



## "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 20

This week we start a new section of Proverbs as noted by the first verse in chapter 25. This marks the end of the section often referred to as the "Sayings of the Wise" and begins a section compiled by the "men of Hezekiah, King of Judah." We'll discuss the king in a bit, but I wanted to draw your attention to the change in "literary style" in chapters 25-29. The sayings seem to be grouped together by subject matter more so than the previous chapters. Also, in chapters 25-26, there are many "comparatives," using the words "as" and "so", which is called a simile. In chapters 28-29, Solomon uses many "contrasts," using the word "but" more often. As you read through, try noticing these words, as well as identifying the subject matter of the verses and how they are grouped.

The "men of Hezekiah" were probably royal scribes or staff that were most likely responsible for not only collecting and copying the transcripts, but editing and arranging as well. They desired to capture and maintain the truths of these sayings from generation to generation. Hubbard says "Copied may picture a bevy of scribes taking turns transferring the text from worn out or faded manuscripts to new parchments or papyrus for use by generations following." Allow me to quote a paragraph by Irving Jensen, "These chapters contain proverbs that Hezekiah's staff collected 250 years after Solomon wrote them. We learn from 1 Kings 4:32 that Solomon authored 3,000 Proverbs. Of that number, the ones that God decreed and inspired to be part of Holy Scripture eventually were brought together into the one book, Proverbs. The details of how this book became a unit are not given by the Bible, partly because such details are not determinative in one's study of the Bible text. The fact of Hezekiah's part in this collecting was deemed worthy of note, hence the reference in the opening verse of 25:1." Lane suggests that maybe they were rediscovered by Hezekiah when he "spring-cleaned" the Temple (2 Chronicles 29). Very interesting! Let's get started, shall we?

#### First Day

1. Read Proverbs 25:1-28. Upon first reading, what subjects or topics first jump out at you? Do you notice any particular groupings?

2. Solomon was one of Judah's greatest kings. Read the following verse and write what we learn about him from each:

A. 2 Chronicles 29:35

B. 2 Chronicles 30:26

C. 2 Chronicles 31:2-21

3. Why do you think Hezekiah thought it was important for his people to read these Proverbs? Why is that significant?

Solomon was the last king before the Kingdom was split, becoming the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. While Hezekiah was reigning over Judah, they were taken captive by the Assyrians, in 722 B.C.

4. Back to our text! As you read chapter 25, did you notice any words or phrases that were repeated?

5. Why do you think he makes so many references to the king? What comparison do you think he's trying to make?

6. What immediate application do you see for yourself from this chapter?

We'll end here for today. I pray that the Holy Spirit opens our eyes and hearts to deep truths about ourselves this week!

**Memory Verse of the Week:** "Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down, without walls." Proverbs 25:28

### Second Day

**Work on your memory verse. Do you have rule over your spirit?**

1. Read 25:1-28 again, then focus on verses 1-7. How does Romans 11:33 tie in with verses 2-3? Does God need to "search out" a matter?

Solomon seems to be painting a picture to teach his readers about the power of government. "The king is beneath the God he represents, but above the people, who look up to him as he to God." (Lane) God Himself has chosen not to reveal everything about Himself or His plans (Deut. 29:29), but kings, in order to make wise decisions, must investigate situations fully. "God hides some of His knowledge from kings, and kings hide some of their knowledge from their subjects." They don't have to fully disclose any information they have regarding the decisions they make. But God desires those in power to search things out. Ironside wrote, "Because God is God, He rightly does not share all things with His creatures. But though He so acts, He would have those in authority search earnestly His Word that they may find out His mind and will."

2. According to verses 4-5, what can happen if the wicked are allowed to remain in the kingdom?
3. What principle is taught in verses 6-7? How do Luke 14:7-11 and Matthew 20:20-28 illustrate this same principle? What did Jesus say about this?

4. What is your own personal "take-away" from these verses? Are you one to exalt and promote yourself, or to humble yourself? Do you believe that greatness lies in serving, not ruling?
  
5. Read Proverbs 25:8-10. Summarize what Solomon is saying. Why do you think he brings this up?
  
6. Verses 11-15 talk about our speech once more. What lessons can we learn from these verses? (There are many!)
  
7. How do you think a word can be like an "apple of gold"? Have you ever had a word spoken to you that would be described like this?
  
8. Do your words bless people? Do they encourage? Do they refresh? Do you keep your promises and honor your word? How do you think others would answer this question about you?

In verse 15, the phrase "a gentle tongue breaks a bone" is an unusual phrase. I read that it most likely implies that soft words can accomplish difficult things, similar to the truth of Proverbs 15:1. Are your words gentle and soft?

