

Daily Devotions
from the
Book of Proverbs

by

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10/10/14

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Table of Contents

Chapter	Page Number
Introduction.....	17

JANUARY

Why One Should Study the Book of Proverbs (01 January)	21
Seek Wisdom and Understanding as Silver (02 January).....	22
Keep the Commandments for Length of Days (03 January)	23
Hear the Instruction of a Father (04 January)	24
Attend unto Wisdom and Understanding (05 January).....	25
On Being Surety for a Friend (06 January).....	26
Keep His Commandments and Live (07 January)	27
Wisdom Cries Out at the Gate (08 January)	28
Godly Wisdom Has Built Her House (09 January)	29
A Wise Son Makes a Glad Father (10 January).....	30
A False Balance is an Abomination to the Lord (11 January).....	31
Those that Love Instruction Love Knowledge (12 January)	32
Godly People Speak Better than Ungodly People (13 January)	33
Every Wise Woman Builds her House (14 January)	34
A Soft Answer Turns Away Wrath (15 January).....	35
Effective Ministry Requires Faith and Commitment (16 January).....	36
Better a Dry Morsel than Strife and Good to be Wise (17 January).....	37
Mingling with All Wisdom and Having No Delight (18 January)	38
The Blessings of Poverty versus the Curses of Riches (19 January).....	39
Wine is a Mocker and Strong Drink is Raging (20 January).....	40
The King's Heart is in the Lord's Hand (21 January).....	41
A Good Name is Better than Riches (22 January).....	42
Be Not Desirous of Deceitful Meat (23 January)	43
Do Not Desire to be with Evil People (24 January).....	44
The Glory of God Conceals a Thing (25 January).....	45
Honor is Not a Pretty Thing for a Fool (26 January).....	46
Boast Not Thyself of Tomorrow (27 January).....	47
The Wicked Flee when No Man Pursues (28 January).....	48
He that Being often Reproved (29 January)	49
He is more Brutish than any Man (30 January)	50
The Words of Lemuel about Female Relationships (31 January).....	51

Table of Contents

Chapter	Page Number
---------	-------------

FEBRUARY

Fear of the Lord is the Beginning of Knowledge (01 February)	52
The Lord Gives Wisdom and Knowledge (02 February)	53
Be a Person of Mercy and Truth (03 February).....	54
Let thy Heart Keep the Commandments (04 February).....	55
Beware the Lips of a Strange Woman (05 February)	56
Deliver thyself from being a Surety (06 February).....	57
Write the Commandments upon thy Heart (07 February)	58
Understand Wisdom and Have a Wise Heart (08 February)	59
Wisdom Calls to Those that Want Understanding (09 February).....	60
The Hand of the Diligent Usually Prospers (10 February).....	61
Riches Fail in the Day of Wrath (11 February)	62
The Righteous Think Right but the Wicked Do Not (12 February)	63
The Soul of the Diligent Shall Be Made Fat (13 February).....	64
False Pride, Dirty Oxen, and Faithful Witnesses (14 February).....	65
A Wholesome Tongue is a Tree of Life (15 February)	66
God Does Not Make People Wicked or Proud (16 February).....	67
Trying the Heart and the Ways of Wicked People (17 February)	68
Contempt and Reproach versus Deep Waters (18 February).....	69
Foolishness Perverts and Wealth Separates (19 February).....	70
The Sluggard Will Not Plow in the Cold (20 February).....	71
The Plowing of the Wicked is Sin (21 February)	72
Humility and Fear of the Lord Lead to Riches (22 February)	73
Labor Not to be Rich (23 February)	74
A House is Built by Wisdom and Understanding (24 February).....	75
The Heart of Kings is Unsearchable (25 February)	76
Answer Not a Fool But Answer a Fool (26 February).....	77
Open Rebuke is Better than Secret Love (27 February)	78
Evil Men Understand NOT Judgment (28 February)	79
Execute Judgment but Avoid Certain People (29 February)	80

MARCH

Hear Instruction and Forsake Not the Law (01 March).....	81
God Gives Sound Wisdom to the Righteous (02 March)	82
Trust the Lord Even before Trusting Oneself (03 March).....	83
Get Wisdom and Do Not Forget Understanding (04 March)	84

Table of Contents

Chapter	Page Number
The Ways of a Strange Woman cannot be Known (05 March)	85
The Ant is Not a Sluggard (06 March)	86
Wisdom and Understanding to Avoid Wrong Women (07 March)	87
Godly Wisdom and Understanding Lead to the Lord (08 March)	88
Forsake the Foolish and Pursue Understanding (09 March)	89
The Just, the Wise, and the Upright Benefit in Life (10 March)	90
The Wicked are Forgotten and the Right Delivered (11 March)	91
The Wicked are Overthrown and the Right Stand (12 March)	92
Righteousness Keeps in the Way but Wickedness Fails (13 March)	93
Scorners and Fools Do Not Find Wisdom (14 March)	94
The Wise Teach and the Upright Please (15 March)	95
Enemies, Being Righteous, and Being Led (16 March)	96
Mocking the Problems of Others and Grandchildren (17 March)	97
Judging Wicked and Righteous and Guarding Words (18 March)	98
False Witnesses and the Chief Giver of Gifts (19 March)	99
The Just Man Walks in His Integrity (20 March)	100
The Wicked are Destroyed but Everyone is Wicked (21 March)	101
The Borrower is Servant to the Lender (22 March)	102
Eat Not the Bread of an Evil, Greedy Person (23 March)	103
In the Multitude of Counselors is Safety (24 March)	104
Righteous Rule and Taking Too Much upon Oneself (25 March)	105
Do Not Use a Fool to Deliver an Important Message (26 March)	106
Hungering after Righteousness and Not Wandering (27 March)	107
Keep the Law and Be Not Greedy for Gain (28 March)	108
Consider the Poor and Turn away Wrath (29 March)	109
Every Word of the Lord is Pure (30 March)	110
It is Not for Kings to Drink Alcoholic Beverages (31 March)	111

APRIL

Do Not Go Along with the Evil Crowd (01 April)	112
The Lord Keeps the Way of His Saints (02 April)	113
Honoring with Substance and Enduring Chastening (03 April)	114
Wisdom is the Principle Thing (04 April)	115
Depart Not from the Words of Wisdom (05 April)	116
Poverty to the Lazy and Froward Mouth to the Wicked (06 April)	117
Simple Men are Easily Fooled by a Harlot (07 April)	118
Instruction over Silver and Knowledge over Gold (08 April)	119

Table of Contents

Chapter	Page Number
Reproving a Scorner and Rebuking the Wicked (09 April).....	120
Godly People and Godly Words Go Together (10 April).....	121
Righteous Leaders are Preferred over the Wicked (11 April)	122
Having a Servant and Lacking Bread (12 April)	123
The Poor Do Not Hear any Rebuke (13 April)	124
Fools Joke about their Sins (14 April)	125
Correction and Destruction are before the Lord (15 April)	126
Making Good Judgments and Being Honest (16 April)	127
Excellent Speech, Lying Lips, and Spiritual Gifts (17 April).....	128
A Fool's Mouth and a Talebearer's Words (18 April).....	129
Coming to the Lord is the Best Choice for any Person (19 April)	130
Being Cleansed from a Filthy Heart and Being Honest (20 April).....	131
The Wicked Regard No One and Will Be Destroyed (21 April).....	132
Cast out the Scorner and the Contentious (22 April).....	133
Withhold Words of Wisdom and Honor old Boundaries (23 April)	134
The Thought of Foolishness is Sin (24 April)	135
Be Slow to Fight and Quick to Get Along (25 April).....	136
Do Not Honor Fools or Give them Parables (26 April).....	137
Simple Pleasures and Not Burdening Others (27 April).....	138
Hear the Law and Do Not Cause Others to Stray (28 April)	139
Be Careful around Foolish and Bloodthirsty People (29 April)	140
Biblical Inerrancy and Being neither Rich nor Poor (30 April).....	141

MAY

The Greedy of Gain Wait for their own Blood (01 May).....	142
Godly Wisdom is the only Way to the Good Life (02 May)	143
Godly Wisdom and Understanding Make One Happy (03 May)	144
Wisdom Leads One in Right Paths (04 May)	145
Avoid Wrong Relationships and Marry a Godly Person (05 May)	146
Everyone is a <i>Belial 'Adam</i> at Birth (06 May).....	147
The Harlot Tempts those Void of Understanding (07 May).....	148
Godly Wisdom Has More Value than Rubies and Things (08 May).....	149
Reproving a Scorner and Rebuking a Wise Person (09 May)	150
God's Love Covers the Sin of Those that Come to Him (10 May).....	151
A Person of Understanding Speaks from a Good Heart (11 May)	152
The Root of the Righteous Yields Fruit (12 May).....	153
Avoid Wrongful Pride and How to Have Lasting Wealth (13 May).....	154

Table of Contents

Chapter	Page Number
The Backslider Will Be Filled with his own Ways (14 May)	155
The Scornor Does Not Love the One that Reproves (15 May)	156
Righteous Kings Please and the Lord Pacifies Anger (16 May)	157
God Covers Sin, Reproves, and Deals with Rebellion (17 May)	158
Slothfulness and Wasting and a Strong Tower (18 May)	159
A False Witness, the Delight to a Fool, and Discretion (19 May)	160
The Works of Creation, Laziness, and Complaining (20 May)	161
Helping Others and Giving Only the Right Kind of Gifts (21 May)	162
Knowledge is from the Lord (22 May)	163
Withhold not Correction from one's Child (23 May)	164
If Thou Faint in the Day of Adversity (24 May)	165
Kind Words Can Be Very Powerful (25 May)	166
Hiring Godly People is A Good Business Practice (26 May)	167
Be Wise, Be Prudent, Be Not Simple (27 May)	168
The Poor Outdo the Rich and Joy in the Righteous (28 May)	169
Do Not Tell Everything but Be Honest (29 May)	170
Do Not Accuse a Servant and Honor Thy Parents (30 May)	171
Open thy Mouth and Judge Righteously (31 May)	172

JUNE

Wisdom Calls to the Simple, the Scornor, and the Fool (01 June)	173
When Wisdom Enters and Knowledge is Pleasant (02 June)	174
Creation by Wisdom, Understanding, and Knowledge (03 June)	175
Take fast hold of Instruction instead of Things (04 June)	176
How the Godly Can Deal with Evil, Ungodly Thoughts (05 June)	177
Seven Ungodly Traits that the Lord Hates in His People (06 June)	178
Seek Godly Wisdom and Understanding over Worldly (07 June)	179
Hating Some Things and Seeking Godly Wisdom (08 June)	180
God Receives Scornors and the Wicked on His Terms (09 June)	181
Wise People Use Knowledge Well and are Rich in God (10 June)	182
The Value of Wise Counsel and of Being a Surety (11 June)	183
The Wicked are Snared and the Just are Delivered (12 June)	184
A Walk with the Lord is by Hope but Not only by Hope (13 June)	185
The Simple, Fool, and Wicked or the Prudent and Wise (14 June)	186
Understanding seeks Knowledge but Fools are Foolish (15 June)	187
How to Live Right and How to Prepare for Death (16 June)	188
Meeting an angry Animal, Evil for Good, and Strife (17 June)	189

Table of Contents

Chapter	Page Number
Biblical Salvation is Not Based upon One's Wealth (18 June).....	190
Angry Kings, Foolish Sons, and Prudent Wives (19 June).....	191
True Lasting Value, Collateral, and Ill-Gotten Gains (20 June).....	192
The Just Enjoy Doing Right and God Receives Sinners (21 June)	193
The Strange Woman and the Rod of Correction (22 June).....	194
Let Not thy Heart envy Sinners because There is an End (23 June).....	195
Godly Wisdom Will Be Eternally Sweet to the Soul (24 June).....	196
Be a Faithful Messenger But Not a Proud Boaster (25 June).....	197
Be Not Too Wise in One's Own Eyes and Be Not Lazy (26 June).....	198
Receiving Collateral and Loudly Blessing a Friend (27 June)	199
Confessing and Forsaking One's Sins (28 June).....	200
A Meeting of the Poor and the Deceitful (29 June).....	201
The Unclean Generation that Sees itself as Pure (30 June)	202

JULY

Turn when Reproved and Receive a Godly Spirit (01 July).....	203
Wisdom and Knowledge Deliver from Eternal Death (02 July).....	204
Salvation Leads to Godly Wisdom and Understanding (03 July).....	205
Choose the Lord rather than the Way of Evil People (04 July)	206
Avoid Immorality by Drinking from One's own Cistern (05 July).....	207
Commandments Lead and Reproofs Instruct (06 July)	208
Naïve Men need Godly Wisdom and Understanding (07 July).....	209
Wisdom and Understanding are Better than Gold (08 July).....	210
All Good Things in Life Begin with Fearing the Lord (09 July).....	211
Labor of the Righteous and Ownership by Chastening (10 July).....	212
Forming Good Marriages and Being Kind to Others (11 July)	213
The Ways of a Fool and the Ways of a Wise Person (12 July)	214
The Law of the Wise Leads to Life and from Death (13 July)	215
The Simple, Prudent, Evil, Wicked, Poor, and Rich (14 July)	216
Things Better Compared to Things not Better (15 July).....	217
Having the Right Kind of Pride and Seeking the Lord (16 July).....	218
Justifying the Evil, Condemning the Just, and Friends (17 July)	219
Hearing the Whole Matter and the Weak Spirit of Man (18 July).....	220
Danger in Slothfulness, Keeping one's Soul, and Sharing (19 July)	221
Seek Godly Advice Only and Stay from Flatterers (20 July)	222
Pleasure Leads to Poverty and the Wicked End Badly (21 July)	223
Oppressing the Poor and Listening to the Wise (22 July)	224

