



## "REASONS TO REJOICE"

"Your Words were found and I ate them, and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Jeremiah 15:16

### PROVERBS LESSON 13

This week we'll be looking at chapter 17; a great chapter that really gives us a good contrast between peacemakers and troublemakers. Most of the verses are loosely related to either peace or strife. One book I was reading titled this chapter, "Family Ties and Friendly Bonds," saying that the two main themes are honoring parents and loving friends. There are few direct references to God, but He is definitely weaved through and through. There are also many repeated topics, but most of them shed additional light to the principle being taught. Can't wait to jump in. Are you loving Proverbs? I certainly am!

I want to begin with a short paragraph written by Raymond Ortlund. He wrote, "Wisdom is when we outgrow our misconceptions about how life should work, and we learn how God actually built life to work, and work well. That takes us way beyond rule-keeping. Something deeper happens. God's wisdom enters our hearts and changes us within, so that as we grow, we know intuitively what to do and what not to do, what will work and what won't. Wisdom is the skill for living when there is no obvious rule to go by. This is what the book of Proverbs is for -- Gospel wisdom for complicated lives."

#### First Day

1. Read Proverbs 17:1-28. As you read through, note any repeated words, phrases, or topics.

2. Which verses make direct references to God?

3. How many references are there to "wisdom"?

4. Proverbs 17:1 is another "better than" Proverb. How does it relate to 16:32?

Having the ability to control our own spirit is better than having military might, according to 16:32. Here in 17:1, controlling the atmosphere over our household is better than having plenty of food. Having God's wisdom within ourselves is always better than being able to have control or plenty of anything else. Our heart is always what matters most.

In ancient times, family bonds were extremely important. In fact, next to fearing and honoring the Lord, honoring and esteeming your parents probably ranked the next highest. The Proverbs talk a lot about the atmosphere in the home, what was being taught, and how well one should listen. How well a child behaved really impacted the lives of their families. Many "despise" their parents, or treat them as worthless, as if they are beneath them. Hubbard wrote, "The cluster of sayings in chapter 17 and elsewhere in Proverbs has much insight to offer a generation blind with greed and drunk with ambition. No persons in any era or setting can deem themselves wise if they neglect to understand the effect of their drives and decisions on the people closest to them."

5. Write your thoughts on the quote above. Do you think it's true? How do you treat "family"? Are you guilty of taking the intimate ties of "kinship" for granted?

6. How can you, by choosing to live in God's wisdom, bring joy to your family? How does the way you live your life affect every family member?

It's important to be reminded again that there is no "middle ground" between the paths of the wise and the wicked; between right and wrong; or between fearing

or not fearing God. There's no reasonable compromise. Proverbs 14:12 was a reminder of that. When describing how eloquently Solomon wrote the Proverbs, Derek Kidner said, "All this is done with a light touch and a keen eye for the finer points of the way we treat each other. The tactless friend who 'sings songs to a heavy heart' or 'outstays his welcome' or 'gets you up too early,' or the 'practical joker,' or the 'idler and his preposterous excuses,' the 'gossip,' - all these are almost as disastrous as the downright wicked, and their opposites are a joy to God and man. But we learn our lessons from them better by a flash of wit than by a roll of sermonic thunder. And by finding room for these apparent trivialities (which are, after all, the very stuff of everyday encounters), Proverbs claims the whole of life for wisdom, and the whole range of wisdom for God."

7. Have these "short flashes of wit" (Proverbs) helped paint a clear picture of the path that God intends for us to walk down? So far, what have you enjoyed the most about this book?

That's it for today. Praying that there are "many" things you've enjoyed about the book of Proverbs. I pray that it has been a great challenge to you, as well as an encouragement. And most of all, I pray that your faith is growing by leaps and bounds as you fill your heart and mind with the truth of God's Word!

**Memory Verse of the Week:** "The beginning of strife is like releasing water; therefore stop contention before a quarrel starts." Proverbs 17:14

## Second Day

**Work on your memory verse.**

1. Read Proverbs 17:1-10. What principle is verse 1 teaching? At your family gatherings, what is most important to you, the love and peace that's there, or the "plenty" and "possessions"? What is your focus?



7. Have you ever been guilty of "mocking" the poor? Also, have you ever been guilty of being happy over someone else's' misfortunes? What does Romans 12:15 say about that? (According to Proverbs 17:5, what awaits those who do that?)
  
8. I find Proverbs 17:6 a very interesting verse. Explain it in your own words. Why are grandchildren a "crown"? Also read Psalm 128:5-6.

In the Old Testament, if you lived long enough to see your grandchildren, you were doubly blessed. It was very important to them that their family name continue, and their kids were definitely cause for joy and dignity. The phrasing in this verse paints a picture of children and grandchildren gathered around the aged parent like a crowning diadem. But not only are the aged parents proud of their kids and grandkids, the sons and daughters should be proud of their parents! To "honor" our parents is to treat them as worthy, just because they are our parents. I once read this about parents: "They do not have to earn our respect; we owe it to them. The burden is not on them but on us, according to God's Word." (Ortlund) I once read how Israel always boasted in their father Abraham (Matthew 3:9; John 8:33). Isn't that a beautiful thought? Another reminder of the closeness and bond between family members.

