



"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 14

In my devotions this morning, I read the coolest translation of 2 Timothy 2:20-21. The New Living Translation said this: "In a wealthy home some utensils are made of gold and silver, and some are made of wood and clay. The expensive utensils are used for special occasions, and the cheap ones are for everyday use. If you keep yourself pure, you will be a special utensil for honorable use. Your life will be clean, and you will be ready for the Master to use you for every good work." What a great picture that paints for us as to how we should want to live! God saved us and called us to live a holy life (2 Timothy 1:9). I don't know about you, but I want to be the "special utensil" used for honorable use! The Book of Proverbs is all about helping us figure out how to do that. It's full of practical wisdom for us to glean from as we navigate through our daily walk with Christ. May this week's lesson challenge you, strengthen you, and encourage you in your faith!

First Day

1. Read Proverbs 18:1-24. Name some topics that are discussed. Also list some of the contrasts or comparisons.
2. Do you see any repeated words, phrases, or ideas?
3. Verses 1-9 are said to talk about a fool's nature, speech, and destiny. Read the verses and break them down into those three categories:

A. Nature

B. Speech:

C. Destiny:

4. Also, this chapter talks a lot about a person's relationships with others. Which verses reference that and what personal applications do we see?

5. How many times is the word "wise" used? "Fool"?

6. What verses talk about our tongue? (The verses may overlap on relationships, which is ok.)

7. Which is your "favorite verse" from this chapter, and why?

That's all for today. May God continue to guide you down the path of "wisdom" and may you make the choices necessary to stay on that path!

Memory Verse of the Week: "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe." Proverbs 18:10

Second Day

Work on your memory verse. What a great reminder of the strength and stability we have in our God!

1. Read Proverbs 18:1-9. Verse 1 tells us that some people isolate themselves and avoid contact with others. The wording literally means "he who separates himself." What may be some reasons for doing this? What does "seeking his own desire" indicate?

The foolish "loner" seeks his own fulfillment but also has no "sound judgment" because he has to complain and criticize what others think or say. In this way, he "rages" against wise judgment. I suppose he thinks he knows best.

2. Are you a "loner"? If so, why do you think you are? Is it insecurity or a lack of confidence, or is it that you have separated yourself from others so you don't have to hear their opinions? Think about it...
3. How does verse 2 relate to verse 1?
4. Derek Kidner said "Verse 2 warns against having a closed mind and an open mouth." What does he mean? Does he want to learn anything from anyone?
5. Sinful and foolish living have consequences. What progression do we see in verse 3?

11. It appears that verses 6-7 refer to the fool, and although still a fool, verse 8 talks about a "talebearer" or a gossip. How is a gossip even worse?

Eric Lane describes it like this: "As 17:4 points out, the listener to malicious gossip is as 'wicked' as the one who speaks it. The way rumors are received is graphically described here. They are like choice morsels, those tidbits which don't need chewing or stick in the throat but slip easily down into a man's innermost parts. We find no difficulty in concentrating on the gossip's tale, we lap it up like a cat the cream. Nor do we find it hard to remember, indeed the term 'inner rooms' has the sense of a storeroom where things are retained to be brought out later. In this way the listener to gossip assists him in carrying out his cruel schemes."

12. Do you tend to be a gossip? Or perhaps often find yourself on the receiving end? How can you avoid and stay clear of either? Why is gossip such a temptation to spread, as well as listen to?

We'll end here for today. I pray that the "tasty trifles" of gossip instantly turn sour when they enter our mouth or our ears. May we learn how to control and bridle that powerful member, the tongue!

Third Day

1. Read Proverbs 18:9-15. Any common themes?

In verse 9 we take another look at the "sluggard" or the lazy man. In this verse, the context is speaking about someone who works for someone else, because work is literally translated "commissioned." It appears that Solomon is saying that if you work inefficiently or don't do your job well, you're no better than someone who actually opposes the job.