Table of Contents

Chapter	Page Number
Be Not among Winebibbers or Riotous Eaters of Flesh (23 July).....	225
Do Not Rejoice When thy Enemy Falls (24 July)	226
Smoothing out Anger and the Risks of Overeating (25 July).....	227
Slothful People are Unproductive and They Die Lost (26 July).....	228
A Continual Dropping and a Contentious Woman (27 July).....	229
A Wicked Ruler and the Oppressive Prince (28 July)	230
General Principles about Training Children (29 July).....	231
A Unique Generation and the Cries of the Horse Leach (30 July)	232
The Virtuous Woman Takes Care of her Family (31 July)	233

AUGUST

Those that Have Refused Godly Wisdom (01 August)	234
Godliness Must Be Bred into Young Children (02 August).....	235
About Sudden Fear and the Desolation of the Wicked (03 August).....	236
Mentoring and the Paths of the Just and the Wicked (04 August).....	237
Rejoice with One's Wife and Be a Godly Parent (05 August).....	238
One Man for One Woman for One Lifetime is Bible (06 August).....	239
Immoral People Lead Astray but God Leads Straight (07 August).....	240
Godly Wisdom is Eternal with no Beginning or End (08 August).....	241
People Live Longer by Wisdom and Understanding (09 August).....	242
Three Misuses and Two Wise Uses of the Tongue (10 August)	243
Righteousness to Life and Wickedness to Death (11 August).....	244
No False Witnesses will be at the Final Judgment (12 August)	245
Prudent and Foolish Talk, Wicked and Faithful Life (13 August)	246
Not Despising, Not Devising, and Not Talking (14 August).....	247
Being Slothful or Righteous, Being Wise or Foolish (15 August)	248
Handling the Word Wisely and Speaking Favorably (16 August)	249
Be Careful about Surety, Strife, and the Tongue (17 August).....	250
God Gives Knowledge and Spiritual Gifts for His Use (18 August).....	251
Chastening Children, Great Wrath, and Instruction (19 August)	252
Cursing one's Parents and a Squandered Inheritance (20 August)	253
Avoid Angry People and Be Ready for the Lord (21 August)	254
Wisdom and Knowledge are Pleasant Things (22 August)	255
Honor one's Parents, Come to the Lord, and Be Wise (23 August)	256
Sudden Calamity and being a Respector of Persons (24 August).....	257
Knowing to go Home and How to Treat a Neighbor (25 August).....	258
Dying Lost because of Laziness and being a Meddler (26 August)	259

Table of Contents

Chapter	Page Number
Iron Sharpens Iron and Being Faithful and Diligent (27 August)	260
Jesus is the Way and the Hope for all Creation (28 August)	261
Correcting a Wayward Child and Having a Vision (29 August)	262
Mocking One's Parents and Four Things Not Known (30 August)	263
The Virtuous Woman Buys a Field and Takes Care (31 August)	264
<u>SEPTEMBER</u>	
Godly Wisdom Does Not Wait Forever (01 September)	265
Immorality and Ungodliness are Contagious (02 September)	266
Do Not Withhold Good When It Is Due (03 September)	267
Attend to and Depart not from Words of Wisdom (04 September)	268
Why People Pursue Inappropriate Sex (05 September)	269
People Cannot Do the Impossible by Resisting Sin (06 September)	270
Many Young People Foolishly Choose Immorality (07 September)	271
Wisdom Proves Scientists Wrong about Creation (08 September)	272
Godly Wisdom Benefits but Scorners Are Alone (09 September)	273
Righteous Lips Feed and the Lord Makes Rich (10 September)	274
Punishment for Wicked and Deliverance for Just (11 September)	275
Godly Truths are Forever but Lies are Soon Gone (12 September)	276
Poverty and Shame for Refusing Correction (13 September)	277
Crown of the Wise, Faithful Witness, and Fear (14 September)	278
A Multitude of Counselors and the Way of Life (15 September)	279
Godly Understanding and Sweet Pleasant Words (16 September)	280
Having a Foolish Child or Having a Merry Heart (17 September)	281
Settle Disputes by Witnesses or by Casting Lots (18 September)	282
Choosing the Lord's Plans and Being Ethical (19 September)	283
Wait on the Lord, Do Not Repay Evil, Be Honest (20 September)	284
Seek God, Live for Him, and Trust in His Wisdom (21 September)	285
Understanding the Value of Eternal Truth (22 September)	286
Giving the Lord one's Heart and Living for Him (23 September)	287
It is Important to be Honest with the Wicked (24 September)	288
Where to Turn in Trouble or with a Heavy Heart (25 September)	289
Deceiving one's Neighbor and Betraying Secrets (26 September)	290
Ungodly People are Very Different than the Godly (27 September)	291
How to have Plenty and How to be Blessed (28 September)	292
Ignoring Correction and Speaking Hastily (29 September)	293
Adulterous Wife Analyzed and Unseemly Things (30 September)	294

Table of Contents

Chapter	Page Number
---------	-------------

OCTOBER

All Shall Eat the Fruit of their Ways and Devices (01 October)	295
Godly Wisdom Leads to Good, Right, and Life (02 October).....	296
Serving Others rather than Devising Evil (03 October).....	297
Words of Wisdom are for this Life and the Next (04 October)	298
The Ways of a Person are Always before the Lord (05 October).....	299
Godly People Can Do Much to Eliminate Thievery (06 October)	300
Receive Godly Wisdom for Help against Sexual Sins (07 October)	301
None of the Reasons for Turning from God is Good (08 October)	302
Those that have Messed Up should come to the Lord (09 October)	303
The Wicked are Nevermore but the Righteous Last (10 October)	304
Presenters of the Gospel will be Abundantly Blessed (11 October).....	305
No Evil for the Just but Mischief for the Wicked (12 October)	306
Walking with the Wise versus walking with Fools (13 October).....	307
Fear the Lord and be Slow to Get Angry (14 October)	308
The Proud, the Wicked, the Pure, and the Greedy (15 October)	309
There is a Way that Seems Right to Man but it is Not (16 October).....	310
Wicked People Bribe but Godly Wisdom brings Joy (17 October).....	311
Being in Christ Helps Resolve and Avoid Offenses (18 October)	312
Fearing the Lord is Good but Being Slothful is Bad (19 October).....	313
Godly Leading, Making Vows, and Divine Discipline (20 October).....	314
Keeping One's Tongue, the Proud, and the Slothful (21 October)	315
Do Not Rob the Poor or Oppress the Afflicted (22 October)	316
Intoxicating Beverages Have Two Extreme Sides (23 October)	317
Prepare before Building and only Cautiously Tattle (24 October)	318
Caring for One's Enemies and Handling the Tongue (25 October).....	319
Contentious People and Talebearers Kindle Strife (26 October).....	320
How to Receive Praise and Removing Foolishness (27 October)	321
Do Not Be a Respector of Persons but Love the Lord (28 October)	322
Not Servant to Child and People that Cause Trouble (29 October).....	323
One can Learn from Four Tiny but Wise Creatures (30 October).....	324
Her Husband is Known in the Gates (31 October)	325

NOVEMBER

Apostasy Taught in the Old and New Testaments (01 November)	326
---	-----

Table of Contents

Chapter	Page Number
Lasting Blessings for the Right and the Mature (02 November)	327
Do Not Envy Successful People or Evil People (03 November).....	328
Put Away a Filthy Mouth or Risk Being Chastised (04 November)	329
Wicked People will be Brought down by their Sins (05 November)	330
Physical and Spiritual Adultery are close Kin (06 November).....	331
Many People are Destroyed by Sexual Immorality (07 November).....	332
Blessed is the Person that Chooses Godly Wisdom (08 November)	333
Like People Draw to Like People and Act Likewise (09 November)	334
Prolonging Days, Eternal Hope, and Way to Life (10 November).....	335
Trusting in the Lord rather than Financial Wealth (11 November)	336
Knowing when to Speak and when to be Quiet (12 November)	337
Leaving a Godly Inheritance and Working Hard (13 November)	338
Envy, Helping the Poor, and Righteous Hope (14 November)	339
How the Righteous Answer and Answered Prayers (15 November).....	340
Kinds of People that Cause Trouble for Others (16 November)	341
Choosing to Come to the Lord and to Live for Him (17 November)	342
Death, Life, the Tongue, and a Good Wife (18 November)	343
Be One with Understanding and Honor Parents (19 November)	344
Making Right Choices and Living for the Lord (20 November)	345
Against Laziness, Wickedness, and the Untruthful (21 November).....	346
Avoid Angry, Furious People and Be Not a Surety (22 November)	347
Little Good for the Godly in Intoxicating Wine (23 November).....	348
Live by the Golden Rule and the Field of the Lazy (24 November)	349
A Brawling Spouse, Good News, and Judgment (25 November)	350
Do Not Believe a Wicked Heart or Hating Lips (26 November)	351
Care for Flocks and Herds and Riches Soon Gone (27 November)	352
Correcting, Stealing, and Trusting in the Lord (28 November).....	353
Negative Pride and Ungodly Friends Bring Down (29 November)	354
Four Beings of Strength that show God's Work (30 November).....	355

DECEMBER

Wisdom Produces Safety and Freedom from Fear (01 December)	356
The Wicked and the Transgressors are Prevented (02 December)	357
The Wicked are Cursed but the Just are Blessed (03 December)	358
Establish Thy Ways and Turn Not From It (04 December).....	359
Sexually Impure People are Rejecting the Lord (05 December)	360
Bad Outcomes of Physical and Spiritual Adultery (06 December)	361

Table of Contents

Chapter	Page Number
Eternal Condemnation and the Harlot's House (07 December)	362
Godly Wisdom Gives Eternal Life and Favor (08 December)	363
Sin Separates One from the Lord but Jesus Saves (09 December)	364
Righteous People Remain and Speak Wisely (10 December)	365
Soul Winners are Wise and the Just are Rewarded (11 December)	366
Being Saved Means to Seek, Commit, and Trust (12 December)	367
Correcting One's Children and Being Moderate (13 December)	368
Wisdom, Exalting a Nation, and the King's Favor (14 December)	369
Getting Saved, Receiving Correction, and Honor (15 December)	370
A Crown of Glory and Being Slow to Anger (16 December)	371
Sparing One's Words and Having a Good Spirit (17 December)	372
Being Rich in the Lord and Seeing Him as Friend (18 December)	373
Bad Instruction, Ungodly Witnesses, and Scorners (19 December)	374
Strength, Beauty, and the Chastening of the Godly (20 December)	375
God Guides Upright, Overcomes, and Gives Safety (21 December)	376
Creditworthiness, Boundaries, and Being Diligent (22 December)	377
Living for the Lord beats Intoxicating Beverages (23 December)	378
Lazy People do not get Laziness from the Lord (24 December)	379
People Should Not Boast but Control their Spirit (25 December)	380
Hating Lips, Wickedness, Digging a Pit, and Lying (26 December)	381
Hay, Grass, Herbs, Lambs, and Serving the Lord (27 December)	382
Trusting the Lord, Giving to the Poor, and Rulers (28 December)	383
Trusting the Lord Makes Safe but Unjust Disgusts (29 December)	384
Being Quiet is Better than Being Boastful (30 December)	385
She Looks after Her Family and They Do Well (31 December)	386
Index	387
About the Author	421

Daily Devotions from the Book of Proverbs

This book is dedicated to my niece, Tammy

She greatly enhanced my understanding of the book of Proverbs many years ago when she led our daily family devotions in that book. So may this book bless her and her family as much as she blessed ours.

Daily Devotions from the Book of Proverbs

Introduction

It has been correctly stated that a person should study the book of Proverbs if he or she wants to be wise. Accordingly, whether by design or not, the book of Proverbs has been organized into thirty-one different chapters. That means that a person can read a chapter in the book each day based upon the numerical date of the month. For example, on the first day of the month, one would read the first chapter in the book of Proverbs. On the second day of the month, he or she would read the second chapter. On the third day of the month, he or she would read the third chapter and so forth for the whole month. If a person were to do that for an entire year, then he or she would read the whole book of Proverbs twelve times every year minus a few chapters for those months with fewer than thirty-one days.

However, one should note that in trying to write different daily devotions on the book of Proverbs that it is not practical to write twelve separate daily devotions for each entire chapter in the book of Proverbs. First, it is not practical to do so because an entire chapter may not have twelve separate truths to share for each of the twelve months. Second, even if it were possible to write twelve separate devotions for each entire chapter, those devotions would be too lengthy and too repetitive to be read in a single setting. For those reasons, I have divided each of the thirty-one chapters into twelve groupings of two or three verses each. By doing that, a single devotion covers only a few verses and it can be restricted to a single page. In addition, since no devotion in this book is writing about the same two or three verses, no devotion is a duplicate of another.

The organization of the devotions in this text has followed the same pattern as how one might read the book of Proverbs for themselves. In other words, on the first day of each month, this text will have a short devotion on two or three verses from only the first chapter of the book of Proverbs. On the second day of each month, this text will have a short devotion on two or three verses from only the second chapter of the book of Proverbs. That format has been used throughout this text. By so doing, a person might read the eighth chapter in the book of Proverbs on the eighth day of a particular month. Then if he or she were to read this devotion book for that same date, it would be a short devotion on two or three verses from the eighth chapter of the book of Proverbs. Writing this text according to that structure seemed better than just going through each chapter in verse-by-verse order. The reason is because it does not seem right that a person would read the second chapter in the book of Proverbs on January second and then read a short devotion in this text that is on a few verses in the first chapter of the book of Proverbs.

