

The Proverbs

Lesson 25

Proverbs 22

Proverbs 22:1 A *good* name is to be more desired than great riches, Favor is better than silver and gold.

Intentionally or not, when we hear the mention of a person we know, we immediately form a judgment about that person. Why does this happen? It occurs because all of us, by our actions, have established a reputation. The reputation will indicate, either positively or negatively loyalty, helpfulness, trustworthiness, friendliness, curiousness, kindness, obedience, thriftiness, cheerfulness, bravery and reverence. If the reputation in these areas is positive, the person has a good reputation; if it is negative, the reputation is bad. All the wealth in the world cannot buy a good name and find favor in the eyes of others. A good name, a good reputation, is built over time and is a person's most valuable possession.

Proverbs 22:2 The rich and the poor have a common bond, The LORD is the maker of them all.

Much can be said about the rich and the poor, but regardless of the economic status of a person's life here on earth, the LORD created that person who is rich and that person who is poor. In His sight, both are equally important, both are equally valued, both need Him as Savior.

Proverbs 22:3 The prudent sees the evil and hides himself, but the naive go on, and are punished for it.

Evil abounds around every corner. The person who is wise and careful will quickly recognize that which is evil and will shield himself from its lure. Those who do not know better will be lured into the lair of the evil and be guilty even if only by association.

Proverbs 22:4 The reward of humility and the fear of the LORD are riches, honor and life.

Humility alone does not bring riches, honor and life; it must be connected to the fear of the LORD to bring such blessings. During the time of Israel's wilderness journey, the LORD developed this theme extensively, directing His people to humble themselves before Him. Solomon understands the importance of being humble before the LORD. At the dedication of the Temple, Solomon repeated the words the LORD spoke to him in the night.

2 Chronicles 7:14 and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray, and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

History has recorded that Israel, the LORD's people, have failed to humble themselves before Him and they are struggling every day with their riches, honor and life. The Bible promises that only with the LORD's intervention during the time of the Tribulation will Israel finally humble herself before the LORD.

Proverbs 22:5 Thorns *and* snares are in the way of the perverse; He who guards himself will be far from them.

Perverse people do not realize that their future is filled with difficulties, suffering and trials of all kinds. Perverse people move from one evil venture to another and with each one come hurdles and roadblocks. Conversely, the person who stays away from evil and perverse things will not face the consuming barriers, complications and sorrows of life!

Proverbs 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it.

In Hebrew it actually says, "Initiate the child at the opening (the mouth) of his path." In other words, when the child is able to speak and understand, the parent should at every opportunity give instruction in conduct, duties, dangers and blessings so that when the child must walk alone and make his own decisions, he will remember and follow these teachings.

Proverbs 22:7 The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower *becomes* the lender's slave.

The mindset of borrowing money for everything only makes the poor poorer and the rich richer. The poor person has only one place to borrow money and that is from a person who has more than he. Borrowing money will cost the borrower and add to the wealth of the lender. If a poor person cannot repay his loan, the lender can take from him that which was placed as collateral for the promissory note. Even if just one payment remains unpaid, the lender can take that which the borrower has paid for many months and years.

Proverbs 22:8 He who sows iniquity will reap vanity, and the rod of his fury will perish.

When a farmer plants corn seeds, he expects to reap a harvest of corn. Therefore, when a person plants evil seeds, what should he expect to harvest? Surely not something good! The planting of sin, the doing of evil deeds, will result only in a sinful, evil harvest. Additionally, what a person plants in wrath will not produce a useful crop to harvest.

Proverbs 22:9 He who is generous will be blessed, for he gives some of his food to the poor.

A blessed person will share some of what he has with another who has nothing. The person with nothing cannot share and therefore will miss the blessing from the LORD.

Proverbs 22:10 Drive out the scoffer, and contention will go out, even strife and dishonor will cease.

Contention, strife and dishonor occur because of the actions of someone who has disdain for the social structure. Why a scornful person remains in a social structure remains a mystery. As hard as it may be, most often, the scoffer must be removed from the environment in order to restore harmony within the association.

Proverbs 22:11 He who loves purity of heart *and* whose speech is gracious, the king is his friend.

Servants of a righteous king who are pure in heart and gracious in speech will find favor in his eyes. Sadly, the opposite is not true with a treacherous king; his favor extends only to the extent that the servants support him in his evil doings. The same wrath of the evil king will be shown toward his servants when they are no longer useful to him. No so with the righteous king! The righteous king will protect those who are pure in heart and gracious in speech.

Proverbs 22:12 The eyes of the LORD preserve knowledge, but He overthrows the words of the treacherous man.

When Solomon uses the words “the eyes of the LORD”, he is referring to the Divine providence of the LORD. The LORD’s plan for the ages will override all the words and desires of the treacherous man.

Proverbs 22:13 The sluggard says, "There is a lion outside; I shall be slain in the streets!"

Here, Solomon presents a picture of the claim of every sluggard who has ever lived, "There is a lion outside; I shall be slain in the streets!" What is the sluggard really saying? "I am a victim!" He is saying that out in the streets of the city, someone has it in for him and intends to bring harm to him. He is transferring his plight to someone else and blaming all his ills on the other person.

