which he has no control (20:16). **19** Those who love to sin against that which is right, are actually loving that which puts them into conflict with their fellow man. The one who builds an expensive house puts himself into a precarious position of having to support it. **20** People who are filled with deceit believe that everyone else is of the same heart. And thus, they do not see good in others. Also, ungodly living leads to further ungodliness. **21** When a son rebels against the instructions of his parents, he brings shame to his family and heartache to the parents (See 15:20; 23:24). **22** Those who are positive in their outlook on life have better health (3:8; 12:25). **23** When bribes are accepted by officials, justice is perverted (Ex 23:8; Dt 16:19; Is 1:23; Jr 22:17; Ez 13:19; Hs 4:18). **24** Fools lead aimless lives. **25** The unrighteous behavior of children will always bring grief to righ-

teous parents (See vs 21; 10:1; 15:20). **26** If one does harm to those who are living righteously, he has judged himself to be wicked (Compare Jn 18:23). **27** Wise people speak little and those with understanding speak calmly (Compare 10:19; Js 1:19). The mouth of fools is out of control. **28** One often manifests a lack of confidence when he speaks too much. And one who speaks too much in a crowd of people is often manifesting uneasiness among people.

Chapter 18

18:1-24 This chapter of Proverbs is again a contrast between the behavior of the wise and the foolish. **1** A person separates himself from others because he is thinking of himself. When approached by society, he is not able to deal with social interaction because of his lack of social skills. **2** Fools are opinionated. They have little interest in the thinking of others (12:23; 13:16; 15:2). **3** Society has contempt for the wicked, and thus their presence is not desired. **4** Those who speak good things bring life and encouragement to others. Good people have an inexhaustible amount of good to say to others. **5** When partiality is shown to the wicked, and justice denied the righteous, then the foundation upon which society rests has collapsed (See Lv 19:15; Dt 1:17). **6** A fool will generate contention, and with his words will invite a beating. **7** Those who cannot control what they say will be the victim of their own speech (Ec 10:12). **8** Gossips destroy the reputation of others. Gossip manifests that one has low self-esteem, for the one

who gossips seeks to bring others down in order to exalt himself (16:28). **9** The lazy person and the one who wastes are of a similar nature. Both are not responsible for carrying out their responsibilities in society (10:4; 12:11,24; 23:21). **10** As the high tower is the safest place of a city under attack, so is the Lord the safest place to find security in a world that is attacked by sin (Ps 61:3). **11** Because the rich trust in their wealth, they feel that they are secure in society, and thus cannot be brought down to poverty. Because their security is in their wealth, their security in the Lord is weak. **12** Arrogant people present themselves for rejection, while the humble are exalted (15:33; 16:18). **13** If one speaks before he has heard all the facts, he will embarrass himself before others. If one speaks before he hears all the facts concerning what another thinks, then he will speak and make unfair judgments concerning the opinion of others. **14** If one has a strong spirit, it will sustain him while in sickness. But those who are weak in spirit will often succumb to ill circumstances. One must maintain a positive spirit in times of calamity in order that he not allow the environment in which he experiences calamity control his character. **15** Those who are wise will continue to learn. They are students of life in order to build on their understanding of all things. They are students of the word of God in order that they learn the greatest wisdom of all. **16** If one comes bearing gifts, he will be welcomed as a friend (See Gn 32:20; 1 Sm 10:27; 25:27; 1 Kg 4:21; 10:25; Mt 2:11; Lk 16:9). **17** If only

one side of a story is heard, then what is said is often accepted as truth. It is wise to hear both sides of a story, for in hearing both sides of the story the truth can be determined. **18** If two parties are in a disagreement concerning a matter, then both parties can agree to cast lots (flip a coin) in order to settle the matter. **19** Once two people have an argument, it takes a great deal of time to bring them together again. It is difficult to receive them because they often harbor unforgiving spirits that carry on for years. **20** A person must be accountable for what he says, and pay the consequences of wrong statements. Only by taking ownership of the consequences of what one says will he learn to be cautious about speaking before he thinks. **21** Those who realize the power of speech will often use it to their own advantage. Therefore, those who know the power of speech must assume responsibility for what they say (See Js 3). **22** Married people live longer. They do so because God intended that people live in companionship with one another in order to enjoy the fullness of life by sharing with others. **23** Rich people are often harsh. They resent the pleas of the poor. In fact, they often shun the poor because they see them as a threat to their riches. **24** If one would have friends, then he must be friendly. And when one gains a friend, the friend will often be more true to friendship than a blood brother (17:17; 27:10).

Chapter 19

19:1-17 When one is content with where he is, and with what he has, he has

a greater understanding of and appreciation for his economic status in life. **1** It is better to be a poor man with integrity than a rich fool (Compare 28:6). **2** It is not good to be without knowledge. However, it is worse to be without the knowledge of God. For without the knowledge of God, one will continually run in the direction of error and destruction. **3** When one rejects the word of God, he will be the victim of himself. We must take responsibility for our own foolish behavior (Compare Ez 18:25,29; 33:17,20). **4** Self-serving people will seek to be the friend of those who have money. But because one cannot expect any gifts from the poor, the friends of the poor are sincere (See 14:20; 18:23,24). **5** The one who perjures himself will not go without punishment (14:5; see Ex 20:16; 23:1; Dt 19:16). **6** Because some are political, they will seek to be a friend of some ruler (29:26; Jb 11:19). And because some are materialistic, they will seek to be a friend of those from whom they may receive financial blessings. The politically minded often seek power and positions. The financially minded seek relationships that are based on the possibility of financial gain. **7** The friends who are made by the poor are sincere because they are friends who are not seeking some financial gift or political position. **8** Good news to the poor is that they do not have to have wealth in order to be wise and have understanding. Through both wisdom and understanding they will prosper. If they do not prosper financially, they will prosper with great friends and eternal life (16:20). **9** This is a warn-

ing against those who would perjure themselves against others (vs 5). Slanderous people will be judged by society when they are discovered and rejected. Slander reveals a jealous and envious heart. **10** There are two social situations that are not normal. First, fools do not work in society to gain wealth (Compare 17:7; 26:1). Second, we do not set rulers over us who are of a lower social class (Compare Ec 10:7). If society did, such would be social anomalies in normal societies. **11** Those who are hot-tempered usually have little discretion (Compare 14:17,29). But those who show discretion are merciful to the faults of others, and thus they do not over react to the faults of others (Mc 7:18,19). **12** Wise servants of the king understand the moods of the king. They are cautious that they do not incite his temper (See Am 3:4,8). **13** Disobedient children will disgrace a family (10:1; 15:20; 27:21). A woman who cannot cease nagging her husband builds an emotional wall between the two (27:15). **14** Children are blessed if they inherit the wealth of their parents. But a loving wife is an inheritance from the Lord. **15** Society is not responsible for those who refuse to work for their own food (10:4; 12:24; 20:13). **16** The one who follows instructions will guard his own life. But if one has little regard for his own well-being, he will reject instructions, especially those instructions that are given by God (13:13; 16:17). **17** Those who are kind to the poor will have their rewards (Is 10:1,2; Am 2:6,7; 4:1-5; compare Mt 25:40).

