



## "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 16

Welcome to our adventure through Proverbs 20! Although our chapter deals with some topics we've previously discussed, we also have some new ones to look at. While reading through some of my commentaries on chapter 20, I was amazed at how different the titles were that were given to this chapter. One called it, "Things to Avoid and Things to Seek." Another titled it, "Firm Hands and Fair Scales" and yet another, "Discipline of Children and Honesty in Business." I found some thoughts written by David Hubbard very interesting. He wrote, "Stability in the community was a basic concern of Israel's teachers. Without it, life would return to chaos, villages would become jungles, and the covenant neighbor love would be shredded into tiny pieces. How children are raised and how business is transacted are two key factors in the solidarity or fragmentation of a community. The sages who taught the Proverbs urged parents to use firm hands and merchants to use fair scales. The welfare of the community and the good pleasure of God were on the line." Again, how we raise our kids and the honesty with which we handle our business is of deep concern to God. Make sure you pray before you begin, asking the Holy Spirit to not only open your eyes to the truth of His Word, but for the wisdom to know how to apply it to your own life.

#### First Day

1. Read Proverbs 20:1-30 and answer the following questions:

A. What are some topics that have been previously addressed?

B. What are some "new" topics? (or relatively new)

C. Do you see any repeated words or phrases? How many "buts" are there?

D. How many verses refer to how you conduct your business?

E. Are there any verses that are puzzling to you?

F. What verse specifically spoke to your heart today?

Hopefully you got a good overview of this chapter. I pray that the Holy Spirit is challenging you, encouraging you, and convicting you, all at the same time!

**Memory Verse of the Week:** "The spirit of a man is the lamp of the Lord, searching all the inner depths of his heart." Proverbs 20:27

### Second Day

**Study your memory verse. Let Him search your heart today!**

1. Read Proverbs 20:1-8. What warning do you find in verse 1?

Wine comes from the word "Yayin" and the word for "strong or intoxicating drink" is "Sekar." The strong drink is usually seen as beer, and other drinks made from barley, date, or pomegranates. In our text, wine and beer are personified as people of bad character, and Solomon strongly warns against being deceived by it. It was forbidden for priests (Lev. 10:9), and the Nazarites (Numbers 6:1-3) as well as others (Isaiah 5:11). Other Proverbs state that wine leads to poverty (21:17;

23:21); it produces sorrow, strife, needless wounds, gossip, and red eyes (23:29-30). It is a deceiver and harms those who drink it (23:31-32), and can be addictive (23:35). Proverbs 23:20-21, 29-35, and 31:4-5 also condemn drunkenness. Verse 1 reminds us that wine and beer can make one foolish and aggressive.

2. How can being drunk lead someone astray? How can it harm family and community? How can it pervert justice and disturb the peace?

All throughout Scripture, drunkenness is treated as sin. John Phillips wrote, "The first recorded drunkard in Scripture was Noah (Genesis 9:20-27). Reading on we learn that Lot was forever disgraced while he was drunk (Genesis 19:30-36). Nabal added drunkenness to his other unlovely traits (1 Samuel 25:36). Attempting to cover his own guilt, David added to it by trying to get Uriah drunk (2 Samuel 11:13). Today eleven million Americans are hooked on alcohol and seventy-six million have alcoholics in their families. Studies show that 10-15% of all Americans over 60 are alcoholics. What incredible folly it is to take that first drink." (These are very old stats; the numbers are much higher now.) Lane wrote, "Liquor promises happiness, an escape from misery or dull routine into realms of bliss. But it leads to worse hell than the one you tried to escape."

F.S. Fitzsimmonds wrote, "This Proverb concentrates on the negative side of wine and beer. On the other hand, in 3:10 and 9:5-6, wine and beer function as symbols of prosperity and the good life. On the one hand, wine and beer are prohibited for those situations demanding sharp discretion (Lev. 10:9; Isaiah 5:11-12, 22) and for the Nazarite who is separated to God from earthly joys (Numbers 6:3). It is also a symbol of self-indulgence (Isaiah 28:1-5; Amos 6:6). On the other hand, beer and wine are the token of God's blessings (Genesis 27:28; Exodus 29:40; Deut. 14:26). Jotham praises it as the elixir of gods and people (Judges 9:13). These two aspects of wine, its use and its abuse, its benefits and its curse, its acceptance in God's sight and its abhorrence, are interwoven into the fabric of the Old Testament so that it may gladden the heart of man (Psalm 104:15) or cause his mind to err (28:7), it can be associated with merriment (Ecc. 10:19) or with anger (Isaiah 5:11), it can be used to

uncover the shame of Noah (Genesis 9:21) or in the hands of Melchizedek to honor Abraham (Genesis 14:18). The Proverb protects itself from contradicting this favorable side of wine and beer by restricting it to the inebriated."

