

4. Do you see any contrasts or comparisons?

5. Do any verses talk about fear? Is it fear of the Lord?

6. Which verse(s) really speak to your heart? Why?

I personally am convicted by verse 11 and challenged by verse 25. Venting my feelings is something I'm good at, sad to say. I often seem to lack the self-control needed to "hold them back." And verse 25 shows us such a clear contrast between fear of man and fear of God. I can't wait to discuss that verse further. Let's end here for today and spend some time on our memory verse. Guess which one I picked!

Memory Verse of the Week: "The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord shall be safe." Proverbs 29:25

Second Day

Work on your memory verse.

1. Read Proverbs 29:1. Our chapter opens up with a pretty severe warning. Using your own words, explain what Solomon is saying in this verse.

2. Who do you think is offering the reproof?

One book I read titled this chapter, "Sudden Death for the Hard Hearted." When the door of opportunity to repent finally shuts, says Waltke, probably at death, the fool is beyond all hope of a cure. Ortlund wrote, "When God rebukes us, He is only calling us away from death back into life and pleasure in Christ. He is patient. But if we stubbornly refuse and refuse, then every heartbeat is more rebellion against a God of love, and His patience will end. His patience ended toward a whole culture at Sodom and Gomorrah. His patience can end at any time toward individuals and churches. Isn't God pleading with every one of us right now? We are in a moment of mercy right now—if we will bow long enough to receive it. He is ready right now to do a new work in you and me. If we are not believing and eager, what are we thinking? That God is obligated to wait until we feel good and ready? How can we assume that tomorrow God will still be holding the door open for us? If we do not take advantage of this opportunity right now, why should He give us more? He has already waited. This is our moment with the Lord Jesus Christ, who gives us every gracious incentive to humble ourselves and become decisive for Him."

3. Are you hard hearted, unwilling to yield or repent? There is a time when "hope" is over. He's giving you fair warning, so don't allow your neck and heart to get stiff!

4. How is verse 1 an example of divine justice?

5. Is anyone you know in danger of "hardening their neck"? Don't stop praying for them, witnessing to them, and loving them. The word "suddenly" means at any time they could be without the hope of a cure! Stop and pray now! May this verse be a strong exhortation to us to keep on sharing our faith.

6. Read Proverbs 29:2 and 4, which both speak of political justice. Why do people "groan" when a wicked man is in power? How does justice bring a nation stability and joy?

The "bribes" referred to in verse 4 can mean many things, such as "sacred offerings," overtaxing people, receiving large contributions to vote a particular way, or making rulings in court for those who can pay for them. When people in power abuse that power to benefit themselves, the people under their authority are the ones who suffer. This is an abomination to the Lord! I like how Eric Lane put it when he said, "This policy is counter-productive and likely to tear down the fabric of the state, or it causes unrest among the people and provokes the intervention of God, the defender of the poor (22:22, 23:10). Justice for all is the way to the *stability* of a country and the *security* of the throne!"

Phillips wrote, "Integrity should be the mark of all three branches of government. The legislative branch should be noted for passing wise, fair laws and for setting appropriate, meaningful penalties for lawbreakers. The executive branch should be noted for fair, evenhanded administration. The judiciary branch should be noted for impartiality in making justice available to all. Integrity should mark the way a nation handles both internal and international matters."

7. Let's make this personal. Are you a leader in some way, whether it be as a parent, a ministry leader, at work, or in school? Ask yourself ... how well are you leading? Can you be bought? Do you tell people what they want to hear just to make them happy, whether it's the right thing or not? Do people easily influence you in your decision making? Search your heart on this one. Do your best to honor God as you lead and always do the right thing, because it's right!

8. Proverbs 29:3 reminds us of one way that wisdom manifests itself. What does "wisdom" keep someone from doing?

9. Read Proverbs 29:5-6. How is flattery a form of lying? Literally the word means "make smooth." What can you say about the usual "motive" of the flatterer?

10. How is verse 6 related to 5? (They are called a "proverb pair.") Who is the one that gets entangled in the net and gets "snared"?