In those days they saw children as a mark of divine blessings and a sign of favor from the Lord. Waltke wrote, "By contrast, in the New Covenant dispensation, Jesus Christ, who had no biological children, blessed the church to reproduce spiritually, not physically (Matthew 28:18-19; Luke 24:50-51; John 20:22; 1 Corinthians 7:8-9, 25-35). Under the New Covenant, while these things are important, our blessedness does not depend on our parents and how we were brought up. Although it's something we all should be striving for in our homes, many believers come from bad homes, die young, or are unable to have children. It is not necessarily a sign of God's "discipline" or displeasure towards us. This is important to understand and remember."

9. Are you blessed with grandchildren? What are some practical ways you can influence them for Christ?

10. Read Proverbs 17:9. How is "covering over" an offense an evidence of love? Also read 19:11.

We discussed this principle when we talked about Proverbs 10:12. We know that love doesn't keep records of wrongs, doesn't delight in evil, and always protects (1 Corinthians 13:5-7). It's so important to consider the person and their feelings and reputation before we pass on something we've heard. Obviously this verse isn't talking about serious offenses that must be confronted and dealt with, or are serious enough to be taken to the church. Sometimes, a lack of love is shown if the offense isn't dealt with. This verse can also imply that love is forgiving, for forgiveness must be shown if the offense is against you or those you love.

That's it for today. May God give you the grace to "cover" transgressions and always be "ready to forgive" (Psalm 86:5). Thank God that He, because of His unfailing love, is always good, and ready to forgive us.

### Third Day

**What's your memory verse? Are you practicing it as well?**

1. Read Proverbs 17:10-16. Each of these verses refer to some form of evil or foolish action. List all the "foolish" actions that are mentioned.
  
2. How would you describe the demeanor of a bear who has her cubs taken away? (As a parent, how do you act when your kids are threatened?) Why is this "safer" than meeting a "fool in his folly"?

3. Let's look at our memory verse, 17:14. Also read 20:3. When water is released, is it controllable? How does that relate to stopping contention?

Verse 14 is such sound advice in keeping peace in our relationships, in our homes, and in the workplace. How often we allow our tempers to flare up and make things worse than they really are, causing irreparable damage. Often our pride blinds us to the truth of the situation and causes us to continue to fight to "prove our point." How blessed is the man who attempts to stop the quarrel before it starts, or to find a solution quickly to end the quarrel.

4. Are you ever guilty of allowing an argument to continue, just to prove you're right? Have you ever stirred the pot, causing things to overflow and begin to burn whoever you're quarreling with? What are some practical ways to "stop contention" before that happens? (Proverbs 14:29, 15:1,8; 19:11)

Proverbs 17:15 reminds us that God loves justice and honesty. Waltke wrote, "This Proverb corrects the popular misconception that it is better to set free ten guilty persons than to condemn one innocent person. Both are an abomination to the Lord."

5. Proverbs 17:16 tells us that a fool thinks he can "buy" wisdom, but in reality, he lacks the very thing needed to acquire it. What is it?
6. How does 17:17 describe a friend and a brother? (Some believe there is no distinction between friend and brother, while others draw various contrasts.) How does this compare to what is known as a "fair weather" friend?

7. It's easy to read a verse like this and think of friends we "wished" knew this verse, but not so easy to apply it to ourselves. What kind of friend, or brother, or sister, are you, or have you been? Are you always present, in good times and bad, especially during adversity? Do you show your friends love, even if they aren't being lovable? Look at yourself and the kind of friend you are. What changes can you make? This is the only kind of friend "worth being"!

I once heard that the best friends to have are "foul-weather friends," and I think this verse supports that! Those are the kind of friends that stand by you during difficulty and hardship. Actually, those are the only kind worth having! Maybe this verse, though, makes you say, because you don't have many good friends, or any that have been faithful to you during bad times, as well as the good. I want to encourage you with this ...you have Jesus! He is the friend that sticks closer than a brother (18:24)! He is called the "friend of sinners" (Matthew 11:19)! He also calls us friends (John 15:13-15) and brothers (Hebrews 2:11-18). He laid down His life for us (John 15:13)! He is really the only one we need. Friends can come and go in our lives, but Jesus remains. He will NEVER leave us or forsake us! I hope that makes your heart soar!

We'll be talking more about friendship in the weeks to come. Proverbs has a lot to say about what kind of friend we should be to one another.

