



"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 18

We only got through part of chapter 22 in last week's lesson, so today we'll pick it up in verse 7. Last week we had the opportunity to talk about God's sovereignty in every area of our lives. It's so great to be reminded that He is not only sovereign over you and I, the "common" people, but He reigns and rules over the highest authorities as well. That brings me such comfort and allows my sometimes "agitated" heart find peace. Always remember ... nothing is outside of God's control.

First Day

1. Read Proverbs 22:7-16. Choose one verse and summarize it in your own words.
2. According to verse 7, how can someone who is borrowing money become like a "slave" to the lender?
3. If someone continually sins, what will follow them, according to verse 8?

Verse 10 tells us that if we remove the "scoffer" or the troublemaker, trouble leaves as well. Makes sense, right? That thought leads right into verse 11, because rather than be around a scoffer, a king would naturally enjoy being around those who are gracious instead of those who are contentious. I think that applies to everyone, though, not only a king. Wouldn't you rather be around someone with a pure heart?

4. Some say that verse 12 is a good summary of the purpose of Proverbs. Would you agree with that? What's the purpose?

5. Solomon turns the topic back to the lazy man in verse 13. What extreme excuse does he give to avoid going to work?

6. Explain verse 15. How does correction remove foolishness from a child? How is discipline a cure for folly? Also read Proverbs 23:13-14.

7. What happens when discipline is continually withheld from a child, or when bad behavior isn't addressed? How can discipline "save his soul from hell"?

Let's face it, our hearts are just plain wicked. We're born that way. David Hubbard wrote, "We are born not knowing how to make sound choices. Our instincts run toward self-centeredness not toward cooperation with others. Our bent is to assert our own rights whatever that assertiveness may do to those around us. Such selfishness is branded "foolishness." It is not the stuff of which strong families and close communities are built. Yet it is so integral to human life that it is described as "bound up in the heart" as tightly as Rahab's scarlet cord was tied to her window in Jericho (Joshua 2:19-21). Strong leverage like the 'rod of correction' is needed to pry it loose, toss 'it far from' the child and give 'the heart' room to wrap itself in wisdom. The discipline that inflicts sufficient pain to discourage bad behavior and encourage good is needed. Discipline is the cure for folly. Without it, the cords that bind foolishness to our hearts become tougher as the years go by." We learned back in Proverbs 13:24 that discipline must be

administered promptly, before the bad behavior is forgotten. If it's delayed, children forget why they are even being punished, the feelings are intensified, and the opportunity for teaching is less available. Bad behavior can't be neglected or ignored. The fruit of the discipline will be seen by all (Proverbs 20:11), and with it will come respect and hopefully a good reputation (Proverbs 20:29). The "rod" is to be understood literally, but also includes other forms of discipline, as in verbal correction.

8. What particular sins are children most prone to, do you think? How do you make sure the "crime equals the punishment"?

A parent has such a major role in shaping their children's lives. Last week we discussed Proverbs 22:6 which tells us to "train" up our children in the way they should go. Obviously, discipline plays an important role in that training. We need to remember what our first and foremost goal as a parent should be:

- A. That our children would know and hear God's voice and learn to discern it from all others.
- B. That our children would desire to obey Him when they hear His voice.
- C. That our children would obey Him, not in their own power, but in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Discipline is more than "sin management." Discipline aims at the heart of the child, and right behavior is a by-product of that. "Spiritual parenting" is learning to cultivate environments for our children's faith to grow and to blossom. God has blessed us with this role, and we need to take it seriously. Michelle Anthony wrote, "Our goal as parents should be to endeavor to pass down our faith to the next generation in such a way that they will be able to pass down their faith to the following generation in our absence. Someday we won't be here, and all that will remain is that which is eternal -- those things that we have successfully transferred to our children, and our children's children, so that faith will endure to all generations."

We'll end here for today. Whether or not you have kids, I pray that you grasp the importance of discipline in a child's life, as well as in that of your own. Our own foolishness is bound up in our hearts as well, and must be driven far from us!

Memory Verse of the Week: "Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise, and apply your heart to my knowledge." Proverbs 22:17

Second Day

Work on your memory verse.

Today we'll begin looking at our next section of Proverbs, 22:17-24:34. The style change is very noticeable, and the main point of this section is the constant appeal to apply the instruction they are receiving. Proverbs 22:17 and 24:23 tells us these sayings are the "words of the wise." Most believe, however, that Solomon was the one who collected and edited the Proverbs that weren't his own. Solomon's own words pick up again in chapter 25.