This section is hard for me to write because I have strong opinions on drinking for pleasure, as well as the sin of drunkenness. According to one official statement, brewers spend over twenty million a year to market their products on college campuses to encourage drinking, yet the drinking "contributes to poor grades, excessive vandalism, many injuries, and not so frequently, death." (Edward W. Desmond) Just in the year 2010, 10,136 people were killed because of a drunk driver. In many of our families, there's been both sexual and physical abuse due to drinking. For many of us, there is no "good" that comes from drinking, but I also know, this isn't everyone's story. This section will certainly cause a lot of discussion, I'm sure. But one thing that is not disputable ... drunkenness is a sin.

3. According to Ephesians 5:18, what should we be "filled" or controlled with?
4. Let's jump back to Proverbs 20:2. Why can it be dangerous to make a king angry? How does this apply to our lives today? How does verse 8 relate?
5. What does Proverbs 20:3 say about fighting? I once read, "Society grants honor to the one who is able to pacify a situation by not participating in strife." What are your thoughts on this verse? Are the wise more concerned with bringing peace or being right?

Verse 5 tells us that a wise person can learn to "get people talking". In other words, they know how to "dig deep" and draw someone's inner feelings to the surface and help examine them. This takes time, being willing to listen, humility, and discernment.

6. Do you know how to draw people out and allow them to talk about their feelings? Do you care enough about people to spend the time and energy to "draw them out"? How is this different than "being nosy"?

7. In verses 6-7, Solomon talks about the faithful, or dependable man. But he also talks about a man who boasts about himself, or "talks about his own goodness." Can you think of any examples in Scripture of a man or woman who was guilty of this?
  
8. Verse 7 teaches us that the faithful man is also consistent. What's his reward, according to this verse?
  
9. Do you resemble this man? Are you faithful or do you boast about yourself? Are you consistent in your walk, providing your children a good example to follow? Think about it ...

That's it for today. Lots of good stuff, right? Looking forward to hearing all the Spirit has to say to us tomorrow! See you then, friends!

### Third Day

**Work on your memory verse.**

1. Read Proverbs 20:9-17. According to verse 9, can anyone claim to be innocent of sin? Why do you think Solomon decided to write that statement right then?
  
2. What light do the following verses shed on this truth?
  - A. Romans 3:9-12
  - B. Romans 3:23
  - C. Ecclesiastes 7:20
  - D. Jeremiah 17:9

3. Read Proverbs 20:10, 14, 17, and 23. The Lord takes a keen interest in how business is run. What is Solomon saying? Why is honesty so important?

These verses use strong language when describing how God feels about dishonesty. Full blown lying, subtle "half-truths," cheating, misleading ... all are "not good." They are horrible acts because they prove the true intent and motive of the heart. God expects our character and integrity to be seen in every area of our life, all the time. If we are shrewd, try to "take" people, and are dishonest bargain hunters, there is a problem.

4. Reflect on how you do business, how you hunt for bargains, and how you handle the people you deal with. Ask the Lord to show you if any of these verses apply to you.
5. Read Proverbs 20:11-12. As we've seen, what a person "says" doesn't always reflect his true motives and character. How do these verses reinforce that?

Having a "good" or pure heart is reflected in a person's behavior, demonstrated by good actions. So, like verse 12 says, we must listen to what people are saying with our ears, and observe their actions with our eyes.

6. Is your life characterized by good works, as outlined in James 2:14-26? Why is "faith without works" dead?

7. How can laziness lead to poverty, as in Proverbs 20:13?

8. Why is speaking with knowledge more valuable than jewels? (20:15)

Verse 16 warns us again about putting up surety for someone else. At that time, a debtor's outer garment could be taken and used as collateral to guarantee that the debtor would pay. This Proverb is thought to be "rhetorical sarcasm" rather than a command. It seems, rather, to remind us of the foolishness of risking one's life for an unknown stranger by becoming their surety, or guarantee.

Verse 18 reminds us again of the wisdom in seeking counsel and advise from others, especially during war. And verse 19 reminds us once more of the importance of being careful what you share with people, as well as who you talk to. Proverbs hits us between the eyes over and over again about the use of our words.

9. If you curse your mom and dad, what can happen, according to verse 20? How is this the reverse of the first commandment with promise, Deuteronomy 5:16?