2. How can the diligence you show as an employee be a good or bad testimony to the Lord? What kind of employee are you?
3. Notice the contrast/comparison in verses 10-11. Where do they find their strength? Where do they find their confidence?
4. Why do some people think that money and wealth can protect them or "keep them safe"? Safe from what?

The literal meaning of the word "safe" in verse 10 is "lifted high." We can be safe and lifted high above our enemy as we trust in the Lord; in His Name, in His proven character; in His attributes, and in His promises. Our only safety in this world is found in Christ! Eric Lane points out that, "A city's fortress is not where people live and work, but is there for refuge in emergencies, so that citizens can run to it and be safe."

5. Notice that although the Lord is there for us to find our safety in, we actually have to "run" to Him. How do we practically do that?
6. Where do you run when you're afraid, weak, or tired? Do you tend to run to friends, Facebook, or family, before you run to The Lord, the Mighty Fortress?
7. We've already covered Proverbs 18:12 when we discussed humility, so let's jump to verse 13. Why is it foolish to form an opinion on something before we hear the whole, or both sides, of the story? How does verse 17 tie in with verse 13? What can happen? Have you ever done this? How can you guard against doing this?

8. How can these verses cause us to misjudge others or show prejudice, like we were warned against in verse 5?

Verse 14 is an interesting one. Most commentators believe this verse gives the reader another reason not to "trust in oneself." Although having a strong determination and spirit can help bring you through an illness, there is really only one who can truly heal a broken or crushed spirit, which is God Himself. It goes back to verse 10; He is the only one who can offer us true security and safety!

9. Verse 15 reminds us of a familiar theme throughout the Proverbs; the value of gaining knowledge. What do the words "acquire" and "seek" tell us?

I know I keep quoting Eric Lane, but he has some great things to say! For instance, from verse 15, he reminds us of these three things:

- A. Cultivate a discerning heart by appreciating the value of knowledge.
- B. Approach it with earnestness, seek it out, don't wait for it to come to you.
- C. Give it rapt attention - the heart will not acquire it unless the ears listen to it with concentration in order to understand and retain it.

10. From this section, which specific verse or thought ministered to your heart?

That's all for today my friends! May you be diligent in the lifelong pursuit of wisdom and knowledge. Are you watching "daily at the gates?"

Fourth Day

Are you working on your verse?

1. Read Proverbs 18:16-18. These verses seem to be discussing legal matters and how to handle them. Explain them in your own words.

Scholars are unsure of what "gifts" are talked about in verse 16. No one seem to know exactly whether or not these are bribes or "courtesy" gifts to persuade influential men to hear their cases. It seems to me that it would fall under the "intent" of the giver.

2. We discussed verse 17 yesterday and how it related to verse 13. We know the principle is true when hearing cases in court. How does this apply as a parent as well? When your children argue, are you prone to listen to the one who first "tattles," or do you listen to both sides before you weigh the matter?

3. Casting lots was an acceptable way in Israel to settle disputes and decide specific matters. (We have discussed using the Urim and Thummim in 16:33.) Obviously we don't make decisions that way today. As believers under the New Covenant, how do we settle our disputes? Where do we go to find our answers?

Verses 17-18 warns us to be cautious in how we settle disputes, which leads us right up to how we handle conflict in personal relationships with family and friends.

4. Verse 19 tells us that an offended brother is harder to win than a city. Why is that? And how do contentions become like "bars of a castle"?

5. Are there any "offended brothers" in your life that you need to try to make it right with? The "bars of a castle" are hard to remove, but not impossible! Will you pray and ask the Holy Spirit to give you wisdom on how to seek reconciliation?

6. In Proverbs 18:20-21, Solomon uses "farming or gardening" terminology. How can a person's words be beneficial and satisfying to himself?

7. How well a farmer takes care of his crops determines the quality of his harvest. Often, his life and the life of his family depend on it. When good fruit is produced, he is full, fat, and happy! We are called to use the same level of care in choosing the words we speak. Why is that so important, according to verse 21?

