

# The Proverbs

## Lesson 17

### *Proverbs 14*

#### ***Build Up/ Tear Down***

**Proverbs 14:1** The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish tears it down with her own hands.

A woman can build or tear down her home in many different ways. Physically, she can keep the home in shambles or clean enough to eat off the floors. Emotionally, under her care, the home can be a place of peace or a place of turmoil. Spiritually, under her watch, the home will reflect godliness or ungodliness. All the days of her life, one woman provides a wonderful life for her family; another woman causes her family to live every day in dread.

#### ***Walks Right/Walks Crooked***

**Proverbs 14:2** He who walks in his uprightness fears the LORD, but he who is crooked in his ways despises Him.

This proverb is about one's relationship with the LORD. Righteous people worship Him, "crooked" people hate Him; both show their true character and heart.

#### ***Foolish Mouth/ Wise Lips***

**Proverbs 14:3** In the mouth of the foolish is a rod for *his* back, but the lips of the wise will preserve them.

The first part of this proverb should say, "is a rod of pride." Here the word rod is the Hebrew *ewl* and it is different from the word used in Chapter 13:24, "spare the rod and spoil the child." In that case, it means a switch used to spank a child. In this verse, rod means a standard of conduct or character. The "mouth of the foolish" will impose his standard of using thoughtless words at the most inappropriate time to bolster his displeasing position. However, "the lips of the wise" will protect him.

#### ***Nothing/Much***

**Proverbs 14:4** Where no oxen are, the manger is clean, but much increase *comes* by the strength of the ox.

The ox became the most valuable of all the animals to the farmer. It was slow but steady and stronger than the other animals. Rarely did it contract a disease and its working life exceeded all other animals by many years. It fed on that which the other animals would not eat and when its working life was through, its meat nourished the family. In ancient days, the absence of an ox meant work was going to be harder and the family would have to suffer through the winters

without the means to survive easily. The work for the family was made lighter and yet provided a greater volume because of the strength of the ox.

### **Faithful Truth/ False Lies**

**Proverbs 14:5** A faithful witness will not lie, but a false witness speaks lies.

The godly person will attempt never to stoop so low as to embellish the truth with a lie. The ungodly person will offer little truth.

### **Scoffer/Wise**

**Proverbs 14:6** A scoffer seeks wisdom, and *finds* none, but knowledge is easy to him who has understanding.

A scoffer is a person who speaks of someone or something in a mocking or ridiculing way. The scoffer who hates the LORD cannot find true wisdom even if he tries. Wisdom and understanding come easily to those who love the LORD.

### **Leave a Fool/No Knowledge**

**Proverbs 14:7** Leave the presence of a fool, or you will not discern words of knowledge.

We must never forget that all people are our mission field in which to share the Gospel of the LORD Jesus; we should be careful that we never attempt to emulate the fools of this world, adjust to their standards or participate in their ungodly ways. We may subvert the commands and teachings of the LORD in our hearts, replacing them with those of the fools.

### **Wisdom Prudent/Folly Fools**

**Proverbs 14:8** The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way, but the folly of fools is deceit.

It is possible that this proverb completes the thought begun in 14:7. If so, according to this part of the proverb, the prudent person understands the way that is acceptable to the LORD. He is not tainted by the ways of the fool which lead to deception, trickery, dishonesty, pretense and duplicity.

### **Fools Mock/Upright Good**

**Proverbs 14:9** Fools mock at sin, but among the upright there is good will.

The true meaning of this proverb might be better understood if it read, “Fools make a sport of sin.” Fools love to do those things that they know are sinful. The fool will live with someone in a marital style relationship without the commitment, without the license and without the bond established by the LORD within the Scriptures whereas the godly couple will seek to please the LORD in all they do, and in turn, bring His good will upon their lives. Solomon presented this same idea in Proverbs 10:23, “Doing wickedness is like sport to a fool; And *so is* wisdom to a man of understanding.”

## **Bitterness/Joy**

Proverbs 14:10 The heart knows its own bitterness, and a stranger does not share its joy.