10. In what way today can we be guilty of "cursing our parents"?

11. God also seems to take a keen interest in how we honor our parents. Why do you think this is so important to God?

That's it for today. I think we all should call our parents, don't you? ☺

### Fourth Day

**Work on your memory verse.**

1. Read Proverbs 20:21-25. An early inheritance may come from dishonesty, or perhaps could have been requested early. Who did that in Luke 15:11-20, and what was the result?
  
2. We're going to spend a little time on verse 22. How does Romans 12:17-19, Hebrews 10:30, and Deuteronomy 32:35 relate to this verse?
  
3. Why is it so much better to leave vengeance to God rather than to take matters into our own hands?
  
4. According to verse 22, what should we do instead? Why is this so hard? How do we "practically" do that?

I read this somewhere, but sadly, I can't remember where! But it was good. It described "vengeance" like this: "Its motivation is selfish, its execution is usually extreme, it usually results in accelerating conflict, and it's God's business, not ours. It's important to remember that only God can judge accurately the damage done, and only He can distribute the blame fairly! He alone has the power and perspective to do it right!

5. Are you struggling with the idea of revenge because of something that was done to you? Can you decide today to hold on to His promise that He WILL take care of things?
  
6. Why do you think we, as humans, seem to struggle with the idea of taking revenge so often? Why do we always seem to "hope" they "get what they deserve"?
  
7. We are responsible for the choices we make on a daily basis, as well as the direction and action we take, yet it's God who ultimately determines the realization of that goal. How does Proverbs 20:24 support this?
  
8. According to verse 25, why is it dangerous to make promises without thinking them through? Why is making promises or vows to God about things you really can't control not too smart? Waltke wrote, "Rash religious excitement that leads to hasty vows is no substitute for a solid character that thinks soberly with well-balanced judgment." What would be a present day example of this? What does Luke 14:25-33 say about this topic?

In the Old Testament, you could voluntarily dedicate things to the Lord as a show of gratitude and thankfulness. Solomon was warning that in their excitement and zeal, they needed to consider whether or not they could really go through with it. Even though the vow was voluntary, you couldn't take it back; it was not retractable. By doing that, you would fall into a snare, or a trap. We would do well today to consider the implications and count the cost of something before committing to it.

We're going to end here for today. May you strive to be a person that uses sound, wise judgment in all you do!

### Fifth Day

**Write out your verse from memory.**

1. Read Proverbs 20:26-30. According to verse 26, a king's job was to separate the wicked from the righteous and see to it that the wicked were punished. In verse 27, what contrast do we find to that thought?
  
2. What do these verses say about this?
  - A. 1 Chronicles 28:9
  - B. 1 Corinthians 2:10
  - C. Jeremiah 17:10
  - D. Hebrews 4:12
  - E. Psalm 119:105
  
3. Like a lamp lights up the darkness, God lights up the secret parts of our hearts. Have you allowed God to search the inner depths of your heart? Do you give Him free reign to look everywhere?

4. According to verse 28, what character traits are required for an effective ruler?
5. Kind of a random question, but if you are in any type of leadership, do these traits describe you?
6. Verse 29 shows us how "mutual dependence of generations" should look. Compare the young men with the old.
7. How can the younger men encourage the older men, and visa versa? How can they both help each other grow in their faith? What are the benefits of having mentors?
8. Obviously this is true for women as well. Read Titus 2:1-8. What are some ways that older women can mentor younger ladies?
9. Why, do you think, there are so few men and women in the body of Christ that are willing to take the time to mentor those who are younger? Are you?
10. If younger ladies don't want to spend time with older women, what are they missing?

Proverbs 20:29 tells us that young men's chief glory is their strength, and they should be dedicating that strength to the Lord for His service and glory. The older men's "splendor" is their gray head, meaning that they have experience and wisdom that they should be passing on. What a great team, strength and wisdom!

11. Read Proverbs 20:30. What are the benefits of affliction? How can it change one's character and help him mature?

12. How does verse 30 relate to verse 29? Does it, in your opinion?

Chapter 20 sure was full of great maxims, or sayings. It was a good review of some old topics, with some new ones thrown in as well!

13. What topics specifically spoke to your heart this week from our chapter? Why?

I chose 22 for the verse that really spoke to me. I understand that we need to leave "vengeance" with the Lord, but I really liked the second part of the verse, "Wait on the Lord and He will save you." What a great reminder that we don't have to try to make sure anyone "pays" for it, or that they will get away with what they've done. We can leave it in the Lord's hands; wait on Him is what we're called to do. What a blessing to not have to carry the burden of retribution - it belongs to Him!

**See you next week!**