9. Verses 16-17, and 27 talk about overindulgence. What analogy does Solomon use to illustrate that principle? Can you relate to this?

10. You may not eat a lot of honey or over-visit a friend, but are there any areas in your life that you do "over-indulge"? Ask the Lord to show you any areas that you need to bring under submission to Him. How can overindulgence be a sin?

See you tomorrow, friends! I know there are areas of my life that I over-indulge in, as well as obsess over. Those things easily can become idols in my life if I don't watch out. While in Cambodia a few weeks ago, it grieved my heart as we visited temple after temple, filled with many types of idols. But quickly the Holy Spirit reminded me of the idols in my life that aren't visible to anyone but Him. Ouch. That one hurt. ☹️

### Third Day

**Work on your memory verse.**

1. Read Proverbs 25:18-28. How does verse 18 violate the ninth commandment? Why is it so serious?
2. Verse 19 talks about someone who is unreliable and untrustworthy. How is this like a bad tooth or a foot out of joint?
3. Are you a reliable person? Can people count on you? Do they trust you when you say you'll do something?
4. According to verse 20, why is singing a song to a heavy heart like vinegar? How can that be unproductive? Have you ever experienced this?

I bet we've all had this done to us, and done it to others as well. When our hearts are heavy with burden, someone who tries to minister to us by being overly "cheery" can simply cause more destruction. It seems like the "singer" lacks sympathy or compassion. Sometimes it can make the grieving person feel more isolated and alone. Paul said to "rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15).

5. So then, do we never try to comfort, encourage, or cheer up a friend with a good word? What's the balance to this?

I read something very interesting about verses 20 and 21. Verse 21 tells us how to show love to our enemies, right? It's practical and meets the need that the person has. If ministering to our enemy involves meeting their specific needs, whatever they are, isn't that how we, even more, should minister to those we love who are hurting? Perhaps finding out what the "hurt" person needs, and instead of "singing them a song," or throwing a verse at them as you run out the door, it's taking the time to listen, understand their real need, and do your best to meet that specifically. Interesting concept, right? More than once I've shared the deepest hurts I was experiencing, and a friend threw out a verse that was supposed to just "make it all better," and went on their merry way, instead of really listening and weeping with me. And I can't even count the times I've probably done that to someone else.

Verse 23 shows us that it's as easy to predict the consequences of a north rain as it to predict that backbiting or lying tongue will bring angry looks. But in Israel, rain didn't arrive from the north! Some believe that the saying could have originated from outside of Israel, or it could mean that north rain brings black clouds, like a lying tongue brings black looks. I'm not really sure, I just know that a lying tongue can destroy people, relationships, and churches.

6. Read 25:24, along with 21:9. What is similar? What is different? What does he mean?

7. Read verse 25. Explain the comparison Solomon is using. In those days, many traveled for long periods, without any social media or TV to keep them updated. How does this verse make even more sense, knowing how things were at time this was written?
  
8. How do you think this verse applies today?
  
9. Read 25:26-28. How is a person without self-control more vulnerable to trouble?
  
10. Do you need self-control in some area of your life? I know we've discussed this in previous lessons, but today is a new day! The question is, then, are you doing "better" in the area the Lord showed you before, and is there a "new" area in which self-control is a problem?

That's all for now. The next two days we'll be reading through chapter 26. I pray that as we do, you'll continue to have a soft and pliable heart.

#### **Fourth Day**

Work on your verse today. Did you show self-control this week?

1. Today let's read Proverbs 26:1-28. What do you notice about this chapter?
  
2. What are the main themes of each of these sections:

- A. Verses 1-12
- B. Verses 13-16
- C. Verses 17-28

This chapter is really interesting because it only talks about bad characteristics of fools, but not anything about the righteous. Usually the Proverbs jump back and forth, but not in this chapter. I'm not sure what was in Solomon's mind at the time, but perhaps he was both warning the readers to *watch out* for these kind of people, as well as to make sure they don't *become* this kind of person. It's pretty similar to how we train our children, isn't it?

The first twelve verses show us things that are inappropriate for fools, or how certain things in the hands of fools are very dangerous.