One final introductory note must be made with respect to Solomon's language. Because he had lived about nine hundred years before the Incarnation of Jesus, he did not use the same terminology as the later apostles in the New Testament. Instead of talking about a person being saved, he had used words such as wise, righteous, knowledge, and understanding. In every case, though, as will be frequently shown in this text, those words always meant the same as being saved. It would have been totally ridiculous for him to ever say that a wise, righteous, knowledgeable, or understanding person would die lost. Therefore, it will also be important to show in this text that those labels had only applied to individuals after salvation rather than before.

Committed to Becoming

Wiser, More Knowledgeable, and Godlier

One Day at a Time

Why One Should Study the Book of Proverbs (01 January)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 1:1-4

"The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel; To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity; To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion."

Most but maybe not all of the proverbs in the book of Proverbs were written by Solomon. The thirtieth and thirty-first chapters were credited to Agur the son of Jakeh and to King Lemuel, respectively, although many scholars still believe them to be by Solomon, too. Solomon had been born to David and to Bathsheba after their first child had died. He had been the king after his father. He had also passed the right of his father's throne to Jesus who will someday sit upon that throne. Luke 1:31-33 says, "And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." So Jesus will someday rule the house of Jacob from that throne during what has been called the one thousand year Millennium.

Based upon its definition a proverb is a parable or a sentence of ethical wisdom that teaches a person how to be wise. Solomon had been the wisest person of his times. In fact, people had come from all over just to have an audience with him. I Kings 4:30-32 says, "And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men... And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five." So when a person studies the proverbs, he or she will learn wisdom, instruction, and discretion. He or she will also have a greater understanding of the more important issues of this life. Thus, the book of Proverbs should be studied daily. Because the book conveniently contains exactly thirty-one chapters, a person can read one chapter each day of the month. On the first day of the month, the first chapter would be read. On the second day of the month, the second chapter would be read. By following that simple pattern of reading one chapter each day based upon the numerical date, a person can read the entire book every month. He or she will also be able to read the entire book twelve times per year.

Seek Wisdom and Understanding as Silver (02 January)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 2:1-5

"My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God."

In the above passage, the teacher addressed the child about hearing his words and about possessing his commandments. But he also implied that the child has the choice of hearing or not hearing the words and of possessing or not possessing the commandments. That is a critical point. Each person must choose about those things and to then pursue wisdom and understanding. It is not automatic. The Hebrew word used above for "wisdom" means to be ethically and religiously wise, to be subtle, or to be prudent. The Hebrew word used for "understanding" means to apply oneself to intelligence and to insight.

When Solomon had used those words or words like them, he had been talking about people that have sought the Lord by faith and that have entered into a personal relationship with Him. Biblical salvation is free and available to all. But like the above pursuit of wisdom and understanding, it is not automatic either. The person must actually seek the Lord with all of his or her heart. Jeremiah 29:12-13 says, "Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." He or she must also commit to Him and trust in Him. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The Greek word used for "believeth" in that very popular verse actually means to commit to and to trust in the object of one's belief.

Pursuing a relationship with the Lord is what the above passage meant when it said to cry after knowledge and to lift up one's voice for understanding. It is to realize that a personal relationship with Him is as valuable as silver and as hidden treasure. When a person enters into that relationship, he or she will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.

Keep the Commandments for Length of Days (03 January)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 3:1-2

"My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments: For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee."

The Hebrew word used for "law" in the above passage means law, direction or instruction. It can also apply to the Old Testament Mosaic Law although that is probably not the case in this instance. The reasons for that conclusion are that the speaker had been either a teacher or a parent and that the pronoun "my" suggests that the law had been the speaker's law rather than the Mosaic Law. The Hebrew word used for "son" was not gender specific. So the speaker could have been talking to either a young man or to a young woman. In the above passage, the speaker told the young person to keep his or her commandments to have a long life and to have peace. Those are wonderful promises for someone to receive just for obeying a bunch of laws.

The question, however, is whether the speaker rewards the person that is obedient to his or her commandments or whether it is actually being obedient to the laws themselves that causes the reward. The only answer to that question that makes any sense is that it must be the latter rather than the former. Whether the speaker is a teacher or a parent, he or she does not have the ability to extend someone's life or to even give peace. So just obeying his or her commandments is not the key. However, if the commandment is to not drink poison, then the young person will obviously be rewarded with a longer life simply because he or she does not drink the poison. Therefore, it is the obeying of the commandment that actually creates the reward rather than the human being that issues the command.

During His life on earth, Jesus had identified the two most important laws for every person to obey. Thus, they are called the laws of Christ. Matthew 22:36-39 says, "Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." As with the above passage, the individual is rewarded by obeying those laws. The earthly reward is peace and the friendship of others. The eternal reward is being forever with the Lord.

Hear the Instruction of a Father (04 January)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 4:1-2

*"Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding.
For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law."*

In the above passage, a father was speaking to his children. The Hebrew word used for "father" however refers to any head of any household. Therefore, if the male figure was no longer present for whatever the reason then the instruction of the father might just as easily have been the instruction of the mother. The term might also refer to one's heavenly Father, too, although that is not likely the case in this instance. God who was and is the Creator was not preceded by anything or anyone. He is the Creator of Everything. He does not have a mother or a father. However, concerning the speaker, Proverbs 4:3 says, "For I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother."

Therefore, he may have been Solomon as the son of David and Bathsheba speaking directly to his children. But as author of the text, he may also have just been figuratively or generically using the term "father" to represent an authority figure. By his own testimony, though, the father said that he gives good doctrine. That means that he gives good learning, teaching, and insight. Therefore, the children should listen to his words so that they may have that good understanding about the important issues of this life. Proverbs 9:10 says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding." Thus, good instruction and understanding is godly instruction and understanding. The children should also be obedient to the laws or commandments that he gives so that their lives will go well. Proverbs 7:2-3 says, "Keep my commandments, and live...Bind them upon thy fingers, write them upon the table of thine heart."

But one should note that the expressions of understanding, of good doctrine, and of the law do not apply to all family environments. Solomon was specifically talking about God-fearing, God-serving homes where both parents are living for and serving the Lord. The instructions and the laws of a parent do not have much value if they do not point their children to the Lord. The most important part of living this life is to be ready to end this life. Only good godly instruction from one's parents will accomplish that goal. Ungodly instruction from them will not.

Attend unto Wisdom and Understanding (05 January)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 5:1-2

"My son, attend unto my wisdom, and bow thine ear to my understanding: That thou mayest regard discretion, and that thy lips may keep knowledge."

According to the psalmist and Solomon, having a fear of the Lord is the beginning of godly wisdom and knowledge where each one ultimately leads to acquiring godly understanding. Psalm 111:10 says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever." Proverbs 1:7 says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction." The Hebrew word used for "fear" in those two verses does not mean to be afraid of God in the same sense that Adam had been afraid. Genesis 3:9-10 says, "And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself." So instead of being afraid because one has done wrong, the psalmist and Solomon had meant that the person should have a reverential awe for the Lord. It is to see Him as the Creator and to then figuratively fall on one's face before Him. When the individual has done that, then the result is that he or she will have discretion and also retain godly knowledge, both of which are very good and very important.

So how does one figuratively fall on his or her face before the Lord? The simple answer is that the word "figuratively" does not mean literally. In fact, the person that literally falls on his or her face before God might be doing so ritualistically or for show and that would be phony and wrong. So figuratively means figuratively. A person bows before the Lord in his or her heart rather than actually falling to the ground before Him. One can do that by looking at the trees, the stars, the sun, the moon, and all of the other elements of Creation and acknowledge that He is the "Creator of Everything." Having done that, the Prophet Jeremiah wrote that the person can find Him by seeking Him with all of his or her heart. The Apostle John next wrote that the person can commit to Him and trust in Him as Savior. In fact, the Greek word used for "believeth" in John 3:16, which says that salvation is to believe in Jesus, actually means to commit to Him and to trust in Him. The Apostle Paul then wrote that the person can enter into a personal relationship with Him. So those are the simple steps that lead to godly wisdom and understanding.

On Being Surety for a Friend (06 January)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 6:1-3

"My son, if thou be surety for thy friend, if thou hast stricken thy hand with a stranger, Thou art snared with the words of thy mouth, thou art taken with the words of thy mouth. Do this now, my son, and deliver thyself, when thou art come into the hand of thy friend; go, humble thyself, and make sure thy friend."

In the above passage, Solomon warned his son to be very careful about being a surety or a cosigner for a friend. To be a surety for someone means to promise to pay his or her debt if they do not pay. Thus, when the two have stricken or have shook hands they have actually confirmed their agreement. Then if or when the friend reneges on the deal, the cosigner is left with the obligation while the so-called friend goes on his or her merry way. One should note, though, that the Hebrew word that was used for "son" in the passage was not gender specific. So Solomon's instruction would have equally applied to either a son or to a daughter. His point is that some people will sometimes take advantage of their friends if they think that they will help out themselves in the process. They should not do that. But they will sometimes do it anyway. The old adage of a friend in need is a friend indeed definitely applies in such an instance. Proverbs 22:26 says, "Be not thou one of them that strike hands, or of them that are sureties for debts."

While it is not wrong to financially help out someone, it is wrong to financially commit oneself to the extent of not being able to satisfy one's own financial responsibilities. A person that cosigns for another person may cause his or her own family to suffer loss because of the cosigned agreement. Also a cosigner may not be able to service his or her own debts simply because he or she must first pay the obligated debt of the consignee. So in those cases, being a cosigner for another person definitely becomes a problem. The cosigner may be required to restructure his or her own financial life in a very negative way just to satisfy the debt of someone else. Therefore, Solomon told his child to deliver himself or herself if he or she has already cosigned for someone else. The expression to make sure one's friend actually means to continually disturb him or her to fulfill their financial obligation until they finally do so. Of course, one may lose his or her so-called friend in the process. But Romans 13:8 says, "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law."

Keep His Commandments and Live (07 January)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 7:1-2

"My son, keep my words, and lay up my commandments with thee. Keep my commandments, and live; and my law as the apple of thine eye."

If one is not careful, he or she might misunderstand what Solomon told his child in the above passage. First of all, the Hebrew word that he used for "son" was not gender specific. So his message applies to both male and female children. But second, when he said that a person will live by obeying the commandments, it seems to send a very different message than many other biblical passages. For example, Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." So is a person eternally saved by obeying the commandments or by grace through faith? Romans 10:13 says, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." So is a person eternally saved by obeying the commandments or by calling upon the name of the Lord? John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." So is a person eternally saved by obeying the commandments or by believing in Jesus?

Since every word of the Scriptures was inspired by the Holy Spirit and is true, trying to reconcile all of the above verses about salvation and eternal life can be confusing. However, it really is not as confusing as it may seem. Actually all of the above verses are true when taken in the correct order. Many people believe that they will be alright with the Lord if they just do the best that they can to live a good life. While that belief is somewhat consistent with the opening passage it is not consistent with the above three verses that were just quoted. So step one of the salvation process is to acknowledge that God is the Creator. Creation is just one of the ways that He reveals Himself to people. Step two is to seek Him with all of one's heart. Jeremiah 29:12-13 says, "Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." Steps two and three based upon John 3:16 are to commit oneself to Him and to trust in Him. Step four is to enter into a personal relationship with Him. At that point, all of the above verses will be true and the person will be able to live a life that honors the Lord.

Wisdom Cries Out at the Gate (08 January)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 8:1-3

"Doth not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice? She standeth in the top of high places, by the way in the places of the paths. She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors."

Throughout the book of Proverbs, Solomon proclaimed the high value of wisdom and of understanding. However, he was not talking about the wisdom and the understanding of this world. He was talking instead about godly wisdom and godly understanding. The Hebrew word that he used for "wisdom" means prudence, shrewdness, and being ethically and religiously sound. The Hebrew word that he used for "understanding" means to have intelligence, discretion, and knowledge. In his sayings, he frequently indicated that godly wisdom and godly understanding would keep a godly young man away from the wrong kind of woman. But he also said that they would make an ungodly, unwise person into a godly, wise person. Thus, by that he meant that they would change the wrong kind of man or the wrong kind of woman into the right kind of man or woman. In addition, he said that godly wisdom and understanding would help people better handle their finances by leading them away from circumstances and predicaments that should be avoided.

In the above passage, he once again referred to the exalted positions of godly wisdom and understanding. He said that they stand at the top of high places and that they cry out at the gates. That first image shows that they being at the top of high places will cause a person to also live in an ethically and morally high place. Thus, they will show a person how to live a life that is pleasing to God. The second image implies that they do not make themselves scarce or hard to find. In other words, any person can possess the kind of wisdom and understanding about which Solomon spoke. It is important, though, to understand why godly wisdom and godly understanding are superior to the wisdom and the understanding of this world. The wisdom and understanding of this world will only help a person have a good life while in this life. But godly wisdom and godly understanding will do that plus make one godlier and provide a home with the Lord on the other side of the grave. So the way to have that is to seek the Lord with all one's heart, commit to Him, trust in Him, and then enter into a personal relationship with Him.

Godly Wisdom Has Built Her House (09 January)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 9:1-2

"Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars: She hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table."

In the above passage, Solomon said that wisdom has built her house. Since the wisdom to which he was referring is godly wisdom, the house that godly wisdom has built as confirmed by all of Scriptures is the created universe. Genesis 1:1 says, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Psalm 89:11 says, "The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine: as for the world and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them." Many years later in fact, the Apostle Paul even confirmed that Jesus was and is the "Creator of Everything." In speaking about the Lord, the apostle wrote in Colossians 1:16-17, "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist." Therefore, one would be correct to think of Jesus as the "Creator of Everything."