The key phrase in this section is "apply thine heart." The earlier lessons were mainly statements of truth describing godly and ungodly living. They were the observations and reflections of Solomon. Beginning in verse 17, the emphasis is on application, or as Jensen put it, "determining in the heart to walk righteously, in line with the Proverbs already given." It's also interesting to notice that the phrase "My Son" that appeared so often in 10:1-22:16, is nowhere to be found. The words now return to the personal father/son conversation style and give exhortation and commands warmly. Jensen wrote, "Someone has aptly said that at 22:17, the reader feels a hand on his shoulder again."

1. Read Proverbs 22:17-21. What do the "wise men" say as a way of introduction? How would you summarize this section? Can you tell a difference in literary styles?

2. What different things are said about the instruction of Proverbs?

3. The reasons for the exhortations are found in verses 18-19. What are they?

The writers now give us some interesting sayings, as well as first, some things to avoid (22:22-23:11), and then, some things to embrace (23:12-25). Notice that many of the commands are followed by reasons for obeying the command.

4. Read the first saying in verses 22-23. What warning does he give? How does God feel, according to this verse, about the poor?
5. According to verses 24-25, why should you **not** be a friend of an angry man? What does that mean? Where do we draw the "friendship" line?

The author gives us another warning about the risks of putting up security for debts. Shaking hands means to "confirm an agreement," and if a debtor fails to pay, the creditor will first hound the debtor, and then he'll come after the cosigner. If he can't pay, they may take his furniture as payment. Moral of the story: Don't be foolish and get caught up in the middle of other people's financial problems.

6. What's the balance of that principle? When DO you help someone?

The Bible mentions the sin of moving the boundary stone six times (Deut. 19:14; 27:17; Job 24:2; Proverbs 22:28; 23:10.) A farmer could easily enlarge the boundaries of his own land by moving the stones at the boundary line. This was considered stealing and violated the eighth commandment (Exodus 20:15).

7. Why do you think the writer specifically put verse 28 right where it is?

8. According to verse 29, in what way can "diligence" in the workplace be rewarded?

9. If you work outside of the home, what kind of worker are you? (Being diligent is the best way to honor God and influence your employer.) Can your boss and the other employees see a difference in you? Are there any changes you need to make?

We'll end here for now. I pray that every one of our employers can see Christ in us; through our hard work, our faithfulness, our honesty, and in how we treat other employees. May Christ shine through us in the world every day!

Third Day

Are you working on your memory verse?

1. Read Proverbs 23:1-3. This is a very interesting section. If you are invited to a banquet, what should your attitude be? What bit of "sarcastic humor" does he throw in if you happen to be gluttonous?

The verses above talk about showing restraint in what you eat, and now, verses 4-5, talk about having that same kind of restraint in the area of working. If getting rich is your goal, you are focusing on the wrong thing. Wealth is something a man can never get enough of, and is very hard to keep. Wealth is hard to acquire, and has to be left behind when you die.

2. Verses 4-5 warn us again of overworking just to be rich. What new thoughts or ideas on this topic do these verses bring?

3. How do riches "fly away" like an eagle? Have you experienced this? How is pursuing riches like "chasing the wind"?

4. As a believer, where should our eyes be "set"? Read Colossians 3:1-4. Where have you "set" your eyes? Where is your focus?

In verses 1-3, we are advised not to be greedy when served food by a ruler, especially if he's being deceptive and trying to "butter you up" or fool you. Now in verses 6-8, we are warned against eating the food of a "stingy" man. This is the man who pretends to be generous but is really tallying up every single cent. Both are insincere and should be avoided. We must use wisdom and try to understand the hearts behind those who desire our friendship.

5. Is it wise to try to teach a fool, according to verse 9?

6. Proverbs 23:10-11 is similar to 22:28. What other facts does the writer add? What do you think he means?

It's bad enough that a man moves the boundaries, but to take property from children of widows is even worse! The Lord is always concerned with the fatherless (Deut. 10:18; Psalm 10:14, 17-18; 68:5; 82:3; 146:9). He is their "Redeemer" or "Defender" which literally means the "person responsible for meeting the needs of a troubled or defenseless close relative." This is an amazing truth when you meditate on God's great love for those who are defenseless. He WILL come to their aid and we better not mess with them! For those who are being taken advantage of, exploited, or oppressed, God is Your Defender!

7. Verse 11 reminds us that He is MIGHTY! How does this fact encourage you in something you are personally facing or going through? (Do you need God to plead your cause? He will!)