11. What is the righteous so happy about? Why is he singing and rejoicing?

That's it for today. Let's remember that integrity shouldn't only "mark" a nation, but an individual as well. Let's live in such a way that brings honor and glory to Him!

Third Day

What's your memory verse?

1. Read Proverbs 29:7. The righteous want to see help and justice extended to the poor, but the wicked don't. Why not? What is their main focus?

2. According to Proverbs 29:8, how do you think the "wise" can help calm a city?

3. Read Proverbs 29:9-14. According to verse 9, should a wise man expect the wicked to desire justice or be able to reason?

The foolish man doesn't reason well because he can tend to make decisions based on his emotions, as well as on his own personal interest. Solomon may be referring to those trying to win court cases against fools who don't reason well. Verse 10 takes it to another level, saying that often the wicked would rather kill the honest than let them testify against the wicked.

4. Read Proverbs 29:11. The fool usually doesn't think of the consequences of what he's saying or doing, but instead, he usually just "lets it all hang out!" What enables the wise man to hold his feelings back, and why does he?

The phrase "holds them back" literally means "quiets it in the background" or "calms it back" like stilling a storm. The verb is only used here and in Psalms 65:7; 89:9, where it refers to calming the sea's waves. As Debbi Bryson points out, "When a toddler gives vent to anger, it's called a tantrum, but when an adult does it, it's called blowing off steam and fits of rage."

5. What can happen if we vent all our feelings? Why is this so dangerous? What is your own personal tendency?

6. If that's your tendency, what should you do? What changes can be made to become wiser as you handle your emotions?

7. Read Proverbs 29:12. If the ruler acts on lies and deceitfulness, what can happen to justice? What happens to the people?

It's essential to remember that lying destroys trust, which damages justice. Yet another example of why God hates lying and deceit!

8. Verse 13 is an interesting one. Write your thoughts. What do you think Solomon is saying? (Also read Matthew 5:45 for help.)

9. Let's look at one more verse in this section, verse 14. When a ruler judges the poor and those who cannot care for themselves fairly, his throne will be secure. Why?

10. What verse in this section was most challenging to you personally? How do these verses practically apply to you?

Fourth Day

What's your memory verse? Have you shown self-control this week?

1. Read Proverbs 29:15-20. According to 15 and 17, why do we need to correct our children? What happens when we do it? What happens when we don't?
2. As previously discussed, what happens to a child if he's left alone and is not disciplined?
3. How do these verses show us that disciplining our kids pays off in the long term? How does discipline benefit both the child and the parent?
4. Children definitely need boundaries or they will get into trouble. What are some "boundaries" you have given, or did give, your children to keep them safe and out of trouble?
5. Does God give us boundaries? What does Proverbs have to say about that? Write your thoughts.

6. I was posed an interesting question that I'll ask you as well. Is God cruel when He allows pain as part of our consequences for sin, or as a boundary? (Hebrews 12:6-7, 11) What do you think?

7. Verse 18 tells us that where there is no revelation or obedience to God's Word, people will go wild! What does keeping God's law bring?

8. According to verse 19, sometimes words of reproof just aren't enough. Why is that?

9. Verse 20 reminds us of the same principle as verse 11. Why is the fool so quick to speak up? What do the following verses remind us regarding:
 - A. Hastiness: Proverbs 10:19
 - B. Timing: Ecclesiastes 3:7
 - C. Attitude: Psalm 19:14

10. Are you a self-opinionated person? What can you learn from these verses? Does pride make you refuse to listen to others' opinions? Ready to change?

11. Can you recall any specific "trouble" you've gotten yourself into because you spoke words too hastily?

We're going to end here for today. I love this quote by Orson Card, "Among my most prized possessions are the words that I have never spoken." Hmmmm.

Fifth Day

Write out your verse from memory. I pray that you made it a goal for the week and hid this one in your heart!

1. Read Proverbs 29:19-27. Two of these verses refer to servants. Verse 19 reminds us that they need to be corrected. In verse 21, "pampering" a servant most likely means failing to require him to fulfill his responsibilities. If this happens, and he isn't disciplined or corrected, what can happen? Why is it a "bad" thing to have him as a son in the end, in context of what these verses are saying?