The above passage next said that godly wisdom has hewn out or cut out her seven pillars. Because the number seven in Scriptures is often presented as being God's perfect number, the use of that number would have specifically been referring to the Lord. In addition, the pillars that He has hewn out or cut out indicate grandeur and splendor. So Solomon was saying that the house that the Lord has built or the universe that He has created is a magnificent structure. Next the reference to the beasts that godly wisdom has killed is most likely a reference to the fact that God has removed all of the obstacles from those people that truly want to come to Him. Knowing that is very important. While the devil is alive and well, he cannot stop even one person from seeking the Lord with all of his or her heart or from coming to Him. Solomon next said that godly wisdom has mingled her wine. Since wine is often presented in the Bible as a refreshing beverage, having mingled her wine means that the Lord has enhanced the flavor of His Creation.

Finally, having furnished her table means God has attended to all of the details. That makes everything about the created universe perfect. Therefore, Solomon's words celebrate the Lord as the Creator and also the grandness of His Creation.

A Wise Son Makes a Glad Father (10 January)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 10:1-3

"The proverbs of Solomon. A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother. Treasures of wickedness profit nothing: but righteousness delivereth from death. The LORD will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish: but he casteth away the substance of the wicked."

In the above passage, Solomon began the second part of his wisdom teachings. That is what was meant by the opening words, "The proverbs of Solomon." In that second part, he also began using a different model for expressing himself. He would make a simple opening statement and follow that with a simple opposing statement usually within the same sentence. Many times his opposing statement would even begin with the word "but." So in the above passage he made three statements and three opposing statements. One should note, though, that the Hebrew word used for "son" in that passage was not gender specific. So, each of the sayings apply both to young girls and to young boys.

He first said that a wise son makes a glad father but that a foolish son makes his mother grieve. While one might initially think that he was only referring to the child that behaves himself or herself well in this life, he was actually referring to much more. He was talking about the son or the daughter that seeks the Lord with all of his or her heart and the child that commits himself or herself to Him. In other words, he was referring to the godly child that will someday be with the Lord in heaven as opposed to the ungodly child that will not. That becomes especially clear when one really thinks about what he was saying.

How could someone under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit ever call another person wise if that person was not saved? There is nothing wise about dying lost. At the same time, why would he or she call someone foolish that is saved? There is nothing foolish about going to be with the Lord on the other side of the grave. Therefore, whenever Solomon spoke about the wise child and the foolish child, he was always speaking specifically about their eternal destiny and their standing with the Lord. In fact, his concluding sayings were also consistent with that observation. Right living before the Lord and in Him always leads to eternal life, and the Lord will not let the soul of the righteous famish or be spiritually hungry.

A False Balance is an Abomination to the Lord (11 January)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 11:1-3

"A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight. When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom. The integrity of the upright shall guide them: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them."

In the above passage, Solomon spoke about dishonesty, pride, and perverseness. Those are three very negative traits for any individual. In matters of business a balance or a set of scales is sometimes used to determine a product's weight so that its price can be set. In times past some dishonest merchants would label a weighted counterbalance heavier than it should have been marked. That would make the product appear heavier and would allow the merchant to set a higher purchase price than what should have been set. While that practice is obviously dishonest some merchants did it anyway to make as much money as possible.

Solomon said that falsely labeling a set of scales is a disgusting thing to the Lord. But one should note that a person can do the equivalent of using false balances or scales in many ways besides just in business. For example, a person that does not render due services for payments received falls into that category. A person that does anything to cause another person to be materially cheated is guilty of using a false balance. However, as disturbing as those kinds of practices are among the general populace, they are even more disturbing when done by people that claim to be god-fearing. Of all of the people in the world, those people that have come to the Lord by faith should be among the most honest. I Timothy 6:10 says, "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

Finally Solomon said that pride brings shame to the prideful individual and that treacherous, deceitful people are destroyed because of their crooked behavior. The treatment of the latter group is clear and easy to understand. But in speaking so negatively about pride, Solomon was not talking about the kind of pride that causes a person to do the best job that he or she can do. He was instead talking about the pride that causes a person to be arrogant and wrongfully lifted up in his or her own eyes. That attitude of self-importance is also disgusting to the Lord.

Those that Love Instruction Love Knowledge (12 January)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 12:1-3

"Whoso loveth instruction loveth knowledge: but he that hateth reproof is brutish. A good man obtaineth favour of the LORD: but a man of wicked devices will he condemn. A man shall not be established by wickedness: but the root of the righteous shall not be moved."

In the above passage, Solomon said that the person that loves instruction also loves knowledge. But he was not talking about the person that loves to go to school to learn as much as possible. Instead he was talking about the person that loves to be corrected when he or she is headed in the wrong direction in life or is doing the wrong thing. The Hebrew word that he used for "instruction" actually means to be disciplined, chastened, or corrected. It does not mean to study a particular curriculum. The Hebrew word that he used for "knowledge" means wisdom, perception, or understanding. He had earlier associated that word with those individuals that have come to the Lord by faith and that have entered into a personal relationship with Him. Proverbs 1:7 says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction."

So being often corrected is part of the godly walk. Solomon next said that a good person receives favor from the Lord and that a person that does sinful things will be condemned. Those words can be difficult to understand from an eternal perspective, though, because people that have come to the Lord by faith will still sometimes stumble, too. However, because Solomon often spoke in general principles rather than in spiritual absolutes, his comments about those two types of people were general rather than absolute. In other words, godly people are still sinners, too. But his final saying was a spiritual absolute. He said that the root of the righteous will not be moved. Most people will quickly acknowledge that the ability of a tree to withstand strong winds is directly related to the deepness of its roots. In the same sense, those people that have come to the Lord by faith have deep roots so that they can also withstand the strong winds of this life and not fall.

Furthermore, through the continual correction and guidance of the Lord, those roots become ever deeper and deeper over time. Hebrews 12:6, "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."

Godly People Speak Better than Ungodly People (13 January)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 13:1-3

"A wise son heareth his father's instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke. A man shall eat good by the fruit of his mouth: but the soul of the transgressors shall eat violence. He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction."

The Hebrew word used above for "wise" means to be prudent, to be shrewd, or to be ethically and religiously wise. By using that word Solomon was talking about someone that has come to the Lord by faith and that has entered into a personal relationship with Him. One can know that because he would not under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit call someone wise that would someday die lost. Therefore, that means that he was implying that the scorner that refuses correction is not in a personal relationship with the Lord. That conclusion may sound harsh because godly people may not always hear their parent's instructions and because they may sometimes be a scorner that refuses correction. However, it is important to know that Solomon often spoke in general principles rather than in spiritual absolutes. That means that a godly child will be more inclined to hear a parent's instructions and that an ungodly child will be more inclined to be a scorner that refuses correction.

But regardless of how one understands those words, the real messages are that listening to one's parents is a godly trait and that being a scorner that refuses correction is an ungodly trait. Solomon next said that people will eat well by the fruit of their mouth and that treacherous people will lead violent lives. Those words were similar to what he said on another occasion. Proverbs 12:14 says, "A man shall be satisfied with good by the fruit of his mouth...." Once again, though, he was expressing a general principle by saying that a godly person will usually speak words of godly origin and that the ungodly person will usually speak words that show his or separation from God. That does not mean that those two types of people will always speak according to their respective positions with the Lord. But it does mean that one will be able to distinguish between the two simply by listening to their conversation over time. A godly person will control his or her tongue and speak fresh words whereas the ungodly person will tend to just let his or her words fly without much regard for how they may affect others.

Every Wise Woman Builds her House (14 January)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 14:1-2

"Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands. He that walketh in his uprightness feareth the LORD: but he that is perverse in his ways despiseth him."

In the first part of the above passage, Solomon showed two very important truths. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he first showed that the woman is not held in low esteem by the Lord. In most cultures of those early days and even in some cultures today, females were and are treated very much like second class citizens. But that unequal treatment does not transfer unilaterally to the Scriptures. Solomon did not say that every wise man builds his house although wise husbands and fathers are probably part of the process, too. He said that a wise wife and mother do. By contrast, the foolish woman or the unwise woman tears down the house. Since no gender was specified in that part of his saying, one can probably assume that a foolish man or an unwise man also tears down the house. The second important truth in the above saying is that building a good house takes effort. It does not just happen automatically. Both husband and wife must work together to establish their home based upon biblical principles. Then their individual lives and their family life will go well. Of course, cooperation among the children is also very important and of great value in any home.

Solomon next said that the person that walks in his or her uprightness fears the Lord. One should note that the word "he" in that statement does not specifically refer to the male gender. So Solomon more appropriately had generically been talking about both males and females. Also to walk in one's uprightness means to correctly do things based upon biblical principles. The illustration is of the person walking a straight line between two points without veering either to the right or to the left. That is very important if one is going to be biblically wise. Proverbs 4:26-27 says, "Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left...." In addition, Solomon also said that knowledge and wisdom result when a person fears the Lord. Proverbs 1:7 says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction." Proverbs 9:10 says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom...." So one should walk uprightly and reverence the Lord. He is worthy.

A Soft Answer Turns Away Wrath (15 January)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 15:1-3

"A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger. The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness. The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good."

According to Solomon, it is often not so much what a person says as it is how he or she says it. By saying that a soft answer turns away wrath, he implied that the problem situation already existed. But a delicate or a gentle response to it is often able to keep the situation from escalating into something uglier. By contrast, he said that ugliness usually begets more ugliness. So when two or more people are in conflict with each other, speaking kindly and respectfully to one another can sometimes prevent further trouble. But speaking harshly will usually cause even greater conflict. In that same sense, he also said that a wise person will correctly use his or her knowledge or perception about something whereas a foolish person will just fly off at the mouth with little regard for what he or she is saying.

So by more carefully guarding his or her tongue with respect to the use of delicate information, the wise person can usually prevent trouble from ever happening. Many years later, James the half-brother of Jesus wrote that the tongue is a little member of the human body but that it can cause a lot of trouble. James 3:7-8 says, "For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." Therefore, Solomon and James would probably agree that harsh, ugly words are natural to the human condition because people do not control their tongue. But both would probably also agree that godly wisdom from above changes a person's heart so that he or she can react in a less human way to most situations and more like someone that is walking with God.

Next Solomon said that the eyes of the Lord are everywhere seeing good and evil. One should understand, however, that God is a Spirit or an incorporeal being. That means that He does not actually have literal eyes. But the truth of Solomon's words is still clear. God is aware of everything. No one hides their misdeeds from Him. For that reason, a wise person will seek Him with all of his or her heart and commit themselves to Him. To not do that while one can, is most foolish.

Effective Ministry Requires Faith and Commitment (16 January)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 16:1-3

"The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the LORD. All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the LORD weigheth the spirits. Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established."

Solomon said above that the preparations or the arrangement of man's heart and that the answers or words out of his mouth are from the Lord. That does not mean that people can blame Him if they do or say the wrong thing. Instead it means that they cannot successfully do or say anything for Him without His help. The Lord prepares an individual's heart for every task to which he or she has been called or will be called. He also prepares the ordering of their words so that they can effectively minister on His behalf. Many years later Jesus would tell His listeners the same thing by describing Himself as the vine that nourishes its branches. John 15:4-5 says, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing." So without the Lord's help, a person cannot effectively minister for Him.

Therefore, even though a person might think that his or her ways for service are best, it is the Lord that makes that determination. It is He that weighs or regulates the spirits. Mortal, fallible human beings who are only on this earth for a short span cannot possibly know the best way to conduct a ministry that has eternal consequences. Therefore, anyone that ministers for the Lord must have His help and His guidance to succeed. Right after the Apostle Paul had encountered the Lord on his way to Damascus to arrest Christians, he had asked what he was to do. Then he did it. Acts 9:5-6 says, "And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." So every successful and effective ministry must begin either literally or figuratively with the servant on his or her knees before the Lord in prayer. Then it requires faith and individual commitment to go forward.

Better a Dry Morsel than Strife and Good to be Wise (17 January)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 17:1-2

"Better is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, than an house full of sacrifices with strife. A wise servant shall have rule over a son that causeth shame, and shall have part of the inheritance among the brethren."

In the above passage, Solomon said that a dry morsel and quiet is better than a house full of sacrifices with strife. The Hebrew word used for "dry" means ruined or wasted. The Hebrew word used for "morsel" means meat or more specifically a single piece of meat. A house full of sacrifices would have symbolized a large supply of good meat which is obviously much better than a single piece of ruined or wasted meat. Therefore, his words show that he put a very high value on living in a quiet and peaceful environment. In fact, he spoke several more times about living with contentious or brawling women.

Proverbs 19:13 says, "...the contentions of a wife are a continual dropping." Proverbs 21:9 says, "It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house." Proverbs 21:19 says, "It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman." Because he had had so many wives, he may have been reflecting on his own household. But whether he was or not, he was pointing out how nice it is when a husband and a wife have a good harmonious relationship with each other. According to him, such a blessing far surpasses any of the things that one might accumulate in this life. So such a couple should be very appreciative.

Solomon next said that a wise servant will control a son that causes shame and that he or she will share in the master's inheritance. The points of his statement are that the son was not the servant's son and that the inheritance was not from a relative. So both parts of that statement would have been unusual. Servants do not normally control the children of their master. They also do not normally partake in their master's inheritance. Therefore, those words show the very high value that Solomon put on godly wisdom. He said that a wise servant controls his or her tongue and that he or she serves the Lord first in life. Proverbs 15:24 says, "The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath." So anyone can look to the Lord and be wise.

Mingling with All Wisdom and Having No Delight (18 January)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 18:1-2

"Through desire a man, having separated himself, seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom. A fool hath no delight in understanding, but that his heart may discover itself."