Proverbs 22:14 The mouth of an adulteress is a deep pit; he who is cursed of the LORD will fall into it.

Solomon addresses the consequences of adultery in this proverb because God’s punishment for adultery is a serious matter. It is important to understand the definition of adultery. A man who is married commits adultery when he enters into a sexual relationship with a woman other than his wife. He commits the sin of adultery against his wife. In this proverb, a wife who enters a relationship with a man who is not her husband is an adulteress. She uses the words of her mouth to lure a man into her bed. Just the words of her mouth are a deep pit for the man, causing him to cast wisdom, loyalty and prudence to the wind. The one without the LORD will willingly accept her invitations and suffer the consequences.

Proverbs 22:15 Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of discipline will remove it far from him.

It takes proper training to banish foolishness from the heart of a child. Sin is foolishness and we all sin; nevertheless, Godly instruction can direct a child away from sin's lure.

Proverbs 22:16 He who oppresses the poor to make much for himself or who gives to the rich, *will only come to poverty.*

The actions of a person who withholds assistance from the poor misses the blessing of God, an act which will lead to poverty. The person who gives to the rich in order to gain favor also misses the blessing of God. In the first case, God will not give because a gift was not given. In the second, God will not give to replace the gift that was given. Both lead to a person's having less than he could have if he helped the truly poor.

Proverbs 22:17 Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise, and apply your mind to my knowledge; ¹⁸ for it will be pleasant if you keep them within you, that they may be ready on your lips. ¹⁹ So that your trust may be in the LORD, I have taught you today, even you.

Often we read the Word of the LORD over and over and seemingly never understand its purpose and application for life. Routinely we read through the Bible, dreading certain sections but pressing on through them anyway. Then one day, a situation arrives and those mundane words of the Scripture come to mind and for the first time make sense. Solomon understood that most often wisdom and knowledge must be learned by rote and deposited in the memory bank ready to be withdrawn at the proper time! Once the wise words of the LORD are learned, daily life will prove their importance and trust in Him will begin to grow.

Proverbs 22:20 Have I not written to you excellent things of counsels and knowledge, ²¹ to make you know the certainty of the words of truth that you may correctly answer to him who sent you?

Solomon asks his son, Rehoboam "Do the proverbs I have written in the past not cause you to trust in the LORD?" Have his letters not prepared Rehoboam with the proper counsel and knowledge? With that said, Solomon will write to Rehoboam more letters with more proverbs.

Proverbs 22:22 Do not rob the poor because he is poor, or crush the afflicted at the gate; ²³ for the LORD will plead their case, and take the life of those who rob them.

In Solomon's day, the magistrates sat at the gates to render judgment over conflicts among the people. Even then, it was important for the poor to have a fair and just hearing before the judge. The poor should never be looked down upon because they are poor. Conversely, the person with means should never steal from the poor; such a person will one day stand before the LORD and give an account of why he stole from the poor. The LORD will judge the thief.

Proverbs 22:24 Do not associate with a man *given* to anger; or go with a hot-tempered man, ²⁵ lest you learn his ways, and find a snare for yourself.

It is almost impossible to live among the filthy and not become filthy. It is almost impossible to listen to the speech of the perverted and not begin to use the speech of the perverted. It is almost impossible to go to the place of the wicked without eventually embracing the ways of the wicked. In each case, one day, the filthy, perverted and wicked will not seem so filthy, perverted and wicked.

Proverbs 22:26 Do not be among those who give pledges, among those who become sureties for debts. ²⁷ If you have nothing with which to pay, why should he take your bed from under you?

In the context of this proverb, Solomon is addressing the theme of co-signing a promissory note for someone else who may or may not have the means to repay the debt. In such cases, the debtor has absolutely nothing to lose. If he chooses to repay the debt, he is a good debtor but nothing he has purchased really belongs to him until the debt is paid in full. If he chooses not to repay the debt, he is a bad debtor and he will lose what has been in his possession but is not really his. The co-signer has everything to lose in either situation. His surety is exposed and depends fully on the willingness of the debtor to repay the note. Until the debt is paid, he owes the debt. If the debt is not paid, he owes the debt. Either way, the instruction of the proverb is not to co-sign a note for anyone!

Proverbs 22:28 Do not move the ancient boundary which your fathers have set.

Deuteronomy 19:14 says, "You shall not move your neighbor's boundary mark, which the ancestors have set, in your inheritance which you shall inherit in the land that the LORD your God gives you to possess." Solomon's proverb repeats the law given by the LORD. Even among the Israelites, the temptation to move the boundaries of the tribal areas was great. Sacred places were to remain sacred, boundary lines were to remain as boundaries, memorial markers were to remain as memorials and the Law of the LORD was to remain the Law. The LORD has boundaries for human life and those boundaries are to remain as boundaries.

Proverbs 22:29 Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will stand before kings; He will not stand before obscure men.

Kings are men of status, obscure men are not! The person who has obtained an outstanding level of competency will be sought out by the men of status.