



"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 17

This week we'll be taking a look at chapter 21 through chapter 22:16, ending our second section of Proverbs. The next section, 22:17-24:34, consists of "words of the wise" and are specific to various situations. Chapters 25-29 were assembled by the scribes of King Hezekiah, and chapters 30 and 31 record the words of Agur and Lemuel. There are some really great, thought provoking verses in our lesson this week. Make sure you pray before you begin, inviting the Holy Spirit to be your teacher and to open your eyes to His truth! His Word is powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword! (Hebrews 4:12). May He give us the ability to see, the knowledge to understand, and the wisdom to apply!

First Day

1. Read Proverbs 21:1-31. Name some repeated topics. Do you see any new ones?
2. Of the 31 verses, only 6 mention God by name. What are they, and what do they say about Him?
3. How many times is the word "wicked" used? List the verses and what insight they give.

4. There are two "better than" verses in Proverbs 21. What are they?
5. How many verses refer to the poor? What do they say?
6. Which verses specifically talk about being a wife?
7. Did you see my favorite word, "diligent"? Which verse?
8. Which verses specifically speak to your heart from this chapter? How?

We'll end here for today. Hopefully you got a good "aerial" view of the chapter! May the Lord speak directly into your heart as you meditate on His Word.

Memory Verse of the Week: "By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches and honor and life." Proverbs 22:4

Second Day

Work on your memory verse.

1. Read Proverbs 1:1-4. What does verse 1 teach us about God's sovereignty?

Phillips wrote, "The picture evoked by this Proverb is that of an eastern farmer who directs the water in his irrigation channels simply by moving his foot to dam the flow here or release the flow there. It is that simple to make the water run whithersoever he wishes. It is also that simple for God to overrule in human affairs. He makes the very wrath of man to praise Him (Psalm 76:10)."

2. How does verse 1 encourage you, challenge you, or confuse you?

We know the heart of a king or a ruler is in God's hands (Also see Ecclesiastes 9:1). In 20:24, we read that so are his decisions and steps. We don't need to fear what man can do to us, what laws are made, or what will happen to us if "so and so" wins an election. God is sovereign, or in control, of all of it. Not that we shouldn't vote, work on campaigns, or do our best to make our country a better place to live, but ultimately, God is in control. I pray that the truth of that brings you comfort.

3. According to verse 2, it's not only kings that God is sovereign over. Is God deceived by ANY man? (Also read Proverbs 24:12.)

4. What does the phrase "weighs the heart" mean?

5. God is sovereign over human wisdom as well. What does verse 30 tell us about that?

6. According to verse 31, what else is God sovereign over?

The horse was the most powerful weapon in the ancient days at the time Solomon was writing. Verse 31 reminds us that God is sovereign over armies and over battles. These verses all remind us that it's God who really holds all power! John Phillips wrote, "He alone truly understands the issues, perceives the whole situation, and determines what to do."

7. How can knowing that God is sovereign over **EVERYTHING** help you gain perspective in a situation you might be facing?

8. Does knowing He's sovereign remove personal responsibility? I've heard it called "active dependence." What does that mean?

9. Let's get personal, shall we? Is there a situation or trial weighing heavy on your heart? Have you forgotten that He is sovereign? Why does remembering that encourage you today and bring you hope? (Or does it?)

10. Write a prayer to the Lord, asking God to help you refocus or gain new perspective on a situation. Don't worry, no one will read it!

Third Day

Work on your memory verse. Would your life be described as one of "humility"?

1. Read Proverbs 21:1-4. What really counts, according to verse 3? What is acceptable to God? (What does he add in verse 15?)
2. What is NOT, according to verse 4?
3. There's a great example of the principle found in 1 Samuel 15:1-24. Read the story and briefly summarize it, focusing on the principle of Proverbs 21:3. (Also read Proverbs 21:27.)

God has always preferred man's obedience over his sacrifice when his heart isn't right. In Israel, although they were under the "sacrificial system," their "sacrifice" was no substitute for living righteously. "The Lord detested the hypocrisy in a wicked person who brought an animal sacrifice to Him." (Zuck) The Lord still detests hypocrisy, and always will.

4. What's a practical example of the phrase, "Obedience is better than sacrifice"?
5. Ask the Lord to show you any areas of hypocrisy in your own heart and life. Are you "pretending" to be spiritual in some area, while being disobedient in another?
6. Read Proverbs 21:5-8. Choose one of the verses and explain Solomon's point.