Solomon said that a person will separate himself or herself from something or from some things because of his or her strong desire to intermeddle with or to personally mingle with all wisdom. The Hebrew word that he used for "all wisdom" means sound knowledge, sound wisdom, or abiding success. Proverbs 3:21-23 says, "My son, let not them depart from thine eyes: keep sound wisdom and discretion: So shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck. Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble." Thus, the word that he used for "all wisdom" or for "sound wisdom" is different than the word that he usually used to express being prudent, being shrewd, or being ethically and religiously sound. But both words still referred to the godly wisdom that one acquires upon coming to the Lord by faith and maturing in Him. Therefore, the thing or the things that the person would separate from is the ungodly world or the secular world. That means that a person cannot straddle the fence by having one foot in spiritual things and one foot in the secular world and still possess sound wisdom. He or she must choose between serving the Lord and serving the world.

Solomon next spoke about the fool that does not seek understanding. The Hebrew word that he used for "fool" referred to the "dumb fool" rather than to the "evil fool." The "evil fool" is someone that does evil things. The "dumb fool" is a person that is dumb, a simpleton, or just plain stupid. The Hebrew word that he used for "understanding" means to be intelligent or to have discretion. Thus, when Solomon used that word for understanding, he was specifically referring to godly understanding. The "dumb fool" that does not desire godly understanding contrasts the above person that wants to mingle with all wisdom. The people that want all wisdom seek the Lord with all of their heart. They commit themselves to Him. They trust in Him. They enter into a personal relationship with Him. But the "dumb fool" by contrast does not do any of those things or even care to do them. Dumb fools just want to discover their own heart. But they cannot even do that. Thus, the solution for a "dumb fool" is to simply come to the Lord by faith.

The Blessings of Poverty versus the Curses of Riches (19 January)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 19:1-2

"Better is the poor that walketh in his integrity, than he that is perverse in his lips, and is a fool. Also, that the soul be without knowledge, it is not good; and he that hasteth with his feet sinneth."

Solomon often compared the blessings of godly poor people to the curses of ungodly rich people. Proverbs 13:7 says, "There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches." Proverbs 28:6 says, "Better is the poor that walketh in his uprightness, than he that is perverse in his ways, though he be rich." It was not that he was against being wealthy since he obviously had plenty of everything for himself. But he recognized financial prosperity as a stumbling block to an individual having a personal walk with the Lord. Many years later, Jesus experienced a young rich man turning from Him because the young rich man had not been willing to put the Lord ahead of his money. So Jesus did not reject the young man because he was wealthy. But the young rich man rejected Him because he was wealthy.

What a tragic mistake for someone to make because the eternal consequences of making that kind of decision are terrible and irreversible. *Hades* and *gehenna* are terrible and they will last forever. According to Solomon, though, the problem is that wealthy people in their self-sufficiency often do not sense a need for the Lord in their lives. They have everything that they need in this life and they usually are not too concerned about what will happen to them on the other side of the grave. Thus, he said that they make themselves like the dumb fool that is not even smart enough to realize what he or she lacks. Their words even show their allegiance to the things of this world over the things of the Lord. By contrast, Solomon said that the poor godly person that walks in his or her integrity shows a more rightly focused mindset on the things of the Lord rather than on the things of the world.

Thus, the simple solution for the rich person as well as for anyone not in the Lord is to simply change their focus and come to Him by faith. Jesus never turns away anyone that comes to Him by faith in the right spirit and with the right attitude. To the person that comes to Him He then gives spiritual knowledge and insight. However, He will never force Himself on those that do not want to come to Him.

Wine is a Mocker and Strong Drink is Raging (20 January)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 20:1-3

"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise. The fear of a king is as the roaring of a lion: whoso provoketh him to anger sinneth against his own soul. It is an honour for a man to cease from strife: but every fool will be meddling."

People do not die lost because they drink intoxicating wine or strong drink. They die lost because they will not come to the Lord by faith. To some Jewish people, Jesus said in John 5:40, "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." People also do not lose their salvation because they drink intoxicating wine or strong drink. They do not lose their salvation because they have been sealed by the Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption. Ephesians 4:30 says, "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." They may however lose their testimony and their effectiveness for the Lord by drinking those kinds of beverages. The Hebrew word for "mocker" means that intoxicating wine turns the drinker into a boaster or a scorner. The Hebrew word for "raging" means that the drinker of strong drink is turned into someone that is boisterous or turbulent. Neither of those attitudes is good for the follower of the Lord. In fact, it has been written that no one is ever made godlier by intoxicating drink.

When people drink intoxicating beverages, they sometimes become so confident or reckless with their tongue that they would provoke even a king. That is what it means to be a boaster, a scorner, boisterous, and turbulent. People that consume such drinks will often run off with their mouth or become involved in brawls even if they have not had too much to drink. That is because intoxicating beverages in any amount start to wear down a person's senses such that the individual begins to lose his or her awareness of what he or she is saying or doing. One of the reasons that the Apostle Paul wrote that bishops and deacons should not be given to wine is because people in those positions should not be found in environments that are usually created by people that are drinking. Another is that those beverages turn the drinker into the kind of person that he or she should not be. Thus, those things being the case, intoxicating beverages really are not good for any person but even more so for those individuals that seek to follow the Lord. Therefore, if a person must drink, then he or she should do so at home.

The King's Heart is in the Lord's Hand (21 January)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 21:1-3

"The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will. Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD pondereth the hearts. To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice."

To say that the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord is to use what is called a literary anthropomorphism. That means to describe God in human terms that human beings can easily understand. John 4:24 says, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Because Jesus had said that His Father is a Spirit, it means that God does not have any hands, any eyes, any ears, or any other physical characteristics. He is an incorporeal spirit. But the point of Proverbs 21:1-3 is that He is still in complete control of everything. The Lord is all-knowing, all-powerful, and everywhere present at the same time.

Thus, while people in high places such as a king or those with a lot of money might think that they are in complete control of their lives and their destiny, such a belief is not correct. The above verses say that God turns the heart of the king in whatever way He desires. Thus, the king's control is limited to whatever the Lord wants. An example of that truth can be seen when Jesus had stood before Pontius Pilate. John 19:10-11 says, "Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin." Pilate had thought that he had the power to decide the fate of Jesus. But he had been wrong. No one can ever do anything to hurt or to kill anyone else unless the Lord allows.

The second part of the above passage says that every way is right in a person's eyes but that the Lord ponders or weighs the heart. Through the centuries people have concluded many different things about how to be saved from eternal doom. As a result, they have always been right in their own eyes. But the Bible is clear in John 14:6 when it says, "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." True salvation is only by Jesus.

A Good Name is Better than Riches (22 January)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 22:1-3

"A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold. The rich and poor meet together: the LORD is the maker of them all. A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished."

According to Solomon, a person's reputation is more valuable than having great wealth. But given the way that many people conduct their lives today, one might have great difficulty believing that. There are some people in this world that will engage in any occupation whether honorable or not just to make a buck. There are many people that will legally cheat others out of their money just so that they may have more for themselves. Thus, there are many people that have proved by their own lifestyle the truth of what the Apostle Paul had written to his young convert Timothy. I Timothy 6:10 says, "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

Paul wrote in that verse that the love of money has caused many people to err from the Faith. Thus, while Solomon may not have used those same words, he had communicated a similar truth. He had said that loving favor is greater than silver and gold. The Hebrew word used for "favour" in the above passage means grace or acceptance. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." Therefore, the conclusion between those thoughts by Solomon and Paul is that God has shown His loving favor to all people by offering His only begotten Son on the cross at Calvary to pay every person's sin debt. But many people have instead chosen or are choosing to go after worldly possessions such as silver and gold rather than receiving His loving gift to humanity. Whether rich or poor, though, the Lord is the maker of everyone.

In the matter of receiving Jesus as Savior and committing oneself to Him, the wise person will do so and benefit. But the unwise person in that matter as well as in many other matters of this life will not see the risks in an ungodly lifestyle and continue on in the same paths that lead to eternal doom and destruction.

Be Not Desirous of Deceitful Meat (23 January)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 23:1-3

"When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee: And put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite. Be not desirous of his dainties: for they are deceitful meat."

In the above passage, Solomon seems to have mostly been concerned with how an individual behaves before a ruler during a formal meal. Given that the host has extended a special invitation to the occasion, the invited guest should practice some restraint and not just dive into the food as one that is half-starved. The correct manner would be to eat slowly and to engage in some casual conversation. The invited guest also should not be gluttonous as that, too, would create the wrong impression. The whole idea of putting a knife to one's throat means to hold oneself and one's behavior hostage so as to not act like a complete fool. In other words, for those dignified occasions to which one might be invited, a person should behave accordingly. To "not be desirous of his dainties" means to not eat too much of the host's best foods. Thus, it is also very important to exercise self-control with respect to portion size, too. The general rule of behavior for such special occasions is to always use proper etiquette and to have good manners.

Many years later, Jesus and the Apostle Paul, respectively, would also speak about one's behavior at special dinners and about eating meats that had been offered to idols. To some lawyers and Pharisees, Jesus would say in Luke 14:8-9, "When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room." The lawyers and Pharisees had customarily always tried to seek out the best seats for themselves during special events. So Jesus had warned them to not take too much upon themselves lest they be embarrassed and told to move to make room for someone else. Paul would not later talk about behavior during special occasions. But he would talk about not causing weaker brethren to stumble by eating meats that had been offered to idols. I Corinthians 8:13 says, "Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." Thus, each of the three men said that a person's behavior and actions during special meals are always important.

Do Not Desire to be with Evil People (24 January)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 24:1-2

"Be not thou envious against evil men, neither desire to be with them. For their heart studieth destruction, and their lips talk of mischief."

Solomon wrote that a person should not be envious or jealous of evil people because they are troublemakers. In the days of Noah and the Great Flood, for example, God had seen that all of the people in the world except for Noah and his family had been consumed by evil. They had been immoral. They had been sexual perverts. They had been impure. Also because of their inappropriate sexual relations with the descendants of Cain and his siblings, the godly line from Seth to Jesus with the exception of Noah had also been in danger of becoming corrupt. Therefore, the actions and behavior of all of those people had made the Lord sorry that He had even created human beings. Genesis 6:5-6 says, "And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart."

The result, of course, during that much earlier time had been the flood and the destruction of all of those evil people. So based upon that example, there are at least two reasons why Solomon would have said that a person should not be jealous of evil people. The first is that bad, evil behavior is not honoring to the Lord. The ideal life path for every individual is to seek the Lord by faith, to commit to Him, to trust in Him, and to then enter into a personal relationship with Him. However, that ideal life path and a wicked lifestyle do not go together. The one leads to the Lord and is pleasing. The other as was seen above does not and is not. The second reason that a person should not be jealous of evil people and of their wicked lifestyle is because they will not have a good end to this life. All of those people that had died in the flood had left this world eternally separated from God because they had not come to Him by faith or committed themselves to Him.

Romans 3:10-11 says, "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God." While those verses say that no one ever comes into this life naturally seeking the Lord, each person can seek Him as soon as he or she becomes aware of His existence.

The Glory of God Conceals a Thing (25 January)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 25:1-2

"These are also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out. It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter."

The proverbs that were recorded prior to the twenty-fourth chapter of the book of Proverbs had already been included in the Scriptures prior to the time of King Hezekiah. But those in the twenty-fifth chapter and following were copied into the Scriptures during the time of Hezekiah. He had lived more than two hundred years after Solomon. He had also been a very godly king that had withstood a major threat by the Assyrians. II Kings 18:28-30 says, "Then Rabshakeh stood and cried with a loud voice in the Jews' language, and spake, saying, Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria...Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, The LORD will surely deliver us, and this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria." In the end, however, the Lord had delivered the people of Judah from their enemies. So Hezekiah had had his men complete the transfer or the copying of the remaining proverbs of Solomon into the Scriptures. Because the Prophet Isaiah had also lived during that same time, he may have been directly responsible to the king for much of that copying effort.

In the above passage, Solomon had said that it is God's glory to conceal or to hide a thing. Since the word "thing" is not further delineated, it can literally mean that the Lord can hide or not hide anything that He chooses. People often ask why a particularly negative catastrophic event has occurred that causes the death of many innocent people. If the Lord wants, He can reveal the reason. But if He does not want, then He has not obligated Himself to do so. For example, when the Babylonians overthrew the people of Judah many years after the above incident with the Assyrians, He had told the people through His prophets that they had violated His years of Jubilee. II Chronicles 36:18-21 says, "...To fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years." So they had gone into captivity as the prophets had said. But no one can say why God allows a tornado, an earthquake, a hurricane, a school shooting, or many other bad things to occur. Nevertheless, to Him be the glory anyway.

Honor is Not a Pretty Thing for a Fool (26 January)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 26:1-3

"As snow in summer, and as rain in harvest, so honour is not seemly for a fool. As the bird by wandering, as the swallow by flying, so the curse causeless shall not come. A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool's back."

In the above passage, Solomon said that giving honor to a fool is not a natural or pretty thing. The Hebrew word that he had used for "fool" means someone that is stupid, simple, or silly as opposed to someone that is actually evil or wicked. In the Hebrew language, two different words for "fool" can be used to distinguish between the "dumb fool" and the "evil fool." So in this passage, the word for "dumb fool" was used. It is not natural or pretty for it to snow in the summer or for it to rain during the harvest. Both weather extremes are unwelcome during those two particular times of the year. In the same sense, it is not natural or pretty for a "dumb fool" to receive the same honor as someone that is in a high position because he or she is not deserving or worthy of such recognition.

Next Solomon said that a curse does not come to anyone without a cause. That means that a curse does not just happen to anyone by chance. It happens because the person has either done something to cause it or has not done something to prevent it. When one considers eternity, the same reasoning applies. Dying lost is a curse. But a person does not die lost unless he or she fails to do something to prevent it. To die NOT lost, an individual must seek the Lord by faith, commit to Him, trust in Him, and then enter into a personal relationship with Him. There is simply no other way to have one's name written in the Lamb's book of life.