19:18-29 Through the gift of listen-

ing one is able to increase his knowledge. **18** If parents do not discipline their children while they are young, when they are older it is too late to teach them how to discipline themselves (See Dt 21:18; Ep 6:4; Cl 3:21). **19** One who acts before he thinks, must pay the price for his hot temper. If he does not take ownership of his wrong reactions, he will not learn to control his temper. **20** The more one listens to others, the more knowledge he will gain (8:10; 12:15; see Jb 8:7). **21** A man may have plans to do great things, but he must first consider if his plans are according to the will of God (16:1,9; Nm 23:19; Mt 3:6). **22** The intention to do good is what gives real value to an action. One may say he will do something, but does not perform according to his desires. A poor man will not promise he can do something, and then fail to do it. Successful people are identified by the fact that their performance matches their desires. **23** When one fears the Lord, he is obedient to the will of the Lord, and thus he has life (10:2,3; 14:27). The disobedient person will receive trouble for his rebellion (See Lv 26:6; Dt 9:15). **24** If a person is too lazy to feed himself, then others are not obligated to do it for him (26:15). If a person does not work, then he has no right to eat the food of others. **25** When punishment is rendered to fools, they learn by the example of the discipline that is rendered to them. Wise men learn simply by being instructed (13:1; 15:12; 21:11; compare 1 Tm 5:20). **26** A rebellious child will bring shame upon a family name (10:5; 13:5; 17:2). **27** If one does not continually give heed

to instruction, he will become self-centered, and thus stray from the path of wisdom. If one listens to that which is true, but does not follow the way of truth, then he will stray (See 1 Tm 6:20). **28** Ungodly people devour wickedness, for it is the food of their life. Their character is defined by their mockery of that which is right (See 16:27; 14:5). **29** Society will discipline those who behave in a manner that is contrary to law and the security of people.

Chapter 20

20:1-14 One's behavior determines if he is a righteous person. **1** In this text, strong drink is personified. Illustrated as a person, intoxicating drinks overcome the undisciplined, and then lead people to uncontrolled behavior (See Lv 10:9; Nm 6:3; Is 28:7; Jr 35; Ep 4:18). **2** One is wise if he does not behave rebelliously before those who are in power (19:12). **3** Men of integrity will control their behavior in a manner that they do not lose control. **4** Lazy people look for any excuse not to work. Because they do not work, the workers are not obligated to feed them. As a result, the lazy person finds himself in poverty. **5** People of understanding will question the wise in order to draw on their well of wisdom. **6** There are those who boast of all the works they have done. There are those who are busy doing the work (Mt 6:2). **7** Fathers who behave themselves with integrity will leave an example to their children to do likewise. One of the best things fathers can leave their children is a heritage of integrity. **8** A wise judge

with experience will perceive what is right, and thus deliver the righteous from the unrighteous (Is 11:3,4; 1 Co 2:15; see Ps 11:4; Hk 1:13; Mt 3:12). **9** No man can say that he is without sin (1 Kg 8:46; Jr 7:9; Rm 3:9,10,23; 1 Jn 1:8). **10** Merchants who use unequal weights in their scales to measure goods to customers are detested by God (vs 23; see 11:1; 16:11). Fraudulent business dealings are detestable to God because such are the work of evil men who exploit others for their own gain. **11** If we can determine the character of a child, then certainly people can determine the true character of an adult who pretends to be righteous, but inwardly is wicked. **12** Though man's senses are limited, the omniscience of God is of all things that exist (See Ps 94:9). There is nothing that man can do that is not known by God. **13** Lazy people who love to sleep, will not be working for their food. Industrious people will be their bosses, and thus if they do not work, lazy people will not eat (6:6-9; 23:21). **14** The customer bargains with the seller until he has brought down the price. He then goes away feeling good that he got a good deal.

20:15-30 Wisdom is not a guarantee that one will be wealthy, but a wealthy person must be wise. **15** Having a controlled mouth is more valuable than gold and precious gems (See 3:13-17; 8:10,11). **16** It is unwise to be surety for someone about whom you know little (11:15; 17:18; 22:26). If one is so unwise that he gives his clothing as surety, but does not have enough responsibility to pay back the loan, but would rather

sleep with a wayward woman, then he should lose his clothing (See Ex 22:26; Dt 24:6,12). One should never be surety for someone who has brought himself into debt because of his own foolish business practices. **17** If a person acquires his food by fraud, the food may satisfy his immediate hunger, but in reality it is like eating gravel (5:4; 9:17). **18** Before one puts into operation a plan, he should seek as much advice as possible from others. One should certainly seek the advice of as many people as possible before engaging an enemy in battle (Compare Lk 14:31). **19** A gossip has few friends because those people who are near him feel that he is gossiping about them when he is in the presence of others. Once people discover that a person repeats of others what is told to him in confidence, they will shun the one who gossips (11:13). **20** Under the law the penalty for cursing a parent was severe (See Ex 21:17; Lv 20:9). It was severe because the punishment was a guarantee that such a child should not be one to continue disrespectful behavior to the next generation of society. **21** The impatient son who hastily wants his inheritance is focusing on the wealth, and thus seeks to consume it on his own lusts. He will take his inheritance, but end up in the pig pen (See comments Lk 15:11-32). **22** Vengeance belongs to the Lord (24:29; see Mt 7:12; Rm 12:14,17 1 Pt 3:9). If one harbors vengeance in his heart, it will turn to bitterness. One forgives his offender for his own sake, not for the sake of the offender. **23** The principle is that God detests those who work fraudulently in

their business practices (See vs 10; 11:1). **24** The believer must understand that God is working in the course of all things, and in his own life (16:1,2,9). Though we do not understand His working, we must trust that He is working all things together for good (Rm 8:28). **25** One should not eat the sacrifice of the vow before he makes the vow. When a vow was made, it was a law that one imposed on himself, and thus was binding as a law. **26** A wise king will intimidate the wicked of his kingdom by rendering harsh judgment on those who are caught. **27** God is omniscient, and thus knows all that is in the heart of man. There is nothing hidden from His searching. **28** When kings rule through mercy and truth, they gain the favor of the people. Mercy is extended to those who are repentant. Truth and justice are rendered to the rebellious. **29** Young men must realize that they will pass from strength to a grey head, and thus must not put too much confidence in their strength (16:31). **30** Physical punishment will change the moral behavior of those who are repentant of their sins (19:29; Ps 119:67).

Chapter 21

21:1-31 God not only works in the affairs of man, He also controls the affairs of the world in order to accomplish His purpose for the existence of the world. The wicked, therefore, must not assume that they work outside the providential work of God in the affairs of this world. **1** A farmer directs the water in order to irrigate his crops. In the same manner, God can direct the heart of the

king in order to bring about His work. **2** Men can direct their own paths. However, it is God who is directing the course of this world in order that His eternal plan of redemption be accomplished (See 16:1,2,25; compare 14:12; 20:24). **3** Sacrifice is according to law. However, doing right with one's fellow man and being just toward others are more important than keeping law, for if one does right and is just, he will keep the law. But one can keep ordinances of the law without doing right to his neighbor and being a just person (See 15:8; compare Mc 6:6-8; Mt 12:7). **4** Arrogance and pride will lead one into sin, for such manifests the character of one who thinks of himself to be better than others (6:17; 30:3). **5** If one correctly plans for a work, he will succeed. However, if he seeks to get rich quick, he may lose everything, and thus bring himself into poverty (12:11; 13:11; 20:21; 24:23). **6** Using fraud to gain wealth is injurious to the one who commits the fraud. He is often led to believe that he can live by fraudulent means. However, in the end his treasures will lead to death (10:2; 13:17; 14:27; Jr 17:11; 1 Tm 6:9). **7** Thieves will break through and steal the treasures that the fraudulent have acquired by dishonest means (See Ps 9:15). **8** Righteous people conduct themselves according to that which is right (1; 20:11). Those who are guilty of sin are wicked because they have behaved themselves in a deceitful manner in their relationships with others. **9** It is better to dwell in peace in isolation than in the company of a woman who is out of control (vs 19; 19:13,14).