7. Read Proverbs 21:9 and 19. What point is Solomon so "colorfully" trying to make? (Why does he use a corner of a housetop and the wilderness to make his point?)

8. If you're a wife, do you tend to make your home a pleasant or unpleasant place to be? Would it be more pleasant for your hubby to dwell in the wilderness? Any changes to be made in this area?

9. Let's jump to verse 13. Also read Proverbs 22:9. These verses are extremely challenging to me. What's he saying? (Read Matthew 7:2; 18:30-34) So, you know I'm going to ask. How do you respond to the "poor"? Do you shut your ears and ignore their cries, or do you have bountiful eyes? Are you stingy or generous? Is this verse only speaking about giving financially? How else can you "hear their cry"?

10. Read Proverbs 21:15-16. How will the wicked be punished?

11. According to verses 17 and 20, is Solomon saying that we should never experience pleasure in our life? What's he saying? Read 1 Timothy 6:9-10 and 17-19 for help.

How extravagantly do you live? Solomon is advising prudence in the matter of our money. A fool can squander his money very quickly if he lives a life of luxury,

without any regard for the future. If you spend it all, you may never replace it, becoming poor and desolate. In ancient Israel, acquiring food and supplies was hard work, so the wise man would be a good steward and not spend it all at once! These words are still relevant today. Lane wrote, "For us, this is a timely warning against consumerism, the spirit of our age, which we Christians are in danger of sharing." I pray we take these very important words to heart.

That's it for today. I pray that we listen to the cries of the poor, learn to be a more "pleasant" wife, and not love our riches more than God Himself!

Fourth Day

Are you memorizing your verse? What are "true" riches?

1. Read Proverbs 21:21-31. Solomon previously discussed the importance of being prudent with financial matters, and now he talks about being prudent in the matter of one's morals. What great rewards does the pursuit of righteousness bring? How does verse 21 compare with our memory verse, 22:4?

2. Wisdom gives "strength and stability." How does verse 22 show us this?

Eric Lane wrote, "There is a deeper meaning here than simply military strategy. What is destroyed here is the stronghold in which they trust, so that he is saying wisdom is more powerful than self-confidence, because its first principle is trust in the Almighty God (Psalm 18:29)."

3. What are you trusting in? Is there a "stronghold" that needs to come down in your life? What do you tend to depend on, rather than the Lord?

4. In verse 23, Solomon moves to the importance of prudence in the matter of one's mouth. How is this verse similar to 13:3? How can guarding your mouth "keep you from trouble"? What kind of trouble? Have you been in trouble lately?

In verse 24, "scoffer" is translated "mocker." Mocking shows that the person thinks they are "better" or "superior" to the one he is mocking. This is rightly called "arrogant pride."

5. Are you guilty of "mocking" or making fun of others? Check your heart on this one. What does God think about this? Is, or can, mocking be the same as sarcasm?

In verses 25-26, Solomon again compares the lazy person with the diligent. Verse 28 reminds us about the importance of being an honest witness, and verse 29 speaks against arrogance and hypocrisy. The phrase, "hardens his face" means he "puts up a bold front." He pretends to be something he's not by lying and deceitfulness. The upright, on the other hand "establishes his way" or "gives thought to his ways." He takes the time to make sure he's doing right, and weighs the consequences of his decisions.

6. Which man (or woman) are you? Do you "put up a front" before people, or do you give thought to your ways? Are you careful when you make decisions?
7. We looked at verses 30-31 earlier, but I love them both, so let's read them again! Why is God's wisdom so much better than ours? Do human wisdom and human effort have limitations?
8. Let's jump right into Proverbs 22. Read verses 1-5. A "good name" means "an honorable reputation." Why is this more valuable than riches? How does our reputation reflect the reputation of Christ?

9. What is Solomon reminding them of in verse 2?

It appears that the "thorns and snares" (vs 5) on the path of the wicked are put there by God to keep them from going down the wrong path. The wicked just keep right on going, but the wise watches for the thorns and avoids the paths, staying as far away from them as he can.

10. What path are you heading down? Are you walking carefully, avoiding the thorns and snares along the way? When you see trouble, do you do an "about-face" and go the other way, or do you think you're "strong" enough to get through it on your own? How can "self-confidence" be one of the snares

See you tomorrow, my friends. Stay on the right path ... watch out for those pinecones! ☺ (That's an "obstacle" if you didn't read my devotion!)