Finally, Solomon said that a rod should be the natural implement to be used on a dumb fool's back. Of course, he was not suggesting that one should literally beat a person for being stupid, simple, or silly. But he was saying that such a person like the two animals named in the passage will not respond to basic reasoning or logic. In fact, he would later say that wisdom with poverty is better than power with stupidity. Ecclesiastes 4:13 says, "Better is a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished." Thus, he concluded that one can only get a dumb fool's attention by resorting to the extreme measure of a rod across the back.

Boast Not Thyself of Tomorrow (27 January)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 27:1-3

"Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth. Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips. A stone is heavy, and the sand weighty; but a fool's wrath is heavier than them both."

People many times are inclined to boast about what they will or will not do and even to boast about when they will or will not do it. But Solomon had warned about falling into that trap. The simple fact as he pointed out is that no one knows for certain any part of the future. One moment before having a devastating medical emergency, the individual that will have it probably has no clue about what will soon happen. Similarly a serious automobile accident or some other kind of serious accident might be just a few moments away. But the person or people that will suffer through that experience do not have any idea about that either. As everyone knows, the unknown is simply a very big part of this life.

So James the half-brother of Jesus had also given advice about how to talk about the future. James 4:13-15 says, "Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that." So according to James, everything in this life is ultimately based upon the Lord's will.

The second part of the above passage addressed the futility of self-praise. Solomon said that praise is always better when it comes from someone else. In fact, if people must generate their own praise, then it is likely not warranted and also definitely not worth very much. So the conclusion is that a person will never go right praising himself or herself. But he or she will never go wrong praising the Lord. Psalm 7:17 says, "I will praise the LORD according to his righteousness: and will sing praise to the name of the LORD most high." The second part of the above passage also addressed the wrath of an "evil fool." Because "evil fools" are quarrelsome and despise wisdom, their anger will be more of a problem for the person against whom that anger is directed.

The Wicked Flee when No Man Pursues (28 January)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 28:1-3

"The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion. For the transgression of a land many are the princes thereof: but by a man of understanding and knowledge the state thereof shall be prolonged. A poor man that oppreseth the poor is like a sweeping rain which leaveth no food."

In the above passage about the wicked and the righteous, one might wonder about what kind of individuals Solomon was speaking. Many might categorize the wicked as those individuals that do really bad things like cheat on their taxes, kill people, rob banks, and so forth. They might characterize the righteous as those individuals that do really good things like help old ladies across the street, give large sums of money to worthy causes, and never break or even stretch the laws of the land. However, as much as one might be comfortable with those descriptions, Solomon had not been talking about either of those kinds of people. The Hebrew word that was used above for "wicked" means to be hostile towards God. The Hebrew word used for "righteous" means to be justified with or to be vindicated by God. So in Solomon's mind, being wicked or being righteous depends solely on one's relationship to the Lord. Those people that have come to Him by faith and have been vindicated are bold as a lion. By contrast those people that have not come to Him and are still hostile towards Him run when no one is pursuing.

Solomon's second thought in the above passage pertained to the wickedness or to the righteousness of a nation. When the nation is wicked and its transgressions are many, the changes in leadership tend to occur more often. Many times those changes happen because one person overthrows the other and assumes control of the whole country. But when a godly, righteous person of understanding and knowledge is in power, then the whole nation is more at peace and its changes in leadership occur less often. Solomon's simple conclusion was that godly leaders are better than ungodly leaders for the country and also for the people in that country. Solomon's final thought in the above passage was that poor people are very often unkind and unsympathetic even to each other. He compared their treatment of one another to a sweeping rain that leaves behind no food. His reference to the sweeping rain was to a violent storm that actually carries away the crops in the field.

He that Being often Reproved (29 January)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 29:1-3

"He, that being often reproveth hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy. When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn. Whoso loveth wisdom rejoiceth his father: but he that keepeth company with harlots spendeth his substance."

In the above passage, the Hebrew word used for "he" means a male rather than a female, a husband rather than a wife, or a human rather than God. So the opening phrase is both human specific and gender specific. The Hebrew word used for "reproved" means to rebuke, to correct, to punish, or to chasten. The Hebrew word used for "hardeneth" means to be obstinate, to be stubborn, or to be difficult. So Solomon said that the man that is often corrected but is too stubborn or too difficult to change shall be suddenly destroyed. The Hebrew word used for "destroyed" means broken into pieces, maimed, crippled, or wrecked. Thus, any man that refuses the correction of the Holy Spirit is playing with fire.

One should note, though, that Solomon had probably not been talking about eternal salvation because women who were excluded from his warning can stubbornly refuse to come to the Lord, too. Therefore, he had probably been talking about some kind of sexual sin since men seem to be more vulnerable to something like that. But regardless of the type of sin, a man should not ignore the Lord's correction.

Solomon's second thought expressed a truth about which he often spoke. When righteous people are in power, the people rejoice. But when the wicked are in power, the people are sad. The Hebrew word used for "righteous" means those individuals that have right standing with the Lord. The Hebrew word used for "wicked" refers to those individuals that are hostile towards God. Therefore, Solomon had very definitely distinguished between those people that have and that have not come to the Lord by faith. Thus, from a human perspective, he had said that godly people rule much better than ungodly people. His final thought indicated that a young man should stay away from prostitutes. It could be that that thought was directly connected to his warning in the opening phrase.

He is more Brutish than any Man (30 January)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 30:1-3

The words of Agur the son of Jakeh, even the prophecy: the man spake unto Ithiel, even unto Ithiel and Ucal, Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy."

The above passage begins by mentioning a man named Agur as the possible author of the thirtieth chapter of the book of Proverbs. However, it is more likely that if anything he had merely compiled some of Solomon's proverbs rather than actually adding to what Solomon had already done. One may recall that chapters twenty-five through twenty-nine had been copied while Hezekiah had been the king of Judah. Proverbs 25:1 says, "These are also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out." So one conclusion is that that is what Agur might have done. Of course, another possibility according to some Bible scholars and commentators is that Solomon had been Agur and that Jakeh had been his father David.

While that latter view cannot be confirmed based upon the existing information, the opening passage seems to suggest that Solomon might have felt that way towards the end of his life because he had made some very serious personal mistakes. I Kings 11:1-4 says, "But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; Of the nations concerning which the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart. For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father."

So Agur or Solomon called himself more brutish or more stupid than any other man. He declared that he did not have the understanding of a man, that he had not learned wisdom, and that he did not have the knowledge of one that is holy.

The Words of Lemuel about Female Relationships (31 January)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 31:1-3

"The words of king Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him. What, my son? and what, the son of my womb? and what, the son of my vows? Give not thy strength unto women, nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings."

The above passage identified the words to follow as being those of King Lemuel. But no general consensus exists to support that person's exact identity. Some Bible scholars and commentators have said that Solomon is King Lemuel and that the mother referenced in the above passage is Bathsheba. Some have said that Solomon actually wrote the words of the chapter to King Lemuel rather than them being by King Lemuel. Some have said that the chapter was written sometime after the life of Solomon and simply added to his other works. If that latter belief is true, then the scholars holding to that possibility think that sometime during the Babylonian reign would have best fit. A final possibility is that King Lemuel might have simply compiled the below proverbs of Solomon and then added them to his other writings. So like with Agur in chapter thirty of the book of Proverbs, no one can with any certainty identify King Lemuel. But if the words of the book of Proverbs, chapter thirty-one made it into the Bible, then one can be sure they were inspired by the Holy Spirit just like all of the other words in the Scriptures.

Therefore, until someone can satisfactorily resolve the above difficulty about King Lemuel's identity, the assumption in this text will be that the words of the book of Proverbs, chapter thirty-one originated with Solomon and that the mother being referenced was Bathsheba. But that is not an unreasonable assumption to make given their relationship. During David's last days, she had petitioned with him to make their son Solomon the next king. Then once David had died, she had been like an adviser to Solomon during his first days as the new king. So it makes sense to conclude that she and he had been closely involved as mother and son in the thirty-first chapter of the book of Proverbs. In the above passage, she had told him to not waste his mental and physical abilities on women. Since he had had so many wives and concubines, that would have been pretty good advice. However, the evidence suggests that he had not listened. But one should not be surprised by that because it is not uncommon for a man in high power to be adversely affected by his natural weakness for the opposite sex.

Fear of the Lord is the Beginning of Knowledge (01 February)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 1:5-7

"A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels: To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction."

In the above passage when Solomon said that a wise person will hear and increase in learning, he was talking about someone that by definition is ethically and religiously wise, subtle, and prudent. When he said that an individual of understanding will seek wise counsel, he was talking about someone that by definition is discerning, intelligent, and perceptive. The verses preceding the above passage say that studying the book of Proverbs will give a person wisdom, judgment, justice, and equity. It will also make a simple person wise and give knowledge and discretion to the young person.

It is important to understand, however, that Solomon's idea of being wise and of being a person of understanding is exactly the same as being eternally saved and in a personal relationship with the Lord. One can know that for sure because someone as wise as he would never call someone else wise or credit him or her with having understanding if the person would be eternally separated from God at death. That would not be logical. Therefore, a person cannot be considered wise and die lost because there is nothing wise about dying lost. The same is also true about being a person of understanding. That means that at some point in the individual's life, meaning past, present, or future, he or she must seek the Lord with all of his or her heart. He or she must commit themselves to Him. He or she must put their trust in Him. Then he or she must enter into a personal relationship with Him. There is simply no other way for a person to be biblically wise and a person of understanding without first coming to the Lord by faith.

The latter part of the above passage confirms that truth. Solomon said that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. Fearing the Lord is not being afraid of Him. But it is more than just reverencing Him, too. Truly fearing the Lord will cause the unrepentant sinner to fall before Him and ask for mercy. It will cause the repentant sinner to commit his or her life to Him and live for Him.

The Lord Gives Wisdom and Knowledge (02 February)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 2:6

"For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding."

When people choose to receive the godly words of the teacher and to possess his commandments, they learn the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. When they choose to seek godly wisdom and understanding from a pure heart, they learn what it means to be born again. Thus, those are two very good choices for every person to make. But it is important to realize that those things do not have anything to do with one's intellectual capacity. Instead they pertain mostly to the person's internal spiritual being. In a world where many and maybe even most people seek money and possessions and more money and more possessions, the wisdom, knowledge, and understanding that the Lord freely gives is still much more valuable than anything else.

Someone may question that statement. After all it is important to get a good education, to make a lot of money, to raise one's family, and to do well in life. However, while those things have some importance, nothing in life is more important than being in a personal relationship with the Lord. Truly smart people will realize that and seek Him by faith in the right spirit with the right attitude. Isaiah 55:6-7 says, "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." In contrast to godly wisdom, the biblical definition of a fool is to not seek the Lord while He may be found.

The above opening passage says that God gives wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. James the half-brother of Jesus many years later wrote the exact same truth. James 1:5-6 says, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed." Thus, according to Solomon, one must actually seek those things. According to James, one must actually seek them by faith. The simple fact is that both men are correct. Seek by faith and find.

Be a Person of Mercy and Truth (03 February)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 3:3-4

"Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart: So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man."

Proverbs 3:1-2 says, "My son...let thine heart keep my commandments: For length of days...shall they add to thee." In those verses, the speaker told the young person that obeying his commandments would bring peace and long life. It is important to understand, though, that the book of Proverbs often teaches general principles rather than spiritual absolutes. That means that some promises are statistically probable but not always one hundred percent guaranteed. For example, the probability is high that the person that does not smoke cigarettes or take illegal drugs or drink alcoholic beverages but that does maintain a healthy lifestyle will live longer. But no one can guarantee such a person even one more moment in this life. There are simply too many other uncertainties to consider. For that reason, Proverbs 27:1 says, "Boast not thyself of to morrow...." In the same sense, the above passage says that the person that holds to mercy and truth will find favor and good understanding in the sight of God and man. But that also is a general principle which is not necessarily a spiritual absolute.

The reason is simple. Mercy means to be a good, kind person that is quick to forgive others. Truth means to reflect ethical and religious reality. The first promise to the person that does not forsake mercy and truth is that he or she will find favor and understanding with the Lord. The second promise is that he or she will also find favor and understanding with other people. Those are wonderful promises. But they are only true for the person that is in Christ. If he or she has never sought the Lord by faith and committed to Him, then simply being a good, kind person or being willing to quickly forgive others is not enough. It might be of some value with some people. But it will be of no eternal value with the Lord. In spiritual matters, it is always required to get things in the correct order. Thus, while it might be good to be a good, kind person that is quick to forgive others, it is absolutely mandatory to first receive the Lord. For the promises in the book of Proverbs to be significant, the person must first come to the Lord by faith, commit to Him, trust in Him, and then enter into a personal relationship with Him.

Let thy Heart Keep the Commandments (04 February)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 4:3-4

"For I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother. He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live."

Proverbs 4:1-2 says, "Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding...." In those verses, the speaker was probably Solomon. Thus, the above references to his having been his father's son and the beloved of his mother would have been to his father David and to his mother Bathsheba. So David had told Solomon to let his heart retain his words. He had also told him to keep his commandments. Those words might have seemed strange coming from one king to his son that would be the future king of Israel. But David had not been just another king. He had defeated the Philistine giant Goliath. He had been King Saul's leader in battle until Saul had turned against him. Plus despite his own shortcomings, he had still been the top king in Israel's long history. Acts 13:21-22 says, "And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul...when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king...I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart...."

So David's words to his son would have been very valuable. But their value was not related to his reign as the king of Israel. He did not tell Solomon just how to be a great leader and a great king. He had actually told him how to live for the Lord and how to be a great person. In so doing he had actually prepared his son for eternity by teaching him about the God of Creation and the Creator of eternity. Thus, when David had told his son to keep his commandments, he had actually been telling him to keep the Lord's commandments. One can know that for certain just by reading some of the things that he had written. In fact, some of the things that Solomon later said sounded like some of the things that his father had earlier written. Psalm 19:7 says, "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple." Psalm 37:31 says, "The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide." Psalm 40:8 says, "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." Thus, one might say that Solomon had been so wise because his parents before him had also been very wise.

