

The Proverbs

Lesson 28

Proverbs 25

Proverbs 25:1 These also are proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah, transcribed.

Hezekiah lived about 270 years after the death of Solomon; therefore, Proverbs Chapters 25 through 29 contain the sayings of Solomon that were not previously included in the collection assembled shortly after his death.⁵⁹

Proverbs 25:2 It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings is to search out a matter.

Although God knows the beginning from the end, man does not! He sees the rest of today and all the tomorrows; man sees only the yesterdays and this very moment. Although God has concealed the tomorrows from humans until they occur, God's Word reveals many details that can be learned through the discovery process.⁶⁰ The kings who see great glory in searching out those details will be rewarded. Hezekiah, above all other kings, had the privilege of discovering such details in that, while he was on his death bed, healing came to him because of his prayer and the LORD instructed Isaiah to reveal to him the great events that would transpire in the future as revealed in the Book of Isaiah chapters 39 through 66.

Proverbs 25:3 As the heavens for height and the earth for depth, so the heart of kings is unsearchable.

Solomon did not run his kingdom in the same manner as the kings of the surrounding kingdoms and although he knew what they were doing, their ways of governing baffled him greatly. Therefore, for Solomon, the intent of the hearts of the other kings was unsearchable.

⁵⁹ **1 Kings 4:**³² He also spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were 1,005.

⁶⁰ **Deuteronomy 29:**²⁹ "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.

Romans 11:³³ Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!

Proverbs 25:4 Take away the dross from the silver, and there comes out a vessel for the smith; ⁵ take away the wicked *from* before the king, and his throne will be established in righteousness.

Silver must be purified in a crucible before a perfect silver vessel can be created. Just as the impurities must be removed from the raw silver, so too, must wickedness be removed from the kingdom in order for the king's throne to be considered righteous. Kings who allow wickedness in their kingdom are not considered righteous kings. Paul says in **2 Timothy 2:** ²¹ "Therefore, if a man cleanses himself from these *things*, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work."

Proverbs 25:6 Do not claim honor in the presence of the king, and do not stand in the place of great men; ⁷ for it is better that it be said to you, "Come up here," than that you should be put lower in the presence of the prince, whom your eyes have seen.

Jesus gives a tremendous commentary on this passage in **Luke 14: 8-10**.

⁸ When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you may have been invited by him, ⁹ and he who invited you both shall come and say to you, 'Give place to this man,' and then in disgrace you proceed to occupy the last place. ¹⁰ "But when you are invited, go and recline at the last place, so that when the one who has invited you comes, he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher'; then you will have honor in the sight of all who are at the table with you.

Proverbs 25: 8 Do not go out hastily to argue *your case*; otherwise, what will you do in the end, when your neighbor puts you to shame?

Solomon used this same theme in **Proverbs 17: 14**. "The beginning of strife is *like* letting out water, So abandon the quarrel before it breaks out." Jesus used the theme in **Matthew 5:25**, "Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way, in order that your opponent may not deliver you to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison." Therefore, unless it is a dire necessity, do not enter into an argument in haste.

Proverbs 25:9 Argue your case with your neighbor, and do not reveal the secret of another, ¹⁰ lest he who hears *it* reproach you, and the evil report about you not pass away.

Jesus used this theme in **Matthew 18:15**. "And if your brother sins, go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother." It is permissible to discuss things with friends, but never discuss your private business.

Proverbs 25:11 *Like apples of gold in settings of silver is a word spoken in right circumstances.*

Proverbs 15:23, “A man has joy in an apt answer, and how delightful is a timely word!” goes along with this current passage. Isaiah, who was prophesying when this passage was recorded says, “The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of disciples, That I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word. He awakens *Me* morning by morning, He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple.”⁶¹ The right word, in the right setting, judiciously spoken, is just as proper and beautiful as golden apples displayed among silver flatware!

Proverbs 25:12 *Like an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold is a wise reprover to a listening ear.*

The earring of gold in this passage is probably a nose ring worn in the left nostril. The purpose of the ring was to privately announce to all onlookers that she was engaged. When Rebecca agreed to become the wife of Isaac, she put a ring in her nose as was the custom to show her engagement.⁶²

Proverbs 25:13 *Like the cold of snow in the time of harvest is a faithful messenger to those who send him, for he refreshes the soul of his masters.*

Snow was prevalent in Israel even at the time of the spring and fall harvests. The winter wheat grew better with the light snow. The cool snow of the fall made the heavy harvest for the coming winter possible. So too, the words of the faithful messenger cool the troubled souls of the masters.