The English version should say, “The heart knows the bitterness on the soul.” When the godly person suffers the chastisement of the LORD, he feels it within his soul and that turmoil radiates throughout his entire body. When a godly person experiences the joy of the LORD, it, too, radiates through the entire body. The ungodly does not and cannot share in the joy of the LORD within his soul without entering into a relationship with Him.

## **Wicked Destroyed/Upright Flourish**

Proverbs 14:11 The house of the wicked will be destroyed, but the tent of the upright will flourish.

The promise in this proverb has been stated before. When it is all said and done, righteousness wins and wickedness loses.

## **Man's Way/Way of Death**

Proverbs 14:12 There is a way *which seems* right to a man, but its end is the way of death.

We must notice immediately the absence of the words righteous, upright, good, wicked, evil, sluggard or fool. This proverb deals strictly with the natural man, neither wicked or righteous, faithful or fool. The normal man thinks the way he thinks because the LORD made him that way. He thinks he knows the best way to handle his problems on his own without the counsel of any other. It does not matter how good a man is. If he does everything according to his own way of thinking, he will experience the same results as all other normal men – eternal death. Man cannot reach eternal life without the eternal LORD. He must give up himself to accept the ways of the LORD.

## **Laughter Pain/Joy Grief**

Proverbs 14:13 Even in laughter the heart may be in pain, and the end of joy may be grief.

Tormented souls are often the ones who experience the greatest highs and the lowest lows. There is joy in the moment but only for a moment. Then, away from the stage of life, away from the evening party, back in the solitude of the home where hours are spent alone, the pain and grief return with a vengeance. Many find their laughter and happiness when they are the center of attention in social circles, but those times are few and far between. Tormented within, they seek refuge in those things that make their pain greater and their grief deeper. It, too, is a life without the LORD.

## **Backslider Fill/Good Man Satisfied**

Proverbs 14:14 The backslider in heart will have his fill of his own ways, but a good man will *be satisfied* with his.

In the Scripture, a backslider is a godly person who falls deeply into sin. He will sin willfully for a while, but it will not take long before he will be sick about what he is doing. The good man,

the Godly man should not experience that problem at all. His sins should be accidental, and they will be many whereas the backslider's sins will be on purpose.

### ***Naïve Believes/Prudent Consider***

**Proverbs 14:15** The naïve believes everything, but the prudent man considers his steps.

We must remember that naïve refers to a simple person lacking in experience, wisdom and judgment. In essence, he is gullible and easily influenced. He is easily lured into unhealthy and ungodly situations. The prudent man thinks before he acts and considers the possible outcome of each situation.

### ***Wise Turn/Fools Careless***

**Proverbs 14:16** A wise man is cautious and turns away from evil, but a fool is arrogant and careless.

The proverb should say, “A wise person fears and shuns evil.” Literally, he dreads evil; he runs from evil. The fool is overconfident in his ability to overcome evil; he recklessly engages evil.

### ***Quick-tempered fool/ Evil Hate***

**Proverbs 14:17** A quick-tempered man acts foolishly, and a man of evil devices is hated.

A “quick-tempered man” is a hot-headed man who cannot control his anger and therefore shows his foolishness by purposefully doing and saying the most ridiculous and hateful things.

### ***Naïve Folly/Prudent Crowned***

**Proverbs 14:18** The naïve inherit folly, but the prudent are crowned with knowledge.

The naïve have little knowledge; the prudent have a great deal of knowledge. A lack of knowledge will bring upon a person all forms of craziness whereas people can almost see knowledge resting on a wise person.

### ***Evil Bow/Gate of Righteous***

**Proverbs 14:19** The evil will bow down before the good, and the wicked at the gates of the righteous.

Once again, in the end, goodness wins, evil loses!

### ***Poor Hated/Rich Loved***

**Proverbs 14:20** The poor is hated even by his neighbor, but those who love the rich are many.

In general, God's people love the poor but this is not the case with worldly people who truly tend to despise those thought to be of a lower class or status. Even a person who lives in the shanty at the end of town does not want to associate with a person living under the bridge at the end of the highway. Conversely, in general, every worldly person loves and desires to be in the presence of someone who has the means to provide what is needed, even if it is contraband for an illicit party.