8. If you're a parent, what are some practical ways you can teach your kids to be a Proverbs 17:17 kind of friend?

**See you tomorrow, my friends!**

#### **Fourth Day**

**Work on practicing your memory verse. It's such a good one to hide in your heart.**

1. Read Proverbs 17:17-21. In verse 17, we read that a friend should be a friend during hard times. Does that mean that we should do "anything" they ask? How does verse 18 answer that question? Does that include assuming financial responsibility for their debt?
  
2. Verse 18 shows us that wisdom is needed, even while offering love to a friend. How do we know when to offer to help and when not to? How do we learn to use good judgment?

Verses 17-20 shows us an interesting progression concerning friends and neighbors. Verse 17 shows us that friends can help us overcome strife; lack of good judgment concerning financial situations can cause strife (vs 18), and now fighting, quarreling, bad motives and perverse words all contribute to additional strife (vs. 19-20). Friends should be the peacemakers, and the fools definitely are the troublemakers! One commentator said it moves from the good (vs 17), to the stupid (vs 18), to the violent (vs 19).

In verse 19, "exalting one's gate" speaks of pride. It somehow suggests he sees himself as "higher" than his friend or neighbor. Some think the "high gate" may be a metaphor for the division he puts between himself and others. Some believe it may be a literal high door which was built by a wealthy person to show off his possessions, or may figuratively refer to the way he brags. Whatever it is, we know the verse speaks of pride, and we already read that where there is pride, a fall is coming (Proverbs 16:18)!

3. Do you like to show off your "stuff"? What's the balance between caring about what you have, and showing off what you have?
  
4. Read Proverbs 17:20-22, and 25. A fool doesn't only bring about his own ruin (vs 20), but who else does he affect? How?

The word "scoffer" refers to one who is "dull and thickheaded." In the same verse, the word fool means "one who lacks spiritual perception and sensitivity." The joy of having a son would soon turn to grief if he behaved like a fool, which has been described as ungodly, wicked, undisciplined, lazy, unproductive, unteachable, etc. Nothing can break the heart of a parent like that of a rebellious child. Verse 21 calls it "sorrow" and in verse 25, the word used for grief is even stronger. It means "sorrow, provocation, annoyance, or irritation." The word "bitterness" in verse 25 is a Hebrew word used only here but is related to both the familiar waters of Marah (Exodus 15:23), whose bitterness gave them their name, and to Naomi's adopted name, after her lot changed from sweet to bitter (Ruth 1:20). If you have a son or daughter who has brought you sadness and grief, there is always hope! Never stop praying or loving them; never give up on them. God can do miracles in their life and bring that prodigal child home once more! (Luke 15:11-32)

5. Do you have a rebellious child? How can you continue to love them without supporting their rebellion? Share some practical ideas with your group, and then spend some time praying for those kids!
  
6. Ok, now it's time to look at ourselves. What kind of child have you been, or are you? Are you bringing grief and bitterness to your parents? Have you shamed them by your behavior, decisions, or choices you've made? If you have, what can, and should, you do about it? Is it too late to do anything about it?
  
7. Let's end today by looking at verse 22. How does a "merry or cheerful" heart do good, like medicine? What does that mean? (This is the only place this word for "medicine" occurs in the Old Testament.)
  
8. How is verse 22 an example of verse 21?

9. Right now, do you have a "merry heart" or a "broken spirit"? If it's the latter, pray and ask the Lord to restore His joy in your heart and bring you peace and healing for the brokenness you feel. May His joy fill you to overflowing. Write out your prayer to the Lord below.

### Fifth Day

Write out your verse from memory.

1. Read Proverbs 17:23-28. According to 23, what's the purpose of bribes? Why are they so wrong?
2. According to verse 24, a wise man finds wisdom in obvious places. What about the fool?

It's obvious that the foolish man can't tell the difference between what's important and what's not. Proverbs continually reminds us that wisdom is the principle thing (4:7). If you don't pay attention to wisdom and live accordingly, you will be a fool forever. Lane wrote, "To us wisdom is Christ, who saves from the folly of sin and unbelief. So the believer will keep Christ in view at all times, do all things in His name (Colossians 3:17), so that in everything He might have the supremacy (Colossians 1:18)."

3. Verse 26 is the first of four Proverbs with the words "it is not good." What is not good? (Solomon refers often to injustice within the courts.)
  
4. What do the following "it is not good" verses say?
  - A. Proverbs 18:5
  - B. Proverbs 19:2
  - C. Proverbs 25:27
  
5. How do verses 27-28 go together? (They are called a "Proverb Pair.") Explain them in your own words. How do they relate to 17:9?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. How does Job concur with this, according to Job 13:5? (Remember Job's friends?)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. How hard is it for you to "hold your peace"? Why is silence often the best choice? How does that reinforce the truth of our memory verse?

Abraham Lincoln once said, "It is better to keep your mouth shut and let them think you're a fool than to open your mouth and remove all doubt." Let's end our lesson with that. May we, especially me, learn this principle and use our words sparingly, purposefully, and lovingly.

8. From this week's lesson, which verse or topic impacted you the most?