Beware the Lips of a Strange Woman (05 February)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 5:3-4

"For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil: But her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a twoedged sword."

Proverbs 5:1-2 says, "My son, attend unto my wisdom, and bow thine ear to my understanding: That thou mayest regard discretion, and that thy lips may keep knowledge." In those verses, Solomon advised his son to pursue godly wisdom and godly understanding so that he would have discretion and knowledge. But the Hebrew word that he used for "son" was not gender specific. So it could have meant either a male child or a female child. However, the Bible translators chose to use the word "son" rather than the word "daughter" or "child" because that word best fits the overall context of the passage. Wisdom and understanding from above are acquired when one comes to the Lord by faith. They are developed as he or she learns to live for Him. Then through that maturing process, the person learns discretion and knowledge. The Hebrew word used for "discretion" means to enable someone to see through the evil devices of those around him. So in the above passage, discretion will keep the young male from the strange female.

Only a young man is likely to be swayed by or drawn to the lips of a strange woman. Thus, Solomon's primary goal had been to warn his son and other young men about being caught up in sexual impurity. At the moment of their distraction, her lips would seem sweet like honeycomb. Her mouth would be smooth and appealing. But Solomon called her the strange woman because she was not the young man's intended. If he were married, then certainly he did not belong in any kind of sexual relationship with her. If she were married to another man, then he still did not belong with her. But if they were both single, they did not belong in any kind of sexual relationship with each other either. The Bible is clear about who belongs with whom. Genesis 2:24-25 says, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed." So Solomon said that the end of an improper sexual relationship between a man and a woman is bitterness. But when two people are brought together by the Lord as were Adam and Eve, there is no shame for either person.

Deliver thyself from being a Surety (06 February)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 6:4-5

"Give not sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eyelids. Deliver thyself as a roe from the hand of the hunter, and as a bird from the hand of the fowler."

In the preceding three verses, Solomon warned his child about being a surety or a cosigner for someone that claims to be a friend. To cosign for someone means to pay his or her debt if he or she does not do so. Therefore, Solomon warned his child to be very careful about agreeing to pay someone else's debt if they default. According to him, the individual that claims to be a friend is actually no friend at all if he or she skips out on the financial obligation and sticks the cosigner with the bill. Skipping out like that could possibly make the cosigner unable to satisfy his or her own debts. It could also create some very negative consequences for his or her family that in turn would create even further problems for the young cosigner. I Timothy 5:8 says, "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." Thus, the Bible teaches that the needs of one's family should always come before those of a friend looking for a cosigner. So for that reason, Solomon frequently urged extreme caution to his own children plus to anyone else that might agree to accept another person's financial burdens.

He even told his child that he or she might have to constantly stay on the person to get him or her to take responsibility for their obligation. But if necessary, that is what should be done. The expression that he used was to make sure his or her friend. In the above passage, he also added that his child should not sleep until he or she had been freed from the financial predicament. That was his way of telling his child that the matter required the upmost urgency. Few things in this life are more stressful than the inability to pay one's bills and to care for one's family. That difficulty becomes even more distressing when the young person as cosigner must first pay the bills of someone else that could care less. In those days, the surety agreement was agreed to by a handshake. Once that was done, it was sealed by each person's honor. But the worse part of the whole thing is that the cosigner was stuck in the agreement as soon as he or she shook hands. Therefore, Solomon had wanted his children to be very careful about taking on the financial obligations of those outside of his or her family.

Write the Commandments upon thy Heart (07 February)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 7:3

"Bind them upon thy fingers, write them upon the table of thine heart."

Based upon the non-gender specific Hebrew word that he used for "son" in the opening verse of the chapter, Solomon was telling his child and other male and female children to obey his commandments and live. However, that seems to contradict Ephesians 2:8-9 which says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." According to those verses, a person is saved by grace rather than by keeping commandments. Even more than that, though, no person can even keep the commandments. Every person born from Adam comes into this life with a sin nature that has already programmed him or her to go wrong. Romans 3:10-11 says, "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God." Romans 3:23-26 says, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God...." So because no human being comes into this life seeking God or living for Him, no human being at birth has even a slim chance of keeping the commandments. In fact, it is impossible.

The dilemma that every person faces then is how to be reconciled to a God that no one naturally seeks. The answer is that He reveals Himself to them through His Creation. That means that they can look at the trees, the stars, the sun, the moon, and all of the other aspects of Creation and conclude that there must be a Creator. He then as Creator draws them to Him so that they can be saved. John 6:44 says, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him...." Thus, biblical salvation occurs when people seek the Lord by faith, when they commit to Him, when they trust in Him, and when they enter into a personal relationship with Him. After that, the individual becomes a new person in Christ and is no longer someone that does not seek after God. II Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature...." As that new creature, he or she can begin to live a life that is pleasing to the Lord. He or she can serve Him. He or she can also try to be obedient to His commandments. While the sin nature inherited at birth is never completely taken away, the person with the new nature that one gets from the Lord can better live the godly, obedient life spoken about by Solomon. So being born again must come before the obedient lifestyle.

Understand Wisdom and Have a Wise Heart (08 February)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 8:4-6

"Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of man. O ye simple, understand wisdom: and, ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart. Hear; for I will speak of excellent things; and the opening of my lips shall be right things."

In the opening verses of the chapter, Solomon said that godly wisdom and godly understanding dwell in the top of high places and that they cry out at the gates. By being in the top of high places, it means that they will cause an individual to live a godly life. He or she will have very high morals and also be ethically and religiously sound. One should note, though, that godly wisdom and godly understanding are not just in high places but that they are at the top of high places. Therefore, when one has acquired them there is no higher place to go. Similarly, Solomon also implied that godly wisdom and godly understanding are attainable by anyone because they cry out at the gates rather than hide themselves away in obscurity. In this world, common people are often not given access to the higher venues of life because those things have been reserved for the elite. But with the Lord, anyone can come to Him by faith and immediately put themselves on the path that leads to godly wisdom and godly understanding. Furthermore, the best part of all is that they are completely free.

As Solomon indicated in the above passage, the admonition to the simple person is to understand wisdom and to the foolish person is to have an understanding heart. The Hebrew word used for "simple" means to be foolish or to be naive. The Hebrew word used for "fool" means to be a simpleton or to be stupid. But what may not be clear from those two words is the actual identity of such persons. Who would Solomon say is simple or foolish? While his answer is not surprising, it might surprise many people. Proverbs 9:10 says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding." His father David had also agreed with that. In Psalm 111:10, he wrote, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever." Thus, those people that are not simple or foolish are those people that are revering the Lord. In fact, those verses even say that the beginning of wisdom is to fear Him. So any person that does not fear the Lord and that has not come to Him by faith is missing the spiritual boat.

Wisdom Calls to Those that Want Understanding (09 February)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 9:3-5

"She hath sent forth her maidens: she crieth upon the highest places of the city, Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled."

Proverbs 9:1-2 says, "Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars...." In those verses, Solomon personified godly wisdom to show the Lord as the "Creator of Everything" and as being magnificent in His Creation. Everything about the world that He created was perfect. So in the above passage, he continued to say that godly wisdom tries to reach those people that have never come to the Lord by faith. She sends out her maidens or her servants to share the good news that God can be found and known. Those people being sent out are pastors, evangelists, missionaries, Sunday school teachers, and anyone else that is sincerely trying to share spiritual truth with others. By going to the highest places in the city, she has positioned herself to where she can be easily seen and heard by anyone and everyone. But all the while, her message is the same.

So, two questions need to be asked. First, who is the target audience of godly wisdom? To whom is she specifically speaking? The above passage invites the simple and those people that want understanding to come. Obviously the simple speaks for itself. Similarly someone that wants understanding is someone that does not currently have it. So the answer to the first question as was indicated above is that wisdom calls to those people that have never come to the Lord by faith. One can know that for sure because the Bible never describes anyone that has come to Him as being simple or as lacking understanding. At the same time, it says that those that come to Him will have good understanding. Psalm 111:10 says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever."

The second question seeks to know godly wisdom's message. Quite simply it is that the Lord can be found by anyone that seeks Him with all of his or her heart. Once done, the person can commit to Him, trust in Him, and enter into a personal relationship with Him. That is very good news to anyone currently far from Him.

The Hand of the Diligent Usually Prospers (10 February)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 10:4-6

"He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich. He that gathereth in summer is a wise son: but he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame. Blessings are upon the head of the just: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked."

In the second part of Solomon's sayings, he frequently made an opening statement and then followed it with an opposing statement. Those forms of expression are called couplets. He had probably used that technique because a couplet can usually be easily remembered. In the above passage, he spoke three couplets. In the first two, he compared the hard-working, diligent person to the lazy person. Throughout his sayings, he often praised the diligent person but spoke critically of the lazy person or the slothful person. Proverbs 12:27 says, "The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting: but the substance of a diligent man is precious." Proverbs 26:14 says, "As the door turneth upon his hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed." Thus, Solomon said that the slothful person in the first couplet becomes economically poor while the hard-working person becomes economically rich. In the second couplet, the hard-working child is wise because he or she gathers in summer while the lazy person will not even gather the harvest that is necessary for his or her own survival.

In considering Solomon's couplets, however, one should note that his sayings were often general principles rather than spiritual absolutes. That basically means that they were almost always true but not necessarily always true. For example, the first above couplet implied that hard-working people get rich and that lazy people become poor. While that is a general principle for life, most people will acknowledge that Solomon's saying is not always true. Many times, people cheat and steal their way to riches rather than actually work hard for their prosperity. Also many very hard-working individuals never become economically rich. In the third above couplet, Solomon said that blessings are upon the head of the just. The Hebrew word used for "blessings" means the praises of the Lord. The Hebrew word used for "just" means righteous or vindicated by God. So once again, those people that have come to the Lord by faith and that are committed to Him will in general be blessed in this life and for sure be blessed in the next life.

Riches Fail in the Day of Wrath (11 February)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 11:4-6

"Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death. The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way: but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness. The righteousness of the upright shall deliver them: but transgressors shall be taken in their own naughtiness."

In the opening verses of the eleventh chapter, Solomon said that dishonesty, arrogance, and deceitful behavior are disgusting to the Lord. In the above passage, he added something else that should be obvious. It is that while those behaviors are disgusting to the Lord the money that one gets from employing them are of no value to a person when something of value is most needed. By that, he was saying that the riches of this life will not help a person in the day of wrath but that righteousness will deliver from death. Thus, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit he was speaking directly about the final judgment.

The key to understanding that is his saying that righteousness delivers from death. By righteousness Solomon meant those people that have sought the Lord with all of their heart, have committed to Him, are trusting in Him, and are in a personal relationship with Him. They are declared righteous because they have right standing with the Lord. By death he meant the second death. Therefore, those people that have come to the Lord by faith will be delivered from the second death. But those people that have not come to Him will not be delivered from the second death even though they may be wealthy. So the obvious conclusion is that there is no greater wealth in this life than a personal relationship with the Lord.

In saying that, one should note that while many of Solomon's sayings are general principles rather than spiritual absolutes that the above comment about a personal relationship with the Lord delivering from the second death is a spiritual absolute. All of those people in Christ Jesus will have eternal life through Him and with Him. Romans 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." But those people that are not in Him do not have eternal life through Him or with Him. Solomon further indicated that righteous people will be led by their righteousness and that unrighteous people will be led by their naughtiness or wickedness.

The Righteous Think Right but the Wicked Do Not (12 February)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 12:4-6

"A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband: but she that maketh ashamed is as rottenness in his bones. The thoughts of the righteous are right: but the counsels of the wicked are deceit. The words of the wicked are to lie in wait for blood: but the mouth of the upright shall deliver them."

Solomon said that a virtuous woman is a crown to her husband. That means that the wife that is internally strong and spiritually right-focused is like an ornament of honor that he can proudly wear in public. In the sporting games of those days, the winner of an event was also given a crown to be proudly worn. So a godly woman that loves the Lord and that serves Him brings that same kind of honor to her husband and to herself by properly ordering her life. However, it is important to understand that that dual devotion by the wife to the Lord and to her husband should also be matched by her husband's dual devotion to them.

That is because in the best homes and the godliest homes every family member is living for the Lord. Every family member is also committed to Him and trusting in Him. So while some of the older cultures put the husband on a pedestal and had the wife answering his every beckoned call, Solomon never taught or advocated that kind of thinking. He always held mothers and wives in very high esteem. Proverbs 1:8-9 says, "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck." Proverbs 18:22 says, "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD." So as Solomon said, the thoughts of the righteous are right. Two of those right thoughts are husbands and wives honoring and loving each other and children honoring and loving them.

But wicked people do not live by those same kinds of thoughts. Even though people that have come to the Lord by faith will still occasionally stumble, that is never their desire. The closer that one lives to the Lord the closer that he or she will want to be. However, Solomon said that wicked, ungodly people lie in wait for blood. Since the expression that followed those words spoke about the mouth of the upright, the meaning of the preceding statement is that the wicked like to hurt and destroy with their tongue. Thus, all people should guard what they say.

The Soul of the Diligent Shall Be Made Fat (13 February)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 13:4-5

"The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat. A righteous man hateth lying: but a wicked man is loathsome, and cometh to shame."