10 It is the nature of the wicked to eagerly run after sinful actions that affect his neighbor (4:16; 10:23; compare Is 13:18; 26:10). **11** The simple profit by being disciplined, and the wise learn to do better through instruction (19:25). **12** Wise men see the overthrow of the house of the wicked, and thus perceive that wicked men reap what they sow (Gl 6:7,8; see 22:12; Jb 12:19). **13** If a person does not have mercy and give to the needs of the poor, then when he is in trouble, others will not consider his needs (Compare Lk 6:38; 16:19-31; Mt 18:23-35; 25:31-46; Js 2:13). **14** There is no justification for giving a bribe, for wherever a bribe is given, justice is perverted (17:8,23; 18:6). **15** The righteous always rejoice when justice is done, but justice always brings displeasure to those who are unjust (See 10:23,29; 15:21). **16** It is possible for wise men to go wrong. When they do, they wander into the camp of those who are morally dead, and thus destined to eternal death (27:8; Ps 119:176). But if they resort to true wisdom, they will flee from that which brings destruction. **17** Those who like to consume their wealth upon themselves will develop a life-style that will bring them to poverty (See Am 4:1-3; 6:3-6). **18** When calamity comes, the righteous are delivered and the wicked pay the price for their unrighteousness. The evil of which the righteous are spared is brought upon the head of the wicked (11:8; see comments Et 7; Lk 16:25). **19** Men will not dwell long in the presence of a woman who is quarrelsome and nagging (19:13,14). **20** A wise person knows how

to save his resources in preparation for the future. A foolish person squanders his savings, and thus brings himself into destitution. **21** When people do that which is right, they are able to live among others. They will experience the abundant life (See 3:3,16; Mt 6:33). **22** Strong cities provide protection against an enemy. However, wisdom provides security in life against those who fraudulently seek to deceive the innocent (20:18; see 2 Co 10:4; 1 Jn 5:4). **23** Those who are slow to reply to the harsh words of another, will avoid a quarrel (12:13; 13:3; 18:21). **24** Some people behave with overbearing arrogance in their relationships with others. Their arrogance identifies their character and their opinions of others. **25** When a person makes a decision to be lazy, society is not responsible for the outcome of his laziness. His laziness will bring him to poverty. **26** The lazy person dreams of great things, but is too lazy to accomplish his dreams. He wants wealth, but is too lazy to work for it. **27** If one does not keep the law with his heart, then his offering according to the law is detestable to God (15:8,9). **28** A person who gives witness to that which is true, will speak through the testimony of his life (19:5,9). When liars are discovered, they are shunned by society because they have lost their credibility. **29** Wicked people present a bold face to others in order to be in command over others (7:13; see Jr 5:3; Ez 3:7). By living righteously, the righteous secure their way of life (2 Ch 27:6). Others do good to them because they do good to others (Mt 7:12). **30** There is no scheme

or plan that can be devised by man that will change the eternal plan of God for the existence of the world (Compare Jb 5:13; Ps 33:10,11; Is 29:14; At 2:23; 4:27,28; 1 Co 1:20; 3:19). **31** Though men may make all preparations to win the battle against the enemies of Israel, it is God who empowered the Israelites to gain their victories. He brought them victory in order to accomplish His plan for Israel (Dt 17:16; Ps 20:7; 33:16; compare Ja 17:16; Jg 4:3; 1 Co 15:57).

Chapter 22

22:1-16 If one loses his reputation, it will be difficult for him to find it. **1** Since one's reputation is more valuable than gold or silver, then we should do all that is possible to keep it good (Jb 30:8; Ec 7:1; Lk 10:20; At 6:3). **2** There is no justification for the rich to exalt themselves over those who are economically challenged, for God is the creator of both (14:31; 29:13; Jb 34:19). **3** A wise person will perceive if there is danger ahead. But the person who is aloof will proceed without caution. The person who learns through the experience of life, will gain great knowledge. **4** One can enjoy the abundance that life offers only by submission to the will of God (3:5-8,16; 21:21; Lk 14:11). **5** Deceitful people are such because they seek to work around or through other people. And because they pattern their lives in such a manner, others will constantly find them out and correct them (See 15:19). **6** Parents are to train their children in moral behavior. When the children leave the home, and subsequently by their foolishness go out

into the wilderness of unrighteous living, when they are old they know the wisdom of righteous living that they learned from their parents. There are no guarantees in training a child that he will not depart from the instruction he is given. If parents have fulfilled their responsibility to implant a moral guide by which their children can find their way back to righteousness after they leave the home, they have accomplished their duty as parents. **7** The rich rule simply because they control the economic structure of society. The debtor is the servant of the conditions that were made for him when he borrowed money (20:16; compare Mt 18:25,34). **8** The threat the wicked use to intimidate or control others will eventually fail. When it fails, the wicked will reap the reward of their wickedness (9:18; 12:13,14; Gl 6:7,8; compare Gn 21:15; Is 1:28; 16:4). **9** Those who have compassion on the poor will be blessed for their mercy (19:17; Dt 15:9,10; 2 Co 9:7,8). **10** People do not like to have friends that continually engage in arguments. For peace of mind, they disconnect with such people (1:22; see Mt 18:17; compare Gn 21; Gl 4:30). **11** When we see the good in others, and our speech is appealing, then we will have friends, even to the friendship of kings (See Mt 5:8). **12** God is on the side of the believer to protect him from those who would transgress against him (See 8:6; 21:12; compare Dt 6:24; Ja 24:17). **13** Lazy people look for every possible reason not to work (26:13). **14** The adulterous woman is strange to the married man, and thus is a snare to his covenant

with his wife (See 2:16-19; 5:7-14; 7:6-23). Wise men perceive the flirting gestures of an adulterous woman, and thus stay clear of her. **15** Babies are not born with innate morality. As they grow up, and come to the age of accountability, they must be taught and disciplined to behave according to moral principles (13:24; 19:18; 23:13; 29:15). **16** In the economic society of Israel, the poor could glean for their own grain. The one who did not allow gleaning from his fields was oppressing the poor.

Collection Of Wise Concepts (22:17 – 24:34)

Outline: (1) Introduction to the collection of proverbs (22:17-21), (2) Admonitions for society (22:22 – 23:14), (3) Admonitions for good parenting (23:15 – 24:22), (4) Admonitions for social relationships (24:23-34)

INTRODUCTION TO THE COLLECTION OF PROVERBS

22:17-21 It is the responsibility of youth to submit to the teachings of those who have assumed the responsibility to instruct society in the moral principles of God. **17-19** If one does not submit to the teaching of the wise, he has manifested his rebellion, and secured the doom of his future (Compare Hb 3:7,13). Wise students will listen to their teachers. One must thus store up words of wisdom in order to have a library of good things to say for every occasion. The word of wisdom that one must store up in his memory is the word of God. The result of our storing in our minds a knowledge of God

is that our lives are changed. **20,21** One learns the words of truth in order to impart them to others when the occasion may call for truth.