Christ's work as "Redeemer" is a key doctrine of the New Testament. Jensen wrote, "It relates basically to man's bondage to sin. In Christ, 'we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace ' (Ephesians 1:7). Through Christ's blood (the ransom) a sinner is delivered from the enslavement of sin and released to a new freedom. A glance at an exhaustive concordance shows the title 'Redeemer' appearing often in the bright messianic chapters of Isaiah 40-66."

8. Verse 12 introduces our next section. What phrase is repeated?

9. What verses from our section today specifically spoke to you, and why?

See you tomorrow, my friends!! Have a wonderful time meditating on these great verses from God Himself!

Fourth Day

Work on your memory verse. Are you obeying it?

1. Read Proverbs 23:15-21. According to verses 15-16, what makes the heart of a parent glad? How do these verses tie together our "words" and our "heart"?

2. According to verses 17-18, why shouldn't we envy sinners?

3. Define the word "envy." What do the following verses have to say about this?
 - A. 1 Corinthians 13:4
 - B. James 3:16
 - C. Romans 13:13-14
 - D. Titus 3:1-5
 - E. 1 Peter 2:1-2

4. What did David have to say about envying sinners in Psalm 37? Pick out some phrases that apply and summarize his thoughts.

5. Do you ever struggle when you know that "evil" or "lazy" or "whoever" seems to always be blessed while sometimes you, who tries to follow the right path, always seems to be struggling? What should you do about it?

6. Do you struggle with "envy" in general? What types of things make you envious? How can you guard your heart against this?

7. Read Proverbs 23:19-21. What are some other things to avoid if you want to stay on the path of the wise? How does drowsiness result in laziness and poverty?

8. Read Verses 22-25. Again, what will truly make parents rejoice and be glad? Explain why children should still "listen and respect" their parents as they grow older.

As parents get older, they obviously don't have the same authority over their children. They are called to "not despise" or "highly regard" their parents. They have earned their respect. The kids don't listen to the "do's and don'ts" anymore like when they were young, but, as Lane put it, "They should listen for what their long experience of life has taught them. Their children may now have more knowledge and skill than their parents ever had, but there are lessons which can only be learned from living into old age. Let them remember that though they may now have children of their own, their parents still love them as those to whom they gave life, which is how the passage begins (22a) and ends (25b). This love gives them a special claim on their children's attention." Hubbard adds, "Children's existence derives from the parents. We cannot reject them without losing something of our own identity and dignity." Interesting thought. He goes on to add something about the mom having a "wrinkled face" but I decided to leave that part of the quote out. 😊

9. Do you think your parents "rejoice" over you? Do they delight in you because you have proven to be "wise"? Write your thoughts. Maybe you should ask them ...
10. Why do you think when kids get older, they often tend to "despise" or "not regard" their parents, even if they were "good" parents? How does our "society" regard the aged?

I read once that good, wise, Godly living benefits not only the child, or the person, but the parents as well. This verse really shows the truth of that statement.

11. Read Proverbs 23:26-28. Once again the father has a strong exhortation for his son. What does he warn him against?

12. I love verse 26. The father desires his son's heart, his eyes, his lips (22:18), and his ears (23:12). So, basically, what is his point?

That's it for today. May we give our Heavenly Father our hearts, our eyes, our ears, and our lips. May we follow and observe the ways of Christ, as we walk through this life.

Fifth Day

Write out your memory verse.

1. Let's read our last section, Proverbs 23:29-35. This is the longest warning about drunkenness in Proverbs. It gives us a full-length portrait of a drunk. Write your first thoughts. Why do you think the teacher spends so much time on this warning?

2. One commentary I read put this section into different "categories," which I thought was excellent. Read them below and write the verses that support it.

Drunkenness leads to:

- A. Emotional problems:
 - B. Social problems:
 - C. Physical problems:
 - D. Mental Problems:
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3. Wine seems innocent and attractive, but what is the result of "lingering over it," according to verse 32?
 4. Which verse shows us that people can become a "slave" to it?
 5. Do you have a problem with alcohol? Do you tend to "linger too long" over it? Any changes you need to make in this area to stay on the wise path?
 6. From our lesson this week, which topic spoke to your heart the most? Which verses did the Holy Spirit use to zero in on your heart?

"At the heart of our Christian faith is a story ... Unless the story is known, understood, owned, and lived, we and our children will not have Christian faith."

John H. Westerhoff

