



"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 19

This week we'll be continuing our journey through Proverbs by studying chapter 24, which could be titled, "Wisdom and Folly." These last few chapters have been written by "sayings," and this chapter is no different. They are grouped into two or three sentence "sayings" which give us valuable insight and warnings. I really enjoyed this chapter. I loved verses 15-16 that compare the sweetness of honey with the sweetness that wisdom is to our souls. Honey was the sweetest substance in the East at that time and is referenced six times in the Book of Proverbs. Imagine a big ol' slice of cornbread dripping with honey ... that's like wisdom in our lives! What a wonderful picture! (Or I'm just really hungry!)

First Day

1. Read Proverbs 24:1-34. List some of the topics covered in this chapter. Any new ones?

2. Are there any sayings you don't understand, or are confusing to you?

3. Are there any "fear the Lord" phrases?

4. Where do the "Do Nots" begin?
5. Do you find anything unique about this chapter?

6. What specific phrase, thought, or saying specifically spoke to your heart, and why?

7. If you gave this chapter a title that summarized the main thoughts, or would make it easier to remember, what would it be? (Or would you stick with Wisdom and Folly?)

Memory Verse of the Week: "Through wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches." Proverbs 24:3-4

Second Day

Work on your memory verse. Doesn't it paint a great picture?

1. Read Proverbs 24:1-34 again, then go back and focus on verses 1-2 and 19-20. What is the main point of these verses? What reasons are given as to why we shouldn't envy the wicked?

2. Verse 1 tells us "their lips talk of troublemaking" or "their words always stir up trouble." How can our words "stir up trouble? Can grumbling and complaining be in this category?

3. Do you think criticizing our spouses or kids could be in this category as well?

4. Are you guilty of any of the above?

5. According to verses 3-4, how does wisdom bring security? Explain these verses in your own words. How is a house built by wisdom?

6. A house is built brick by brick. A builder uses all the correct tools and material to make sure his house stands. Are you? What tools are you holding in your hands? Have you been a wise builder? Have you filled your rooms with knowledge?

7. What are some "tools" the "unwise" may use?

In her devotion on Proverbs, Debbi Bryson wrote, "Is there a portion of your life that needs reconstructing? All right -- get started! Ask God to show you where the root of the problem is. Face it honestly. Face where you have been foolish or unsundered. Repentance removes the rubble. Forgiveness gives you a fresh start. His Holy Spirit then empowers you and provides all the materials you need to rebuild." I love the phrase, "Repentance removes the rubble." What a great word picture that is for us.

8. Do you have any rubble that needs removing? Is there anything you need to repent of?

9. Read Proverbs 24:5-6. According to verse 5, what can wisdom provide for a man?

10. A wise man, then, is not self-reliant. He does not rely on his own strength. Where does he look for guidance? Why does that bring safety?

11. Do you tend to be self-reliant rather than God-dependent? In what areas of your life? Any changes you know you need to make?

12. Who do you tend to use as your "counselors"? Do you choose them wisely? What do you look for in a counselor?

I once read that the Old and New Testament writers and Bible characters are some of our best counselors. I completely agree!

13. How can pride prevent us from seeking counsel at times?

C.S. Lewis said, "Pride is the complete anti-God state of mind." Pretty heavy statement, but so true. Pride can cause us to become, and stay, self-reliant if we let it go unchecked. Watch out for pride -- it tries to sneak in any way it can!

Third Day

What's your memory verse?

1. Read Proverbs 24:7-9. How can a fool not comprehend or utter anything wise?

Verse 7 refers to the fool not opening his mouth "in the gate." The "gate" was where the leaders sat while making judicial and legal decisions. A fool really "should" keep his mouth shut because he wouldn't have anything right to say!

2. What do verses 8-9 say about "reputation"? (People are on to him.)

3. What type of "reputation" do you have? Are you a scoffer? A jokester? A sarcastic type? Serious? Critical? Whatever your reputation is, does it honor God? (Ask someone if you don't know.)

4. It seems like a person who plans evil, the troublemaker, is just a plain ol' mean person. How did Paul advise us to handle this in Romans 12:17-19?

5. Read Proverbs 24:10. Waltke wrote, "A person reveals the degree and extent of his strength by his conduct in crisis. It is when a man is hemmed in and trapped by adverse circumstances that his powers of endurance are stretched and an estimate of his toughness in stamina can be made." Thoughts?

6. When times are tough, do you faint? Where can we find the strength to stand? (Read Psalm 71 and Isaiah 40:28-31 for a hint!)

Proverbs 24:10 refers to trouble that comes upon a person; verses 11-12 refers to trouble that comes on others. Those who are "drawn toward death" and "stumbling to the slaughter" most likely refer to those who are victims of some type of injustice or oppression. This verse clearly shows that we can't say "we didn't know" and stay uninvolved. The Lord expects us to get involved in the lives of others. We are called to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. We are called to love others more than we love ourselves. We can't look the other way from those who need our help. It's been said that, yes, we are our "brother's keeper." Jesus showed us how to care about others. He saw them and was moved with compassion. He fed the hungry, healed the sick, and loved the unlovable. That's what we're called to do (Philippians 2:4, John 15:12). He wants us to be our brother's (or sister's) keeper!