ADMONITIONS FOR SOCIETY

22:22-29 Words of truth that come from God empower the social and economic situation of the poor within society. **22** It is a detestable thing in the eyes of God to take advantage of the poor (See 19:4). If the rich exploit the poor in order to build their wealth, they have manifested their unrighteousness. **23** God will take the side of the poor if they are exploited (23:11). He will take their side to the point of launching his attack against the rich. **24,25** If a person makes friends with hot-tempered people, he will become the same, and thus reap the consequences of rash behavior (1:10-19; 15:18). **26,27** Do not be quick to make a loan to another, lest someone rob you of your money by not paying back the loan. If the one who has asked for a loan has not fallen on hard times that was no fault of his own, then he probably has little sense about the use of money. If you make the loan, you will become the victim of his lack of knowledge concerning finances. **28** Landmarks established the borders of one's inheritance of Israel (Dt 19:14; Hs 5:10). If the landmark was moved, one was stealing the property of another (Compare 15:25; 23:10,11; Jb 24:2). **29** Industrious people gain the respect of other people. If one knows how to work, he will have no problem in providing for himself and his family. He will be asked by the rulers to work for

the people (Compare 1 Sm 16:21,22; 1 Kg 10:8).

Chapter 23

23:1-13 Social skills are learned by the wise in order to function in society, and thus gain the favor of others. **1,2** When one is in the presence of princes and kings, he must exercise proper etiquette. You will embarrass yourself if you eat as a glutton in the presence of the king. Thus one must exercise self-restraint when eating. **3** One must remember that the king must be political when inviting guests, and thus one must not eat the king's food without considering the motives of the king. **4,5** Riches can be elusive as an eagle to a hunter. If a person's goal in life is to work to be rich, his motive will be the acquisition of the riches, and not the people from whom he gains the riches (Compare Jn 6:27; 1 Tm 6:7-10). **6-8** If you are the guest of a miser, then you are a guest of one who has evil motives (Compare Dt 15:9; Mt 20:15). You will be disgusted with his meal, for he is using the meal to gain something from you. He will serve you according to the evil motives of his heart. **9** Fools will not accept the advice of the wise. Sometimes what you say to them will be used against you (9:7-10). A religious legalist is always looking for an accusation against those who oppose him. **10,11** One should not encroach on the fields of orphans by moving their boundary markers. If you do, God will defend the orphans and work against you (22:22,23; see Lv 25:25; Nm 5:8; Rt 4:1-8). **12** If a person would be knowledgeable

able, then he must apply himself. It takes hard study to learn (1:2). The knowledge of God has come to us by the inspiration of godly men. But we must learn it by the perspiration of hard study. **13,14** Undisciplined children will not discipline themselves when they leave the home. An undisciplined citizen will suffer under the law (13:24; 19:18; see Dt 21:18-21).

ADMONITIONS FOR GOOD PARENTING

23:15-28 God's word provides guidelines, or skills, for living within a society. Since these guidelines are from God, they will guarantee a happy life if obeyed. **15,16** Those who conduct themselves according to the wise principles of God will make both their parents happy (22:15). **17** Though what the wicked may have or do seems appealing to one's pride, one should not follow after the example of their behavior (3:31; 24:1,19; Ps 37:1; 73:3). **18** One must always keep in mind that the outcome of the godly life will be the abundant life (5:4; 19:20; 24:14; Jr 24:11; compare Ps 37:9; Jb 13:12). **19-21** If one cannot control his intake of wine, nor his eating of food, he has revealed a flaw in his character. He has no self-control. His lack of discipline in his life will lead him to poverty (13:15; 20:1; 24:33; 23:29-35; compare Mt 11:19; Lk 7:34). **22** Listen to your father and love your aged mother. Respect of parents is a sign of wisdom. **23** One should make every effort to invest in the truth, for by it one will keep his life from deception (4:5,7; 16:16).

24,25 As a parent rejoices in the good things that his children do, he will be saddened when disappointed by the unrighteous behavior of his children (10:1; 17:21). **26-28** An adulterous woman will lead a young man to his own disgrace, embarrassment of his family, and under the law of Moses, to his own stoning (See 2:16; 22:14,19).

23:29-35 Drunkenness is a disgrace. It manifests a flaw in the character of a person, which flaw is the lack of discipline (20:1). The drunk lives an immoral life. He is insensible and irresponsible. The picture here is of one who has no control over his consumption of alcohol (See Is 5:11). And if this picture of drunkenness is the result of consuming the naturally fermented wine at the time of the writing of the proverb, one can understand the curse that comes with the highly distilled wines and whiskeys of today.

Chapter 24

24:1-22 Good advice that can be given to a young person who leaves the home and goes out into the world is not to associate with evil people. **1,2** Stay away from those who desire to live contrary to the law and in rebellion to the word of God (3:32; 23:17; 24:19; Ps 37:1,8). Evil people scheme to do evil, and thus they will take the righteous into wickedness with them. **3,4** The home of a righteous man is built with wisdom, understanding and knowledge (9:1; 14:1; 23:18). It is a strong home because of the relationships that are maintained among family members. **5** A wise per-

son is strong because he knows how to avert disaster. The abundance of his life increases as he grows in knowledge and implements good moral principles in his behavior (Am 2:14; see 21:22). **6** Before one engages in conflict with another, through wisdom he will access as much knowledge as possible of the situation and his enemy (20:18; 11:14; compare 15:22). **7** The elders resided at the gates of the cities in order to make judgments for the people (1:20-23; 8:3; 22:2). This was not the place for fools. **8** A troublemaker is one who schemes to do that which is wrong. **9** He who would deliberately sin, is foolish. Such a person is known as an evil schemer. **10** One must remain strong in times of adversity. If he falters, then it is revealed that he is not a strong person. **11,12** Those who are compassionate will seek to rescue those who have engaged themselves in things that lead to calamity. But if one does nothing to help another prevent calamity, then God will hold him accountable for doing nothing when he could have helped prevent his fellow man from calamity (See 12:14; 24:29; Dt 22:1-4). **13,14** One should desire wisdom as he would desire the sweetness of honey. Wisdom is the foundation upon which one's future is guaranteed (23:18). **15,16** The wicked are warned not to scheme against the righteous. The righteous person will fall because of hard times, or misfortune, but he will always get up and move on. However, when the wicked person falls, he is crushed (Ps 34:19; Mc 7:8). **17,18** A person should not rejoice in the calamity of any person. If he does,

he is seeking revenge. But vengeance belongs to God. God may lift up the unfortunate over whom one rejoices in order to rebuke the person who has rejoiced over the misfortune of another (17:5; compare Lv 19:18; Ps 58:10; Rm 11:18-21). **19,20** One should not be discouraged by the accomplishments of the wicked (Ps 37:1), for God will eventually bring down judgment on them (13:9; 23:18). One should simply do good, and not allow an evil environment to influence one's attitude. **21,22** One should not rebel against the government (See Ec 8:2; 10:20; see comments Rm 13:1-7; 1 Pt 2:17). Government has been established among men in order to prevent anarchy. If a person aligns himself with rebellion, he will face the wrath of the king, and maybe the judgment of God.

ADMONITIONS FOR SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

24:23-34 It is with wisdom that citizens conduct themselves in a manner by which they can cohabit with others in society. **23** If for any reason one shows partiality in making judgments between parties, then the judgment is unjust (18:5; 28:21; Lv 19:15; Dt 1:17; 16:19). **24** People will detest those officials who make judgments that allow wicked people to continue in society (17:15). **25** Those who take a stand against the unjust official will have done that which is right. God's blessings will come upon such a person (2:10). **26** An honest and fair judgment is like a kiss to the lips. **27** A person should take care of his house after he has prepared for his food which

will sustain his life. Providing for one's family takes priority over taking care of others. **28** One should not generate unnecessary disputes with neighbors. If there is a dispute between neighbors, then truth should be spoken (14:5). **29** Even if one is wrong, retaliation is not justified (See comments Mt 5:38-48).