### ***Despises/Gracious***

Proverbs 14:21 He who despises his neighbor sins, but happy is he who is gracious to the poor.

It is appropriate that this proverb follows the previous one. After stating that “the poor is hated by his neighbor” in verse 20, Solomon indicates that despising a neighbor is a sin. Despise means to belittle, ridicule or hold in contempt. Embracing the poor shows a person’s grace.

### ***Devise Evil/Devise Good***

Proverbs 14:22 Will they not go astray who devise evil? but kindness and truth *will be to* those who devise good.

A person who plans an evil action has gone astray from the will and way of the LORD whereas the person who plans a good action will receive the kindness and truth of the LORD.

### ***Labor Profit/Talk Poverty***

Proverbs 14:23 In all labor there is profit, but mere talk *leads* only to poverty.

All legal wage-earning work, regardless of the pay scale, will provide a person with more income than when he started. Sitting around and talking about nonsense all day long brings nothing in the way of a paycheck at the end of the day. Hard work pays off!

### ***Crown Riches/Fool Folly***

Proverbs 14:24 The crown of the wise is their riches, *but* the folly of fools is foolishness.

The wise are blessed with ample provisions for each day’s need; the stupidity of a jester provides only stupidity! This proverb is closely related to Proverbs 14:18 which says, “The naive inherit folly, but the prudent are crowned with knowledge.”

### ***Truth Saves/Lies Treacherous***

Proverbs 14:25 A truthful witness saves lives, but he who speaks lies is treacherous.

A godly man will endeavor to bring truth to the forefront and thus protect the lives of the innocent. The ungodly man will spew falsehoods and destroy lives for his own benefit.

### ***Lord Strong Confidence/His Children Refuge***

Proverbs 14:26 In the fear of the LORD there is strong confidence, And his children will have refuge.

Be assured, worship of the LORD provides protection and security to believers and their children who are influenced by godly parents.

## ***Fountain of Life/Snare of Death***

**Proverbs 14:27** The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, that one may avoid the snares of death.

Following the same theme of verse 26, be assured that worship of the LORD will protect people from “the snares of death.” Speaking to the woman at the well in John 4:10-14, Jesus says, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.” <sup>11</sup> She said to Him, “Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do You get that living water?” <sup>12</sup> “You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself, and his sons, and his cattle?” <sup>13</sup> Jesus answered and said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water shall thirst again; <sup>14</sup> but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.”

## ***King’s Glory/Prince’s Ruin***

**Proverbs 14:28** In a multitude of people is a king's glory, but in the dearth of people is a prince's ruin.

The greatest resource of all governmental officials rests in their people. Without people, a ruler has nothing to rule over except the land he owns. Without workers, the land will not produce for the king. Without people, the king is ruler over himself only! Without people, a kingly title is worthless.

## ***Slow Anger/Quick Tempered***

**Proverbs 14:29** He who is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who is quick-tempered exalts folly.

Solomon will address this Proverb again in 16:32 when he says, “He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city.” James also addresses the topic in James 1:19 as he says, “*This* you know, my beloved brethren. But let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak *and* slow to anger.” Anger begets anger. Holding in anger until all the facts are in is a trait of the wise and godly. Many times the facts will redirect that initial anger into a productive solution. But anger exploded without the facts will often put a person in a position in which the facts do not matter and therefore the hot-tempered person magnifies his foolish and irrational position.

## ***Tranquil Life/Rottenness Bones***

**Proverbs 14:30** A tranquil heart is life to the body, but passion is rottenness to the bones.

An otherwise healthy body can be destroyed by an agitated, restless, passionate heart and mind. Somehow and in some way, an obsessive compulsive passion brings stomach issues, headaches, bowel issues and loss or gain of weight. Many more physical problems can arise from mental and emotional distress and anxiety. Why does the body suffer when the mind is disturbed? All the medical tests in the world cannot definitively answer that question; nevertheless, the LORD made the body, soul and spirit to work in harmony. An unhealthy soul issue will affect the body

and in most cases, it is a sin issue. However, an unhealthy body issue will not affect a healthy soul.