7. Do you turn your eyes away from those who need help or that are being unjustly treated? Why? How do these verses speak to you?

8. Read Proverbs 24:13-14. As honey is sweet to the taste, wisdom is even sweeter to the soul. What does that mean?

I read something in Debbi's devotion on this verse that I wanted to share because she makes a great point. She wrote, "Honey is not ordinary. A honeybee makes 154 trips to produce just one teaspoon of honey. To gather a pound, a bee flies a distance equal to more than three times around the world and visits two million flowers. Honey has been found in the Pharaohs' tombs, still edible after thousands of years. Just like honey, wisdom isn't developed quickly or with little effort. Maybe that's why so many young or impatient people are not wise."

9. Write your thoughts on the above quote.

10. How does wisdom offer a person hope for the future? (vs 14)

11. Read 24:15-16. To me, this verse means simply, you're dumb if you try to destroy the righteous. Why? What can happen? What does this tell us about God's protection?

I just want to ask one more question. When you fall, do you tend to just give up, or do you get up, brush yourself off, and continue on again? I hope it's the latter. We will fall, that's for sure. But will you rise? That's your choice. See you tomorrow!

Fourth Day

Work on your memory verse.

1. Read Proverbs 24:17-18. Yesterday we talked about the righteous getting up after having fallen. What about when our enemy falls? What are we warned against? What may be a consequence of our gloating?

2. Gloating over someone else's failure seems to disgust God, even if it's your enemy, or even if you think they "deserve" it. Why does God hate "gloating"?

3. Have you ever been happy when some "evil" befalls someone you don't like? Do you ever gloat when you and your spouse are arguing over something and you are proven right? Do you gloat on the "inside" but just hide it well? Write your thoughts...

Waltke wrote, "The son should weep, not rejoice, at the tragic waste and destruction of God's image (Job 10:8-9). One may legitimately hope for God to right wrongs (2 Timothy 4:14) and should celebrate when God's righteousness prevails, but one must not nurse malignant revenge (2 Samuel 1:10; Job 31:29; Psalm 35:11-14; Luke 19:41-44)."

4. We've already looked at verses 19-20, so read 21-22. Besides the Lord, who else does the author say to fear? In some versions, the phrase, "those given to change" is translated as "join with the rebellious." Why do you think he gives this warning?

5. I'm sure we all understand why we shouldn't join with those who are rebellious, but why do you think it can be translated as "those given to change"? How do you handle change? How can it be in the "rebellious" category?

In verse 23 we begin the "second part" of the "sayings of the wise," the first being from 22:17-24:22. Several of these "sayings" include not only warnings, but reasons for the warnings, which helps us a lot. The next sayings discuss things like justice and injustice, priorities, revenge, and laziness.

6. Read 24:23-25. Why is judging impartially so important? How does it bring blessings, respect, and honor?

7. After discussing judging unfairly, what contrast does he paint in verse 26? What's he saying? How is a sincere kiss like an honest answer?

8. Read Proverbs 24:27. What is he saying? Why is it wise to prepare the outside work first?

The saying in this verse admonished us to count the cost before building a household (Luke 6:48 and 14:28-30). Our priorities must be right and in order. It's thought that this verse encourages all tradesmen and farmers to make sure that their sources of food and income out of doors are secure before they take the next, but necessary, step of building a home within doors. Zuck wrote,

"Israelites, most of who farmed land, needed to plow and sow seed before they attended to the more immediate creature comforts." All this to say ... we need to count the cost and have our priorities straight!

9. Read Luke 14:26-33. What does Jesus say about counting the cost? In what context is He using this parable?

10. Do you tend to "count the cost" before you make a decision or move ahead in a direction, or do you tend to act first and think later? Why is it so wise to "count the cost"? What kinds of things can be avoided if you do?

That's it for today. May the Lord bless you and keep you; may He smile upon you today!

Fifth Day

Write out your verse from memory.

1. Read Proverbs 24:28-29. Verse 28 again reminds us to be honest when giving testimony against someone. Ruining someone's reputation is serious business. What is verse 29 warning us against?

2. We should always give honest answers, whether we are in court or not, right? We just read in verse 26 how an honest answer is like a kiss on the lips. Is a half-truth an honest answer? Are you guilty of this? Do you ever purposely leave out information so you either look better, or to taint the listener's viewpoint? Think on that ...

3. We've discussed revenge before. Do these verses relate to 24:17-18 at all? How so?

4. Are you openly, or secretly, seeking revenge against anyone? What warning does verse 29 give?

5. Read 24:30-34. As the writer reflected, he saw many lessons regarding being lazy. What are some of the evils of slothfulness according to these verses?

6. Why did poverty take him by surprise?

7. Our favorite word "diligence" screams from this verse. I love this quote by D. L. Moody, "Work as if everything depended on you and pray as if everything depended on God." Does this describe you?