24:30-34 There is no excuse for laziness. **30,31** One's laziness is always manifested to others. Laziness cannot be concealed. The lazy person is the one who has no understanding. **32** If a person perceives the results of a lazy person, then he should learn that such behavior has a negative impact on one's life (8:10). **33,34** As a thief unexpectedly comes upon his victim, so poverty will seize the possessions of the lazy (See 6:6-11).

Solomon's Proverbs Copied By Hezekiah's Scribes (25:1 – 29:27)

Outline: (1) The first collection (25:1 – 27:27), (2) The second collection (28:1 – 29:27)

There is a collection of 137 proverbs of Solomon from 25:1 to 29:27. As a king who sought to reform Israel, Hezekiah brought these proverbs together in order to restore social behavior and honor of God within Israelite society (See 2 Kg 18:18,37; Is 38:10-20).

Chapter 25 THE FIRST COLLECTION

25:1-10 The fame of Solomon in Israelite history added to the acceptance

of his teaching. This first section of teachings deals with righteous kings and those who surround him in his court. **1** Solomon's proverbs were copied from various sources where they had been preserved since his reign. The scribes may have had the original autographs, but we today do not. We trust in the accuracy by which these scribes carried out their duty to bring the word of God to us. We thus have the word of God today in written form as God wanted us to have it. **2** Some things God has not revealed (Dt 29:29; see Is 14:15; Ec 8:17). However, it is the business of the king to know his people. His knowledge of the affairs of the people gives him the opportunity to make judgments. Rulers who distance themselves from their people have no right to rule. **3** What the king knows is not always understood by the masses of the people (Compare Jb 11:8). **4,5** Vessels were made only from pure silver. Strong kingdoms are built upon men of integrity, men who have submitted to the will of God, and thus are pure in heart (See 16:12; 29:14; Is 1:25; Jr 6:29). **6,7** One must not be presumptuous in reference to associating with those in political authority. It is better to be asked into the presence of the king because of one's integrity, than to assume that one should be among authorities (See 2 Sm 14:24; Lk 14:7-11). **8-10** Before one argues his case, he should have all his facts concerning what he is to argue (17:14; Mt 5:25). If he does not, then he will face embarrassment when those before whom the case is argued find out that he does not know what he is saying. And, it is better

to argue one's case in private with the person with whom he has a dispute, than to do such in public.

25:11-14 There is great power in communication, and thus one must be sure his words are wisely chosen in order to communicate that which is truth. **11** When one speaks a good word at the right time, what he says will be appreciated (vss 18,19,26,28). Communication is not based on the amount of words one might say, but the timing of what one says. **12** If one is receptive to words of wisdom, the words that are communicated by others will be greatly appreciated. **13** A drink of cool water refreshes those who are working in the heat of the harvest. So is a trusted message that is conveyed through a messenger who is trusted by the recipients of the message (See 13:17; 22:21). **14** One who thinks he can do something that he cannot, will be embarrassed when he fails. He is as a promising cloud during drought that does not deliver rain.

25:15-28 By our conduct others can identify that to which we are loyal, whether God our creator, or the wicked ways of men in this world. **15** The power of speech is revealed through gentleness and persistence (15:1; 16:14,29,32; see comments 1 Pt 3:15,16). **16** Moderation is the spice of life. If one consumes sumptuously upon his own lust, he will pay the price for his overindulgence (vs 27). **17** Do not overstay your visit. And if you are residing in a friend's house for a long period of time, do not take advantage of his hospitality. One is responsible for providing for his own lodging.

18 The lies of a false witness are like weapons of war. They bring destruction to the reputation of those against whom one slanders. **19** If you trust in untrustworthy people when you are in need, they will only complicate your problems. Do not rely on their lack of reliability (See Jb 8:13-15). **20** A lighthearted response to a grave situation does not bring comfort to those who are involved in a calamity (See Dn 6:18; Rm 12:15). **21,22** Bless those who curse you. Do good to those who despise you (Mt 5:44; Rm 12:20). In this way, one must love his enemies by expressions of good (Compare 1 Sm 24:17-19; 26:21). "Coals of fire" were given in order that one might start his fire and cook his own food. If you show clemency toward others, even to your enemies, God will reward you. **23** As the northern wind in the northern hemisphere brought the cold winter rains, so speaking behind one's back brings the chill of an angry person. **24** Wives who cannot control their mouths will push their husbands away from them, for men are not drawn to women who cannot control their speech (21:9). **25** When one is in doubt concerning what is transpiring in other places, good news always brings comfort (25:13). **26** When a righteous person morally falls, it brings great disappointment to all those who looked to him for inspiration. **27** If one seeks to be glorified, he has lost his honor. He destroys that for which he seeks. People will vomit up those who seek their own glory (vs 16). **28** If one has no self-discipline, then he is vulnerable to the attack of temptation (See 16:32). His lack

of self-control is his weakness, and thus the means by which he will fall.

Chapter 26

26:1-12 Fools are defined by their refusal to behave according to moral and ethical norms in society. This section is a series of sarcasms that define those who live foolishly. **1** There is no integrity with a foolish person. He has no reputation for being honorable. He is socially out of place as snow in the summer, and destructible as rain during harvest time. **2** There is no justification for speaking evil against another, especially one who is seeking to be righteous before God. When one does speak evil, the words that are spoken never go away when spoken against a righteous person, for the wicked are usually looking for something to say against the righteous (Compare 1 Sm 17:43; Ne 13:2). The evil that is spoken against a righteous person will often come back on the one who spoke the words. **3** As animals must be controlled, so those who are foolish must be controlled by man (10:13; 12:20). **4,5** These verses do not contradict one another. The warning is that one not stoop to the moral level of a fool (vs 4). Silly questions must not be answered (Compare Mt 21:23; 22:21,22; Lk 13:23). One must rebuke the one who is behaving foolishly (vs 5). **6** Fools will either twist or misquote a proverb, and thus a message on their lips will be twisted (13:17). **7** Discernment is not characteristic with fools, therefore it is not possible for them to correctly interpret a proverb. **8** A stone that is bound in a sling will not accomplish its

purpose. A fool who is given responsibility will disappoint those who have entrusted him with duties to be performed. **9** As a drunkard cannot use a thorn bush to accomplish a task, so a fool cannot understand a proverb or use its wisdom properly (vs 7). **10** Both foolish and wicked people will reap what they sow. The foolish will reap the consequences of unwise speech. The wicked will reap the consequences of unrighteous deeds (Gl 6:7,8). **11** Fools cannot learn from their mistakes. They cannot discern that which is detestable (See 2 Pt 2:22). **12** The conceited person is worse than the fool because he sees all things through his own self-interest (3:7; 29:20; Lk 18:11; Rm 1:22; 12:16; Rv 3:17). And for this reason, he is not subject to correction by others and repentance toward God (See Mt 9:12; Lk 15:7; 18:14).

26:13-16 No righteous person can be lazy. **13** The lazy person will seek any excuse to justify his laziness (22:13; see 6:6-11; 19:24). **14** A lazy person has a love affair with his bed (See 24:33). If one cannot get out of bed in the morning and get to work, he is lazy. **15** There is no extent to which a lazy spirit will take a man in being a sluggard. **16** The lazy have an indefinite number of reasons why they cannot do work.