It seems that holding people accountable for their actions, whether it's your children, your workers, or your friends, is a "good" thing. So often we want to look the other way, let things slide, or "pretend" things didn't happen. Holding each other accountable and requiring workers and such to fulfill their duties makes them grow, become responsible, and learn how to be wise and mature.

2. How do you view your family or friends when they try to keep you accountable? Are you defensive? Are you hasty to say something back or point fingers elsewhere? Spend time thinking on this. Do you allow room in your life for others to help you grow in wisdom?

3. Solomon warns against the evils of anger again in verse 22. (He sure talks a lot about that!) Since anger stirs up strife and contention, what other "sins" can it lead to?

A self-controlled man holds back his anger so he doesn't say things he shouldn't. The self-controlled man keeps his words to himself out of respect for others. The self-controlled man doesn't allow his anger to bait him to flinging out insults and foul language that he'll be sorry for later. Are you the angry man or the self-controlled?

4. Verse 23 is directly linked to verse 22. How?

I wonder if Solomon struggled with pride. I wonder if all his success, power, and money threatened to go to his head, which compelled him to warn his readers so often. Verse 23 is so interesting because those who honor the Lord are put above those who withhold honor from Him. We remember Jesus' powerful words in Matthew 19:30 when He said the first shall be last and the last shall be first. Pride usually makes a person think that they did whatever they did apart from God; that they don't need Him. Pride causes us to take credit away from God. Another abomination.

5. Let's jump down to verse 25. Explain this verse in your own words. How does fearing man bring a snare?

6. How does trusting in the Lord bring safety?

7. Do you fear man more than God? Do you say and do things because you think it will make people like and respect you, rather than doing things based on whether they are simply right or wrong, and whether or not they honor God? How easily are you influenced by what others think and say?

Lane said, "The choice is between a life governed by what others think and do, and one based on what God is and has promised. The first is a life of bondage, a snare, for what pleases one will anger another. Trusting in the Lord releases us from this snare, for it makes obedience to God the dominant motive and thus guarantees his personal protection."

8. What would you say is the dominant force behind your decision making? Be honest.

Verse 26 may be one of the most important verses of this chapter because it reminds us who is in charge of "justice." He is the One who will always make things right in the end. That's why trusting Him is so vital.

9. What can happen when we "forget" who the author of justice really is?

10. Solomon ends with a sharp contrast in verse 27. Explain the complete "opposite-ness" of the two. (Is that a word?)

The lifestyles of the foolish and the wise are detestable to each other. There is no common "moral ground." We know that God and Satan are completely against each other, and there is no compromise between good and evil, right and wrong. It is black and white. We can't be in the middle. You're either "with" God or against Him; you can't serve both God and evil. So the righteous detest the things that God abhors, and the wicked detests the character and the honesty of the righteous. It's important to understand this, and determine which side you are on!

We must remember that the major difference between the two is a matter of the heart! A regenerated heart is needed to fully grasp and understand what it means to fear the Lord. The un-generated heart, or the unbeliever, can't even

begin to understand or reason through and accept the lifestyle of the righteous. It is foreign to him.

11. From our chapter this week, what verses or principles spoke to your heart the most, and why?

12. Were you surprised by anything the Lord showed you about yourself this week?

I read this quote today and it reminded me about the importance of truth and not listening to lies like it talks about in verse 12. Adolph Hitler said, "Make the lie big, make it simple, keep saying it, and eventually they will believe it." This is shocking, yet we see how well his plan worked for him. May we only seek honesty and truth in our dealings with people, as well as our dealings with God. Lying and deceitfulness are abominations to Him, so let's stay on the path of the righteous where those horrible traits have no place! Bless you my friends!

"To trust Jesus Christ is to know reality, because He is the truth (John 14:6). To know and obey God's Word is to know the truth (John 17:17), and to be empowered by the Holy Spirit is to experience the truth (1 John 5:6). God is a God of truth, and those who know Him by faith have no desire to frolic in the senseless illusions of the world system (1 John 2:15-17)."

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