Proverbs 25:14 *Like clouds and wind without rain is a man who boasts of his gifts falsely.*

The book of Jude uses this theme when it says, “These men are those who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted.” Experience reveals that most bragging men rarely fulfill their promises.

Proverbs 25:15 *By forbearance a ruler may be persuaded, and a soft tongue breaks the bone.*

This theme is a favorite of Solomon. In **Proverbs 15:1** he says, “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” In **Proverbs 16:14** he says, “The wrath of a king is as messengers of death, but a wise man will appease it.” But before Solomon spoke these words, Abigail said to David in **1 Samuel 25:24**, “On me alone, my lord, be the blame. And please let

⁶¹ Isaiah 50:4

⁶² Genesis 24:47

your maidservant speak to you, and listen to the words of your maidservant.” David was persuaded, his anger calmed and later he took Abigail as a wife.

Proverbs 25:16 Have you found honey? Eat *only* what you need, lest you have it in excess and vomit it. ¹⁷ Let your foot rarely be in your neighbor's house, lest he become weary of you and hate you.

No other food source compared in sweetness to honey in the ancient world. The body of a person who is not accustomed to the sweetness reacts in many different ways, including vomiting. Just as a person should not consume an excess of honey, a person should not tread the floors of a neighbor's house too often because he will soon become a dreaded sight and unwelcomed guest.

Proverbs 25:18 *Like* a club and a sword and a sharp arrow is a man who bears false witness against his neighbor.

Liars cannot be trusted and association with liars will only bring danger and heartache as deadly as clubs, swords and arrows.

Proverbs 25:19 *Like* a bad tooth and an unsteady foot is confidence in a faithless man in time of trouble.

Modern dentistry was not available in Solomon's day and bad teeth provided many possibilities for ailments in that era. Likewise, once a foot began to fail, the whole body was at risk. Neither the bad tooth nor the ailing foot can assure a person of good health or stability. The person who befriends a faithless man will surely find himself in a precarious and unstable position.

Proverbs 25:20 *Like* one who takes off a garment on a cold day, *or like* vinegar on soda, is he who sings songs to a troubled heart.

It is a cruel thing to take a coat away from a person on a winter day. This cruel act is as violent as pouring vinegar on baking soda. In the same way, trying to sooth the troubled heart with merry songs may bring temporary relief but soon the heartache will return.

Proverbs 25:21 If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink; ²² for you will heap burning coals on his head, and the LORD will reward you.

Paul used this same theme in Romans 12:20 saying, " BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS UPON HIS HEAD." In the center of each village in Israel, a fire was stoked day and night. Each morning coals from the fire were delivered to each home by a village boy who would put a container on his head. The hot coals would be heaped into it and he would

then distribute them from house to house for the home owner to start his fire. In Proverbs and Romans, the idiom means that the response to an evil person should always be just and kind, showing compassion and not revenge. Being kind to an enemy may cause a turning of his heart.

Proverbs 25:23 The north wind brings forth rain, and a backbiting tongue, an angry countenance.

The consequences of a north wind were predictable in Israel; rain would quickly follow. The consequences of a backbiting tongue is just as predictable today; an angry look will follow.

Proverbs 25:24 It is better to live in a corner of the roof than in a house shared with a contentious woman.

This verse is identical to Proverbs 21:9. Living in peace and tranquility in a small meager place is always better than living in a mansion with a cantankerous person.

Proverbs 25:25 *Like* cold water to a weary soul, so is good news from a distant land.

In Solomon's day, news traveled slowly, often taking weeks on end. When good news arrived, it refreshed the soul of the recipient. A cool drink of water does the same for the weary person. Humans can survive for weeks without food but only few days without water.

Proverbs 25:26 *Like* a trampled spring and a polluted well is a righteous man who gives way before the wicked.

A righteous man should never let his reputation be ruined by the ways of the wicked. Once a well is contaminated, it may never be trusted again as a source of pure water. Once a righteous man is contaminated, he may never be trusted again as a source of purity.

Proverbs 25:27 It is not good to eat much honey, nor is it glory to search out one's own glory.

This chapter has already addressed both of these themes in two different verses.⁶³ It will also be used in 27:7. Indulging in self-glory is just as bad as eating too much honey. The honey will bring sickness to your body and the self-glory will cause a sickness in other people's souls.

Proverbs 25:28 *Like* a city that is broken into *and* without walls is a man who has no control over his spirit.

Both the city without walls and the man without self-control are vulnerable to all sorts of trouble and attacks from all sides. The sense of peace is rarely felt by those who live in the city and a sense of peace is rarely felt by the out of control man.

⁶³ Proverbs 25:4 and Proverbs 25:16