26:17-28 The righteous need wisdom in order to determine those in society who are not trustworthy. It takes wisdom to live a peaceful life. **17** One should mind his own business, and thus not involve himself in the quarrels of others. One should not look for trouble. There is enough trouble looking for us. **18,19**

Deception is no joke. One cannot escape paying the price for deception if he is caught. **20** Gossips generate strife. A talebearer is one who spreads malicious gossip. He is the slanderous person whose mouth must be stopped. **21** When a contentious man is identified, he must not be allowed to have a forum where he can spread his strife (21:9; 27:15; see comments Rm 16:17,18). **22** Evil speech will inflict wounds on the hearts of people (18:8). **23,24** One may give the pretense of being a good person, but his evil heart will eventually be made known by what comes out of his mouth (See Mt 23:27). **25** If one flatters the lips, be careful. Sometimes the one who speaks the most has the most to hide (See Mt 12:45; Mk 16:9). **26** People use speech to hide a wicked heart. This is deceit, and will eventually be known to everyone (5:14; compare 1 Jn 3:15; 4:20). **27** If one sets a trap for his neighbor, he will eventually fall into it. If he places a stone to cause his neighbor to stumble, he will fall over it himself (Ps 7;15,16; 9:16; Ec 10:8). If one slanders another person, he will eventually reap the judgment of his own slander. **28** People lie about others because of their hate for those against whom they lie. The result of slanderous speech is the ruin of the one who so speaks, and the ruin of the reputation against whom the lies have been spoken. Jealousy and envy are revealed in the heart of the one who speaks slanderously about another. Dominance over others is often the motive of leaders who slander others (See comments 3 Jn 9,10).

Chapter 27

27:1-22 God made man, and thus social structures for man are best determined by God. These proverbs reveal God's instructions for those who would live in peace with one another in any society. **1** Because there is no guarantee that tomorrow may come, one should fully appreciate each day of his life (1:7; Lk 12:16-21; Js 4:13-16; see comments Mt 6:34). **2** One should live a godly life that manifests praise of God, and not give praise to himself (Compare Mt 5:16; Jn 8:54; 2 Co 10:18). **3** Fools will always condemn those whom they envy. They believe that by bringing others down through criticism and slander they can lift themselves up. What they do not realize is that the more they slander or criticize others, the lower they take themselves. **4** Envy will lead one to pour out the bitterness or jealousy of his heart on other people. Those who are the victims of envy have a great burden to bear. **5,6** True love for a friend is manifested when one must correct a friend for behaving contrary to moral principles (Ep 4:15). It is better to be corrected by a friend than wounded by the criticism of one who is your enemy. **7** One can benefit from the rebuke of a friend. Though it is difficult to receive correction from a beloved friend, the correction that is given and received in love is sweet. **8** When one journeys from his home, whether for good or bad reasons, he has left the security of familiar things. He has placed himself at the mercy of strangers. **9** The senses are soothed by perfumes and oint-

ments. Such should be the result of counsel from those who love us. Loving counsel should reassure one of a friend's love. One's speech, therefore, should always be seasoned with salt in order that it be received by others (Cl 4:16). **10** One should not forsake trusted friends who have been around for many years. In a time of calamity, these friends will come to one's aid (See 17:17). If one has left his house and traveled to distant lands (vs 8), then he will have left the security of faithful friends. **11** The success of the student is the pride of the teacher (10:1; Ps 119:42; compare 1 Th 2:19,20; 3:8). **12** Wise people perceive that certain circumstances will lead to calamity, and thus they will avoid going down paths that lead to destruction (22:3). **13** If one gives his garment for surety in order to involve himself with a prostitute, then the one who accepted the garment as surety should keep it (See 6:1-5; 20:16). **14** If one behaves toward another in a manner that is provocative and obnoxious, then the reason for his friendship must be questioned. **15,16** Nagging wives distance their husbands from themselves (19:13). Trying to restrain a nagging woman is like trying to restrain the wind by grasping after it. It slips from one's hands as oil. **17** Good friends compliment one another by correcting one another when each stumbles (1:10-19; 13:20; 22:24,25). **18** Though one is the laborer for a master, he still has a right to the fruit of the harvest (2 Tm 2:6). **19** As clear and pure water reflects the image of a man, so also will a friend who is pure and moral reflect what one is because he

has chosen such a person as a friend. Good men choose good men for friends. **20** Death and destruction will always claim those who are bent on sin, and there are many who will not turn from sin (30:16; Is 5:14; Hk 2:5). **21** The humble character of a man is tested when others give him praise. How he accepts the praise will determine if he is either humble or proud. **22** Fools are fools because of their character. Though corrected, they will not change their behavior. No amount of discipline will turn them from their foolishness.

27:23-27 The life and work of a shepherd teaches many valuable lessons concerning life skills and human relationships. Israel was a rural culture of farmers and herdsmen. From this culture, many practical lessons in social relationships can be learned. **23** A good shepherd will know the state of the sheep over which he cares (See Is 28:23-29; 1 Pt 5:1-4). **24** Wealth does not last, and thus one must focus on that which will exist beyond the end of this world (See 23:5; Jb 20:28; Ps 49:10). **25-27** One's care for his flocks determines the amount of diligence with which he shepherds. Since his livelihood depends on maintaining the flock, then to guarantee his livelihood, he will care for the sheep (See 30:31).

Chapter 28

THE SECOND COLLECTION

28:1-28 A contrast between the behavior of the righteous and wicked helps us to refrain from creating moral laws and social ethics after our own desires. Sometimes cultures exalt that which is

evil. What the book of Proverbs teaches is that all social ethics and morals must be determined by the instructions of God. If societies reject the instructions of God, they will create their own standards of moral behavior, and subsequently lead themselves into moral decay and destruction. **1** If one has a good conscience, and knows that he is behaving according to the will of God, then he will be courageous (Nm 32:23; Ps 23:6; 91; see 1 Sm 17). **2** When there is anarchy and rebellion, there are many who want to rule the nation (Hs 8:4). But social and political stability come when the people submit to the accepted ruler of the nation (Compare 21:22; Ec 9:15). **3** A ruler who has no consideration for the citizens of his country, will be a tyrant who will dictate for his own selfish survival (Is 5; Mc 2:2; compare Rm 1:18-32). **4** Lawbreakers exalt wickedness in order that they may continue in their wicked ways. The righteous, however, are such because of their submission to law. This submission to righteousness puts them in a situation where they have to contend with wicked men (See 1 Kg 19:14; Ps 119:136,139; 139:21). **5** Those who base their morals and ethics on the principles of God are the stability of any nation (Ps 119:100; Ec 8:5; Jn 7:17; 1 Co 2:15). **6** It is better to be a poor and righteous man than a rich and wicked man (19:1). **7** A righteous and obedient son causes a father to be proud, but a disobedient and wicked son brings shame on his family (10:1; 23:19-25; 29:3; Ep 5:18; Ti 1:6). **8** A greedy person will increase his wealth by charging unfair interest (6:1-5; see Lv