8. Verse 21 refers to those who are talkative. They "love it" and will "eat the fruit" or reap the consequences of it if they aren't careful. Are you talkative? Do you find yourself "eating your words" at times because you easily cross the line? What consequences have you had to suffer because of it?

"Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never harm me." True? **ABSOLUTELY NOT!** Words have a lot more power than sticks and stones, to which, I'm sure, we can all testify. Raymond Ortlund wrote, "Our words matter—in conversations and email and texts and blogs and phone calls and all the rest. Much of the strife in our families and offices and dorms and churches and nations is because of foolish words. But we often underestimate the importance of our

words. Adultery, for example, is perceived in most Bible-believing churches as a serious sin. And it is. But I have never seen adultery send a whole church into meltdown. Gossip, by contrast, is often perceived as a little sin. But it destroys churches. There are about 90 Proverbs counseling us about how to speak. In fact, Proverbs has more to say about our words than anything else it addresses in our lives - more than money, sex, or family. The tongue can kill—literally. I heard about a woman in Los Angeles who took her own life. All she wrote in her suicide note was this: 'They said.' In his suicide note, Vince Foster of the Clinton White House wrote of Washington, 'Here ruining people is considered a sport.'"

9. Are you using your words in conversation, emails, blogs, etc. to create trust, form relationships, and build community? How can you be more intentional about this?

10. Time doesn't always heal wounds, and ignoring injuries doesn't usually make them go away. How can we use words to bring healing and restoration?

See you tomorrow! I pray that each of us will be more sensitive to what comes out of our mouth. And remember, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." (Matthew 12:34)

Fifth Day

Write out your verse from memory.

1. Read Proverbs 18:22-24. Why do you think Solomon suddenly jumps into a "wife" verse in the middle of his Proverbs concerning words?

2. Is marriage being "sanctioned" in verse 22?

3. Solomon talks about relationships with others, and jumps to the most intimate of all -- marriage. We've see through our study that not ALL women make good wives, though. What do you think makes a "good wife"?

4. If you're a wife, would you be considered a "good thing" by your husband? Can you ask him his thoughts on that? Does he think he's found favor with God?

It's neat to think that if a man finds a wife, he obtains favor from the Lord. It's interesting that the same phrasing is found in Proverbs 8:35, except talking about wisdom, "For whoever finds me (wisdom) finds life, and obtains favor from the Lord." Aitken wrote, "As if to say that finding a good wife is on par with finding wisdom."

5. If you're a wife, are there any changes that you can make in the following areas:
 - A. Communication:

 - B. Respect:

 - C. Priorities:

 - D. Honoring:

6. Read Proverbs 18:23. Why do you think the rich often treat the poor with contempt?

7. I once read, "Poverty produces a humility that makes one willing to beg favors, whereas prosperity tends to breed an insensitivity which reveals itself in rudeness." Read Matthew 5:3 and Mark 10:24. What does Christ have to say on this?

8. How do you treat the poor? Do you speak to them harshly or roughly? Do you look down on them or treat them as if they are "less" than you, or deserve to be where they are because of bad choices? Search your heart on this one.

Proverbs 18:24 is a great one to end with, although the first line is a bit difficult to translate. Upon first reading, it looks like it simply means that if you want to have friends, you better be friendly yourself. Sounds good to me. Most scholars believe it is difficult to decipher the Hebrew phrase, "must himself be friendly." Some versions connect the word with a root meaning "destroy" or "ruin" and read it, "A man of many companions may come to ruin." Or, "Some companions are good only for idle talk." Either way, it appears to be saying that superficial friends can't be counted on and should be avoided, but the true friend sticks or "cleaves" to us through thick and thin." A Greek scientist raised in Germany commented about American friendships. He called them "friendship inflation" because we have a habit of making lots of friends quickly and then dropping them lightly. How sad is that?!

9. It's the second part of the verse that I love. Yes, we need to be a good and loyal friend, but who do we always have with us, who never leaves us or forsakes us?? That's our biggest "Reason to Rejoice!"