3. Read 26:1-12 and answer the following questions. Also reference the verse where you find the answer.
  - A. Should you put a fool in a place of honor?
  - B. Should you put a curse on someone who doesn't deserve it?
  - C. A whip controls a horse. What should a fool be controlled by?
  - D. Is it smart to use an unreliable person to relay a message?
  - E. Does a fool know how to apply a wise message or a proverb?
  - F. Is giving honor to a fool dangerous? Why?
  - G. Is it smart to hire a fool?
  - H. Does a fool learn from experience?
  - I. What's Solomon's opinion of the one who thinks he knows everything?
4. Which of these verses specifically speaks to you? Mine was verse 11 ... how many times do I have to do the same "thing" over and over until I learn??
5. Do verses 4 and 5 compliment or contradict each other? Write your thoughts. What is Solomon trying to say?

On this topic, Roy Zuck wrote, "The point of these verses is that one should not be drawn down to a fool's level (vs 4) but at times he must use the fool's language to refute the fool so he does not become conceited (vs 5, 12, 16). Wisdom is needed to determine when to apply verse 4 and when to apply verse 5." These verses show us that there is a way to answer a fool, and a way not to answer a fool. Both Proverbs are valid, each in its own setting. The Holy Spirit can give you wisdom on how to answer them in such a way that their own foolishness is brought to light. Again, this shows us how desperately we need the wisdom of God in everything!!

6. Why do you think we repeat our sins over and over, like a dog returns to his vomit? Why is it so common to have such a continuous struggle with the same thing?
  
7. Read verses 13-16 again. These verses show us that the lazy man will come up with crazy excuses to stay in his house and continue being lazy. What is one of them? What are some other characteristics of the lazy man?
  
8. Do you ever come up with lame excuses to get out of things, or to avoid doing something you know you should do? This man was so lazy he wouldn't even lift his hand to feed himself, and, on top of that, he thought he was smarter than everyone else. Search your heart on this one. Are you lazy? Do you procrastinate? Do you avoid? Do you run from responsibility? If so, repent and ask the Lord for forgiveness and start new today!
  
9. Solomon wrote about this later on in his life in Ecclesiastes 10:10. What did he say?
  
10. What does 1 Thessalonians 2:9-12 tell us about Paul's work ethic?

Tomorrow we'll finish up chapter 26 and focus on some more "negative" behavior. I pray that we will continually ask the Holy Spirit to give us the wisdom to see our faults and the power to repent and overcome them!

### Fifth Day

**Write out your verse from memory.**

1. Read Proverbs 26:1-28, focusing on verses 17-28. What does verse 17 say about the "meddler"? What does that mean? How can he cause trouble, not only for the one quarreling, but for himself?
2. Have you ever gotten involved in a quarrel that wasn't any of your business? What happened?
3. Read verses 18-19. These verses remind me of practical jokes or someone with a sarcastic spirit. How can both be hurtful to someone? Can saying "only joking" ("sporting" or "getting a laugh") take away the damage done or the pain that was caused?
4. Do you use sarcasm in your humor? When is it simply being funny, and when does it cross the line? Where is "your" line? How do you keep from crossing it?

5. How do you handle sarcasm when it's directed at you?
  
6. Read verses 20-26. How is gossip like "kindling" for strife? How can the talebearer's words fuel a quarrel into a full on feud?
  
7. How can words be like "tasty trifles"?

Words, like we've said before, can be much worse than weapons. They can be deadly, and they can wound beyond repair. I like this paragraph by Hubbard concerning the importance of words and why Solomon talked about them so often. He wrote, "Words are dangerous. The wise teachers labored to put that point across. Their students were to bear large responsibility, to carry weight in their society, to command the respect of the citizenry. They held in their hands the "big stick," as Teddy Roosevelt called it, the big stick of prestige and authority. That meant that they had special need to speak softly because the people viewed their words as larger than life. What liars, deceivers, scoffers, and other fools said, they could not say. Their tongues, as Israel's leaders, were to do other things -- pronounce blessing, confront in justice, dispense fair decisions, persuade their colleagues to do right, plead sound causes before their ruler."

8. If you are in authority of any kind, your words are viewed larger than life as much as Israel's leaders' words were. As a parent, your words are too. In fact, as a believer, this Proverb applies to you as well. Are you encouraged, challenged, or convicted by these verses?
  
9. Read 26:27-28. Also read Psalm 7:11-16. If a fool tries to destroy others, what eventually can happen to him? Will he get away with his sin?

**10.** I read once that "A lying mouth is a gun that shoots its owner in the foot."  
Write your thoughts in light of these verses.

**11.** Looking back on chapters 25 and 26, which verses specifically spoke to your heart and why?

**12.** Did you learn anything about yourself this week?

**13.** Read 2 Timothy 2:20-22. How does Paul's exhortation fit in with this chapter? What kind of vessel are you, my friend?