25:36,37; Ps 15:5; 109:11). However, his wealth will eventually come into the hands of someone who will have compassion on the poor. **9** God will detest the prayers of those who are disobedient to His law (15:8; Lk 18:10-14; Jn 9:31; see Ps 109:7). **10** If one who knows the law of God leads others away from God, he stands condemned. He stands condemned because he knows what is right but does not lead people to God (Mt 5:19; 18:6; 23:15). Those who do such, will reap the consequences of their bad example (26:27). **11** Those whose vision is not clouded by wealth have a better understanding of life. They better understand those who think they are something when they are nothing (18:11). Those who are successful in business because of their arrogant attitudes and dishonest business practices, therefore, are not good shepherds for the flock of God. **12** When wicked men say everything is fine, then we are in trouble (Compare 29:2; 11:10). Only when the righteous rejoice must we be assured that things are going well. When righteous leaders lead nations, the people have an occasion for rejoicing. **13** People often do not confess their sins because they feel that others will reject them. However, merciful people are made known when confession is made. We are received by merciful people when we confess. Those who wear a mask over their sins seek to exalt themselves above others, and thus stay at a distance from those who humbly confess their sins (See Ja 7:19; Jb 31:33; Hs 9:4; Ps 32:1-4; 1 Jn 1:6-9; compare Mt 3:6). **14** Those who harden themselves

against God will always have a bad conscience about their lives. Fear of the Lord, however, is a guard against falling into sin and destruction. **15** When rulers have no consideration for the people, especially for the poor and those who are socially distant from the rulers, then they govern as tyrants and dictators (See Jr 4:7; Ez 19:6). **16** Tyrannical rulers rule for their own gain. They oppress the people because they use the people to maintain their own power and wealth (10:9; see Jr 22:13-19). **17** The one who is tormented with the guilt of manslaughter, must be a fugitive in a refuge city until the time of his death (See comments Nm 35:31-34). **18** The man who deals wisely and uprightly in his business dealings with others, will not fall victim to those with whom he deals (10:9). **19** A diligent farmer will have food on his table, but lazy people will come to poverty (12:11). **20** If one's goal in life is to be rich, then along the way to his riches, he will often deal dishonestly with others (13:11; 20:21; 21:5). There are many rich people who have not dealt honestly with others in order to gain their wealth. **21** A judge must make decisions without accepting bribes (18:5; 24:23). If he accepts bribes, his judgments will be unfair and corrupt. **22** Those who seek to get rich quick often run over their fellow citizens (See 23:6). They will certainly ignore the poor since the poor offer them no opportunity to gain wealth. Because the wicked rich deal with society in a selfish manner, eventually they may come to poverty (Compare 23:4,5; 11:25). **23** If one lovingly corrects another, he will

be respected by the one he corrects. One's correction of another in love is a sign of love and concern for others. **24** A child who seeks to gain control of and squander the possessions of his parents is a criminal before God (19:26; compare Mk 7:11,12; 1 Tm 5:4,8). **25** One who has an arrogant attitude will engender arguments with others. He will do so because he feels that his opinions are better than others (16:18; 29:22; Mt 6:19-34). Only by humbling oneself to God can one consider others greater than himself (11:25; 16:20). **26** If one trusts in the Lord, and seeks counsel from Him, then he will be delivered from himself (vs 14; 14:16; compare Gn 6:5; 8:21; 1 Co 10:12). **27** It is a blessing to oneself if he gives to others (11:24-29; 19:17; Jn 13:17). One cannot hide himself from the needs of others. **28** The wicked often intimidate the righteous into obscurity. But when the wicked are not present, the righteous shine forth (vs 12; 9:10; 29:2,16).

Chapter 29

29:1-27 Social skills make it possible for one to maintain relationships with others in society. They also guarantee the rule of the king. Thus the leaders of a nation must set an example of righteous conduct that is followed by the people. **1** If one refuses to be corrected by hardening his heart against those who correct him, his heart will become so hardened that he will not repent (1:24-33; 6:15; 15:10; Jb 34:20; Ps 2:9; Jr 19:11; compare Dt 10:16; Jr 2:20; 27:8). **2** Unrighteous rulers are a curse to a na-

tion. They bring down the nation because of their own self-interest (11:10,11; 28:12). **3** A disgraceful son will spend his money on harlots (10:1; 28:7). His foolishness is revealed by his living after the flesh. **4** When the government of a nation is controlled by bribes, the nation has determined for itself a destiny of moral doom (15:27; compare 16:12; 25:5; 1 Kg 15:4). **5** The reason for flattery is to gain the favor of another person for one's own self-interest. Therefore, when one resorts to flattery, he should be held in suspicion (vs 5; 26:28; 28:10,23; see Jb 18:8,9). **6** The unrighteous are caught in the snare of their own sin, but the righteous rejoice because their godly living keeps them free from the snare of sin (11:13; 24:16; see Mt 5:12). **7** Righteous people are concerned for the plight of the poor (Jb 29:12-17; Ps 132:3,4). But the wicked exploit the poor for their own gains. **8** Because scoffing men are morally bankrupt, they generate social chaos within a city. It takes wise men to counter the chaos that they have caused (12:10; 15:1,18; see Is 28:14). **9** Do not be involved in an argument with a fool. The fact that he is a fool will be revealed by the wise statements that are presented by the wise (Compare Mt 11:16-19). **10** Murderers detest the righteous because they realize that the righteous do not have to live with guilt. But the righteous are concerned for the welfare of the blameless (Compare Gn 26:14; Dt 2:23). **11** Wise people speak few words. They listen in order to gain wisdom, and then speak at the appropriate time (14:17,29; 16:32; 25:28).

12 It is the responsibility of those in power to set an example. If they listen to lies, then their governance will be corrupted and unfair. **13** What the poor and oppressor have in common is that God instructs both (22:2; compare Mt 5:44,45). **14** The throne of a just king will be firmly established (16:12; 20:28; 25:5). **15** Undisciplined children will grow up to be undisciplined people, and thus live lives that bring shame upon a family (10:1,13; 13:24; 23:13; compare 17:21; 28:7). **16** Undisciplined children grow up to be wicked people in society. Those who have been brought up righteously, and with discipline, will see the shame that wicked children bring on their parents (Compare Ps 104:7). **17** When children are corrected in the home, and before they leave to join the citizenship of the world, their training in the home will benefit society. **18** When leaders focus the people on godly goals, the people will discipline themselves to accomplish those goals. But leaders who cannot plan for the future because they have no vision for the future, will lead the people into destruction (Compare 1 Sm 3; 2 Ch 15:3; 2 Ch 28:19; Hs 4:6). **19** It takes more than words to correct a servant. He may understand what is said, but his nature will lead him not to perform according to instructions (vs 15; 23:13,14; 26:3). **20** There is more hope for a fool than for the man who speaks before he thinks (26:12). **21** If a servant is treated as a son, he will eventually think that he has the rights of a son. He will thus be brought to grief because he cannot have the privileges or inheritance

of a son. **22** An angry and hot-tempered person causes dissension in society. His hot temper will cause him to sin (15:18; 22:24; 28:25; Js 1:20). **23** The proud will eventually be humbled, but the humble person will be exalted because people are not intimidated by his presence (15:33; 16:18; 25:6,7; Lk 14:22; compare 11:16; Is 57:15; Js 1:9-11). **24** Those who would be companions to thieves, have made an alliance with destruction. Thieves will make their oaths to one another in order to secure their group from discovery (See Lv 5:1; compare Jg 17:2). **25** One must fear God more than he fears any man. If we fear God we will obey His commandments. If we fear man more, we will fall into the rebellious behavior of man (See Mt 10:28; Mk 8:38; compare Is 51:12,13). **26** One may seek the favor of the judge to receive a lighter sentence, but he must keep in mind that the Lord is the final judge of all men (See 1 Kg 10:24; Ps 45:12). Therefore, one must seek the favor of God (1 Sm 16:7; Is 49:4; 1 Co 4:5). **27** The righteous do not like the wicked because of their ways. The wicked do not like the righteous because they are intimidated by their godly life (See Ps 139:21,22; compare 1 Kg 21:20; Is 53:3; Mt 18:34; Jn 15:19).

Wisdom For Practical Living

(30:1 – 31:31)

Outline: (1) Wisdom from Agur (30:1-33), (2) Wisdom from Lemuel (31:1-9), (3) Wisdom for women (31:10-31)

Chapter 30

WISDOM FROM AGUR

We have no information concerning Agur. Some have suggested that he was a wise teacher of his day, and thus his proverbs we considered to be a part of those statements of wisdom from God that should be added to the collection of proverbs for the posterity of humanity.