Fifth Day

Write out your verse from memory.

1. Let's wrap up this week by reading Proverbs 22:6. (Also read Ephesians 6:4.)

This verse is too important to run through quickly, so I wanted to take some time with it. Eric Lane points out that the child NEEDS to be trained for the three following reasons: For the need of the child himself, for the community, and for the church.

A. Why does the child *himself* "need" training?

B. Why does the *community* need the child to be trained?

C. Why does the *church* need the child to be trained?

This is the most well-known verse in Proverbs on "training" your children. The other verses on child-rearing all refer to discipline. The word "train" means "to dedicate." I'm going to quote from the Bible Knowledge Commentary because they explain it so well. "This word is used of dedicating a house (Deut. 20:5), the temple (1 Kings 8:63; 2 Chronicles 7:5), and an image (Daniel 3:2). The noun speaks of a dedication of an altar (Numbers 7:10; 2 Chronicles 7:9), and of the walls of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 12:27). Only in Proverbs 22:6 is the verb translated 'train.' The word seems to include the idea of setting aside, narrowing, or hedging in. The word is sometimes used in the sense of 'start.' Child-training involves 'narrowing' a child's conduct away from evil and toward godliness and starting him in the right direction. It can mean 'dedicate the child to God' or 'prepare the child for his future responsibilities' or 'exercise or train him for adulthood.'"

"In the way he should go' is literally 'upon the mouth of his way' meaning 'according to' or 'in accord with.' Does it mean on the way he ought to go either vocationally or morally? Or does it mean, as others have suggested, according to the demands of his personality, conduct, or stage in life? Since 'way' in Proverbs does not mean personality or stage in life, it is preferable to say that 'way' means 'proper' way, the path of wise, godly living, which is emphasized frequently in Proverbs; basically the way of wisdom. It is from this proper behavior pattern or godly lifestyle that he will not turn when he is old, that is, when he is grown."

**I also read that "training" involves three ideas:
Dedication, Instruction, and Motivation.**

Dedication: The parent must realize that children belong to God and are given to the parents only to be good stewards over. They must raise them "according" to His ways, not their own ways, nor the world's. They are God's kids; therefore, to be raised in His ways.

Instruction: Parents are told to instruct or teach their children to learn everything essential in pleasing God.

Motivation: Parents are to create a taste or desire within the child so that he is internally motivated to do what God wants him to do.

2. How do we literally and practically "train" up a child to follow the path of the wise? What is our desired outcome?

3. How do we train a child to "love God"? What are some important principles?

4. When I think of the word "train" I always think of "exercise" or preparing for some sort of race or event. Are there any similarities to training for sports and training a child to follow the Lord?

5. We are all in different seasons of our lives regarding the training of our kids, if we have children. Take a few minutes and evaluate your "training" approach at this present time. Are you consistent? Diligent? Intentional? Have you made a plan, according to the Word of God, on how you are going to raise them? Have you sought God's counsel and heart on the training of His kids and the best way to steer them toward the right path? Any changes that need to be made?

6. If we train them correctly, what is our hope, according to verse 6?
7. Do you have children that have chosen to follow the wrong path? What can you, or should you, be doing?

I want to remind us of an important truth by quoting the same commentary. Zuck wrote, "Some parents, however, have sought to follow this directive but without this result. Their children have strayed from the godly training the parents gave them. This illustrates the nature of a 'proverb.' A proverb is a literary device whereby a general truth is brought to bear on a specific situation. Many of the Proverbs are not absolute guarantees for they express truths that are necessarily conditioned by prevailing circumstances. For example, verses 3-4, 9, 11, 16, 29 do not express promises that are always binding. Though the Proverbs are generally and usually true, occasional exceptions may be noted. This may be because of the self-will or deliberate disobedience of an individual who chooses to go his own way -- the way of folly instead of the way of wisdom. For that he is held responsible. It is generally true, however, that most children who are brought up in Christian homes, under the influence of Godly parents who teach and live God's standards, follow that training."

8. Many parents err in that they put most of their training efforts in other areas of the child's life, rather than in their spiritual training. Why do you think that is? Why is it so easy to do without even realizing it?

Our job as parents is to raise responsible adults who love God deeply and desire to serve Him wholeheartedly. Is that the goal you're pursuing in your child-training? I pray so! See you next week!