### **Reproach Maker/Honor Him**

**Proverbs 14:31** He who oppresses the poor reproaches his Maker, but he who is gracious to the needy honors Him.

God is the Maker of all people, whether they are good or bad, rich or poor, wise or foolish. Specifically in this proverb, Solomon addresses the actions of people toward the poor. He also addresses this theme in Proverbs 17:5 when he says, "He who mocks the poor reproaches his Maker; He who rejoices at calamity will not go unpunished." In the New Testament, Jesus addresses the same theme when He says in Matthew 25:40, "And the King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, *even the least of them*, you did it to Me.'" The LORD will vigorously defend the poor, especially the poor in spirit, downtrodden, naïve and innocent. The wise person will recognize the difference between a godly and ungodly poor person and graciously react appropriately to the needs of each. We should carefully consider the needs of the ungodly, keeping in mind that each interaction with them may be the presentation of the LORD's message that will redirect him to the Savior.

### **Wicked Thrust Down/Righteous Has Refuge**

**Proverbs 14:32** The wicked is thrust down by his wrongdoing, but the righteous has a refuge when he dies.

Death is the portal to eternal life or eternal death. Eternal death awaits those who have stubbornly and blatantly rejected the Holy Spirit's offer to accept the LORD. Eternal life awaits the one who accepts the Holy Spirit's offer and enters into a relationship with him. Eternal life is the righteous person's refuge. Eternal death will thrust the wicked person into the lake of fire.

### **Wisdom Resets Heart/Bosom Fools Known**

**Proverbs 14:33** Wisdom rests in the heart of one who has understanding, but in the bosom of fools it is made known.

Solomon has used this theme in Proverbs 1:20-22 and 9:1-4. In Isaiah 32:6, the prophet says, "For a fool speaks nonsense, and his heart inclines toward wickedness, to practice ungodliness and to speak error against the LORD, to keep the hungry person unsatisfied and to withhold drink from the thirsty." Fools speak nonsense and the wise speak that which makes sense in the plan of the LORD.

### **Righteous Exalts/Sin Disgraces**

**Proverbs 14:34** Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to *any* people.

America, one nation under God, has been lifted up in its history because of her relationship with Him. All the other nations of the world have struggled where God is not part of life at the core of the majority of family units within the country. In our history, America has struggled with sin but compared to the history of the world, America's sin has truly been insignificant. However, in

the past 40 years, slowly but surely, the grounded righteousness of America has been degraded. In the last 30 years, fearful people from other nations have sought refuge in America. With their entrance, they have imported their religion which worships a god that is different from the true and living LORD. The religion is rebellious to the LORD; it is idolatry; it is sin. Therefore, America will be disgraced in accord with all other nations of the world. Only Israel will be lifted above every other nation in the end. It may seem that the worship of a false god is unchecked by the LORD, but ultimately, those people will be shamed and rejected and sent to eternal death in the lake of fire.

### ***King's Favor/King's Anger***

**Proverbs 14:35** The king's favor is toward a servant who acts wisely, but his anger is toward him who acts shamefully.

A huge difference exists between godly and ungodly kings. An ungodly king will show favor to those who promote his godless agenda and his anger will be toward the godly wisdom of those who oppose him. Therefore, Solomon's proverb must be speaking of the godly king who blesses those who give him godly counsel, serve him well, help achieve his goals and promote the best for the kingdom and its people. Solomon uses the word *ebrah* and it means an outburst of wrath. It is one thing to be angry with a person for something he has done; it is another thing to attack that person to punish him in wrath. A person's wisdom pays off when he keeps the laws of the land or the requirements of a job; a person's folly brings the shame of punishment when he breaks the king's laws and requirements,. This truth is confirmed in Matthew 24:45-47 when Jesus says, "Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. Truly I say to you, that he will put him in charge of all his possessions."