30:1-9 Agur's personal observations were in reference to the knowledge of God and his prayer for humility and that he maintain his integrity. **1** The names, Ithiel and Ucal, may have been used by Agur to communicate the fact that "God was with him" (Ithiel) and that he was "consumed" (Ucal) with the will and word of God. **2,3** Agur confessed his inability to comprehend the incomprehensible God. God is beyond the full understanding of man, and thus man must consult the revelation of God, His word, in order to come to some understanding of God. Those who want to discover the one true God can never do so if they do not study His word. **4** Agur's five rhetorical questions reveal the difference between the magnificence of God and the finite inabilities of man. The questions challenge those who think they can understand all that God is. We can know of God, but we cannot fully understand Him. We would have to be God in order to fully comprehend God (8:24-29; Jb 11:7,8; 38-41; Ps 104:1-5; Is 40:12). **5** God expects us to go to His word in order to comprehend His majesty. **6** If we imagine a false god that is not according to the identity of the God that has come to us through revelation, then we have added to God's description of Himself. The God of heaven can protect us only if

we submit to Him, and not the imagination of our minds (See Dt 4:2; 12:32; Ps 18:30; 84:11; 115:9-11). **7-9** Agur prayed that he not fall victim to falsehoods and lies. He asked that he be given only that which would sustain life. He had seen the curse of wealth, and the despair of poverty. In order to live a life of contentment without the worry of riches or the desperation of poverty, Agur's prayer was for a life that was without the frustrations of either riches or poverty.

30:10-17 Agur saw problems that prevailed in life. **10** We live in a world where some men seek to advance themselves through the slander of others (Rm 14:4). **11** There are curses that continually affect society. There are those who show disrespect for their father and mother by the wickedness they practice. **12** There are those who are self-righteous and self-centered, and thus do not love their neighbors. **13** There are those in society who are contemptuous. They show no respect for others, especially for authorities. **14** There are those in society who use their mouths to attack others and oppress the poor. **15,16** A leech sucks the blood of its victim until it is full. Such are many in society who view others as an opportunity to advance themselves. They exploit the poor for the sake of gaining wealth. They cannot be satisfied. There are four insatiable things in the world: the grave, barren women, the dry earth and fire. The grave continually receives the dead. There are too many barren women. The earth never receives enough rain to produce bountiful crops. Fire will continually consume

all that can be burned. **17** Disrespectful children will not be buried (Ex 20:12; 23:33). Ravens and eagles will consume their flesh.

30:18,19 One may claim to know much, but there is always more to know in reference to the physical world in which we live. Even through the advancement of science in the modern world today, man is not able to understand all that God created.

30:20-23 It is difficult to understand that an adulteress woman feels completely comfortable in her sin. She has completely justified her sin in her own eyes. What would also bring chaos to society would be servants who were made kings, fortunes given into the hands of fools, hateful women who are married, and young maidens to take the place of their mistresses.

30:24-28 Agur was not impressed with fame, fortune and the accomplishments of those who considered themselves to be important people in society. He considered the greatness of little creatures as the ant, rock badger (coney), locust and spider. Though small and insignificant, such creatures of God's creation were able to survive and accomplish great things in comparison to their size.

30:29-31 God has empowered His great creatures with magnificent abilities. The lion has no fear. The great speed of the greyhound (the exact identity of the creature mentioned here is not known). The male goat has the ability to traverse great cliffs. A king is strong when surrounded by his army.

30:32,33 The gift to learn starts with

humility and the control of one's mouth. Arrogance will hinder our growth in the wisdom of God. It is the goal of the wise to bring peace to society (Rm 12:18).

Chapter 31

WISDOM FROM LEMUEL

31:1-7 King Lemuel: He and his mother were possibly not Israelites since his name is not mentioned among the kings of Israel. These statements of wisdom come to us through him, though they were taught to him by his mother. This wisdom was given to Lemuel in order that he might carry out his duties in service to the people. **Women:** Solomon should have listened to the mother of Lemuel. The king could have any woman, for all women would like to be married to the king. Solomon took advantage of this, and thus his fall was that his many wives led to his fall from total commitment to God. **Not for kings to drink wine:** Kings should stay away from wine, lest their judgment be impaired. They may become drunk, and thus forget to behave according to the law. **Heavy hearts:** Strong drink was for medicinal purposes (1 Tm 5:23). It was given to criminals in order that they forget their misery.

31:8,9 Those who rule should guard the rights of the oppressed and poor. They should speak up for those who cannot defend themselves. Officials must extend social justice to the underprivileged (See Is 10:1,2; Am 2:6,7; 4:1; 5:15). One has lost his right to be an official for the people if he uses the people to sustain his position.

WISDOM FOR WOMEN

31:10-31 The conduct of the virtuous woman in the following verses is in contrast to the contentious woman (19:13; 21:9; 25:24; 27:15) and the adulterous woman (22:14; 23:27; 29:3; 31:2). Throughout the book, the writer has explained the work of the mother in reference to her work to train her children (1:8,9; 10:1; 17:25; 18:22; 19:14; 23:25; 28:24), and now the focus is on this woman in her daily activity. **Far above rubies:** A woman of virtue is priceless. **Husband ... trusts in her:** She has gained the respect of her husband. **No lack of gain:** She is devoted to her husband's well-being. **Do him good:** She is devoted to her husband, and thus does not work against him. **She seeks ... works:** She is not lazy, but industrious. **Brings her food:** She makes sure that her family is fed. She is a keeper of the household, making sure that the servants are also fed. **She considers a field:** She buys and plants a garden in order to make sure that her family is fed. **Girds her loins:** She fastens up her clothing and goes to work with her hands. **Her merchandise is good:** She is a good businesswoman, and thus makes sure that she has a profit from the things that she sells. **Her candle:** She works into the night in caring for her family and making sure food is ready for the next day. **Spindle:** She not only makes clothes for her family, she makes the thread in order to make the clothes. **Hand to the poor:** Though concerned first for her family, she cares for others. **Not afraid of the snow:** She

works through the winter in order to make sure that her family has clothing for the winter. ***Clothed with scarlet:*** Not only is her household clothed, they are clothed with articles of luxury. ***Coverings of tapestry:*** Her clothing is appropriate and in good taste. ***Gates:*** Her husband is respected as a leader, for he sits with the elders at the place of judgment of the city. ***She ... sells:*** She is a wise business-woman. ***Strength and honor are her clothing:*** Her focus is on her integrity, and thus through her moral character she looks to the future. ***Mouth with wisdom:*** She has educated herself in the law of God, and thus has God's wisdom and word to impart to others. ***Kindness:*** Her speech is gentle. ***Looks well to the ways of her household:*** Her focus in life is her family. She diligently labors because of her great concern for her husband and children. ***Call her blessed:*** Her example

of industry and kindness have impressed her children to love her. ***Praises her:*** Her husband is proud of her and always offers words of encouragement. ***Surpass them all:*** Women of the world do great things, but the woman of God does greater things because of her spiritual motivation to work according to the will of God. ***Fears the Lord:*** She is a prized woman because of her godliness, which godliness is passed on as a heritage for her children. ***Her own works praise her:*** The elders in the gates of the city give her praise because of who she is. The virtuous woman is the model of a righteous posterity that has been passed down to her from her own parents. She is thus the preservation of society, and one who is to be followed in order that society be preserved for another generation. For this reason, the book of Proverbs comes to us today.