Solomon often spoke about the blessings of the industrious, hard working person and about the empty life of the fruitless, unproductive lazy person. In the above passage, he said that a lazy person will want to have the same things as everyone else. However, he or she will be too lazy to put forth the necessary effort to get any of them. Sometimes the lazy person will not get out of bed to do anything worthwhile. Sometimes he or she will not perform the basic chores to care for himself or herself such as planting crops that can later be harvested. Throughout the book of Proverbs, eleven sayings were uttered about people that are too lazy to make positive contributions to their lives. By contrast, Solomon spoke many very positive things about those that do work hard and that do take responsibility for their lives. Above he said that the soul of the diligent person will be made fat. Obviously that was not a reference to the person's weight. But it did indicate the internal satisfaction that one experiences from being self-sufficient.

In the second part of the above passage, Solomon spoke about the righteous person's feelings with respect to being honest or dishonest. In general, the person that has come to the Lord by faith will have very strong emotional feelings about being truthful. He or she will hate lying no matter how insignificant the lie. Solomon also said that the wicked person is loathsome which means to stink. So the person that has not come to the Lord will in general not feel so strongly about being honest. That means that his ways with respect to his communications will figuratively stink. But the implication is more than just being dishonest with respect to certain facts. Instead it is more about being dishonest concerning another person's character. The righteous person will not perform character assassination against his or her neighbor. But the wicked person will do so in an instant and never give it another thought. For that reason, Solomon said that the wicked person stinks and that he or she will come to shame. The conclusion is that it is wrong to belittle others with one's speech. The old adage of not saying anything at all if one cannot say something nice definitely applies in this case.

False Pride, Dirty Oxen, and Faithful Witnesses (14 February)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 14:3-5

"In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride: but the lips of the wise shall preserve them. Where no oxen are, the crib is clean: but much increase is by the strength of the ox. A faithful witness will not lie: but a false witness will utter lies."

Solomon often spoke about how the words that one says show his or her true character. For example, Proverbs 10:13 says, "In the lips of him that hath understanding wisdom is found..." In that case he said that the use of the tongue shows whether or not a person is wise and has understanding. Proverbs 13:3 says, "He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction." In that case he said that one's words show how carefully the individual manages his or her life. Thus, they sometimes speak without paying much attention to what they are actually saying. In the above passage, he said that people are foolish when they speak with the wrong kind of pride and try to put themselves on a pedestal. The biblical way is to let others give praise rather than trying to create one's own praise. For that reason, a wise person will guard what he or she says and even more so about themselves. So Solomon basically said that people of many words are often careless with other aspects of their lives.

He also said that where the crib is clean there are no oxen. That simply means that sometimes people receive the greatest positives from things that also create the greatest negatives. For example, oxen are very dirty animals. They make a mess. But they are also very productive animals that do a lot of work. Therefore, one should learn to see the benefits as well as the costs of something rather than just looking at one or the other. It may be terrible to have to get up in the morning and go to work. But by working, one can earn money and become self-sufficient. Solomon's point was that few things in life are perfect in every respect. Finally, to close out the above passage, he compared good and bad witnesses. In every court case, either the prosecution or the defense is usually dependent upon reliable witnesses. Solomon said that a faithful witness will tell the truth and help the courts arrive at the proper verdict. But a false witness will tell lies and possibly lead the courts astray. However, one should realize that a person's life in some cases might be dependent upon the truth being known. So, one should be honest.

A Wholesome Tongue is a Tree of Life (15 February)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 15:4-6

A wholesome tongue is a tree of life: but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit. A fool despiseth his father's instruction: but he that regardeth reproof is prudent. In the house of the righteous is much treasure: but in the revenues of the wicked is trouble."

Just as a soft answer can keep a bad situation from becoming worse, a clean and wholesome tongue according to Solomon is like a tree of life. The Bible often mentions the book of life, though, which is much different than the tree of life. So, one must be careful to not confuse the two. It is also important to know which comes first because that is critically important. The book of life contains the names of those people that have come to Lord by faith and been born again. But the book of life only pertains mostly to one's language. So concerning which comes first, a wholesome tongue is of no benefit to the person that dies lost. It also will not keep a person from dying lost. The reason is because no one earns his or her way into heaven. Ephesians 2:8-10 says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

So that passage puts the book of life and the tree of life into the correct order. By the grace of God, a person that comes to the Lord by faith is saved. At that time, his or her name is written in the book of life. They are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and also receive a new spiritual heart. Then the born again person will begin to clean up their language and to speak more wholesomely. In fact, that cleaner tongue becomes an evidence that the person has actually come to the Lord by faith and been saved. Many years later Jesus said to the Pharisees in Matthew 12:34, "O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." So the book of life definitely comes before the tree of life. Solomon even said that perverse speech always reveals one's true spiritual condition. He also said that the ungodly person will not listen to instruction and be more inclined to deal dishonestly in financial matters. However, the person that has come to the Lord by faith will be open to parental correction and also to being more honest in financial matters.

God Does Not Make People Wicked or Proud (16 February)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 16:4-6

"The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil. Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished. By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil."

Solomon said above that the Lord has made all things for himself. But what he said right after that might easily be misunderstood because it is that He also made the wicked for the day of evil. Does that mean that He had predetermined before Creation that some people would be wicked and that some people would not be. In like manner, does He also make some people be prideful? The answer to those questions must be no. Theologians describe the Scriptures as being inerrant and verbally, plenary inspired. Inerrant means that there are not any theological inconsistencies in its teachings. Verbal inspiration means that every word of the Scriptures is inspired by the Holy Spirit. Plenary inspiration means that every word of the Scriptures is equally inspired. Therefore, there are not any words or passages in the Bible that are anymore inspired than any other words or passages.

But if the Scriptures are inerrant and inspired, then how can one explain that God had made the wicked for the day of evil without also concluding that He chose or predetermined some people to be wicked? That same question applies to His also having made some people be prideful. The answer can be found by looking at Nineveh when God was going to destroy that city. The Prophet Jonah went there and warned them of their coming doom. When the king heard the warning, he led his city to repent. Then the Scriptures say that the Lord changed His mind about destroying the city. But God who never changes cannot change His mind. So the way to understand that is that the people of Nineveh are the ones that changed. The Lord did not change at all. The people by their own choice went from being unrighteous to being righteous, and God does not destroy the righteous.

So, one can apply that same reasoning to the above passage. God did not decide that some people would be wicked or prideful. But He did declare a day of evil to deal with those people that choose of their own free will to be those ways. If they repent, they will not be part of that day. But if they do not repent, they will be.

Trying the Heart and the Ways of Wicked People (17 February)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 17:3-4

"The fining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold: but the LORD trieth the hearts. A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips; and a liar giveth ear to a naughty tongue."

A fining pot or a furnace is used to remove impurities from silver, gold, and other precious metals. When those metals are heated to very high temperatures, their impurities or dross burn away and they become much higher quality metals that can be used for special purposes. In the same way, the Lord tries or proves the hearts of those people that have come to Him by faith. The results are that they become finer vessels for Him and that they can be used to bring Him honor and glory as they accomplish His work in this life.

Psalm 26:1-3 says, "...I have trusted also in the LORD; therefore I shall not slide. Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart. For thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes: and I have walked in thy truth." Psalm 139:23-24 says, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." So just as with extreme heat on the metals, the Lord's trying or proving process matures those individuals that have come to Him by faith. It makes them godlier. They learn to trust Him even more. They begin to walk in His truth with greater commitment. They depart from their sinful ways. They become even more spiritually focused.

In addition to the above, Solomon also said that the person that does wicked things will pay attention to false lips and that someone that is untruthful will listen to a person that speaks with perverse thoughts. Those words are consistent with the old adage that birds of a feather stick together. So the bad part about that is that evil begets more evil and that wickedness begets more wickedness. But the good part is that a godly person will be forewarned by a person's speech whether to embrace the individual or to stay away. Those people that are trying to live for the Lord will usually be brought down by hanging out with those people that are not. So Proverbs 4:14-15 says, "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away."

Contempt and Reproach versus Deep Waters (18 February)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 18:3-4

"When the wicked cometh, then cometh also contempt, and with ignominy reproach. The words of a man's mouth are as deep waters, and the wellspring of wisdom as a flowing brook."

Solomon said that contempt comes with the wicked and that reproach comes with ignominy. The wicked are the ungodly. They are the people that have not come to the Lord by faith. Whenever they are around, they create an environment of contempt. That means that they do not like other wicked people and that other wicked people do not like them. It is a two-way street that has been established by hatred and distrust. The two might cooperate with each other as they do their dastardly deeds together. But they do not like each other. They do not trust each other. Plus they are as likely to stab each other in the back as not. The Hebrew word used for "ignominy" means dishonor or shame. Solomon said that reproach or disgrace is the byproduct of dishonor or shame. So his saying was almost like using a double negative where neither negative was good.

He next said that the words of a person's mouth are like deep waters. His analogy was to a deep well that was full to the brim with clear, refreshing water. No matter how much one takes of those deep waters, there is always plenty more to be taken. But one should note that Solomon was not just speaking about any person. By next referring to a wellspring of wisdom, he was talking specifically about the words of a wise person. But who would he consider wise? It is the person that has sought the Lord with all of his or her heart, has committed to Him, is trusting in Him, and has entered into a personal relationship with Him. To do anything less than that certainly would not be considered wise. To do anything less than that would be doing the same as the wicked person discussed above.

He concluded by saying that the wellspring of wisdom is as a flowing brook. A flowing brook usually represents peace, contentment, and refreshing. So that was how Solomon equated wisdom in a person's life. Above he associated words like hatred, distrust, reproach, and contempt with those people that have not come to the Lord by faith. But at the same time, he associated words like deep waters and refreshing brook with those people that have come to Him by faith.

Foolishness Perverts and Wealth Separates (19 February)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 19:3-4

"The foolishness of man perverteth his way: and his heart fretteth against the LORD. Wealth maketh many friends; but the poor is separated from his neighbour."

In the above passage, Solomon said that the foolishness of a person perverts his or her way and that that individual's heart frets against the Lord. In having said those things, however, there is only one kind of heart that truly frets against the Lord. It is the heart of the person that has never come to Him by faith. Thus, Solomon was talking about ungodly people. It is easy to see why the ways of such people are perverted by foolishness. Someone in this existence that has not come to the Lord by faith might be able to make a few wise decisions about some of the things that occur in this life. But by not having come to Him, he or she has already made the biggest miscalculation imaginable.

It is impossible to have one's ways not perverted and to then die lost. Perversion and dying lost go hand-in-hand. Therefore, every person that has ever lived or that now lives had or has a perverted walk in this life simply by virtue of their not having come to the Lord by faith. Solomon always called such people fools, and he referred above to their foolishness. According to him, an ungodly person is not capable of anything else. However, even an ungodly fool can forsake his or her foolish ways and turn to the Lord. God will never turn away anyone that comes to Him by faith in the right spirit and with the right attitude.

Solomon next indicated that wealthy people have many friends but that poor people are separated even from their neighbors. With wealth comes power and position. So he said that people are often drawn to such individuals. But while there is nothing wrong with being rich, being rich should not be a person's chief aim in life. Psalm 111:10 says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom...." Thus, the chief aim of every person whether rich or poor should be to be rightly related to the Lord. While incarnated into this life, Jesus on one occasion even asked what one truly gains by acquiring the whole world but then dying lost. His implied answer is nothing. Therefore, all people need to realize that God is real, that eternal condemnation is real, and that it will last forever.

The Sluggard Will Not Plow in the Cold (20 February)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 20:4-6

"The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing. Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out. Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?"

The Hebrew word for "sluggard" in the above passage is referring to someone that is slothful or lazy. According to Solomon, few human traits are less desirable than that of being lazy. In fact, he wrote six verses in the book of Proverbs about people that he called sluggards. He wrote eleven verses about those that he had called slothful. None of the seventeen verses about those kinds of people had been complementary. For one thing, lazy people will not put forth the effort to even take care of themselves. When it is cold outside, they will not plow their fields because of the undesirable weather. Instead they will stay huddled inside where it is warm. But then when the time for harvest arrives, they will not have produced any crops to harvest for their own sustenance. They will not even have what they need to survive. The result is that they will be reduced to begging. So a wise person will hear Solomon's counsel about laziness and be strengthened.

He said that counsel in the heart of man is like deep water. That means that it might be harder to find because one can obviously find something in shallow water much easier than in deep water. However, a person that has biblical understanding will find and apply that godly counsel even if it is symbolically hidden in deep water. To have biblical understanding means to have insight into God's truths. It can also mean to have discretion. But that is the very reason for the book of Proverbs. Solomon had spoken so many proverbs so that the hearer and receiver of his words might have understanding, knowledge, and discretion. Proverbs 1:1-4 says, "The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel; To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity; To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion." Therefore, a wise person will daily read the sayings of Solomon, apply their teachings to his or her life, and as a result become even wiser. Psalm 49:3 says, "My mouth shall speak of wisdom; and the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding."

The Plowing of the Wicked is Sin (21 February)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 21:4-6

"An high look, and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked, is sin. The thoughts of the diligent tend only to plenteousness; but of every one that is hasty only to want. The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death."

In the above verses, Solomon said that a high look, a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked are sin. What that had basically meant is that the wicked or the ungodly are only capable of things that are sinful. A high look means to put oneself on a pedestal. A proud heart means to have the wrong kind of pride. Psalm 10:4 says, "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts." Thus, that kind of pride should not be confused with the pride that causes one to work hard and to do a good job. Similarly plowing one's fields is also a positive labor. But the plowing of the wicked unlike that positive labor leads to sinful behavior, too, because wicked people are consumed by evil thoughts. When they are not doing the wrong things, they are usually planning the wrong things to do.

Next Solomon said that a hasty person would always be in want or lacking. The reason is simple. Haste makes waste. Finally he indicated that dishonest acquisitions are not honorable either. Furthermore by saying that the gained treasures are a vanity, he had in effect been indicating that wealth is as a vapor. That means that it does not last forever and that it is gone before one knows it.

However, in saying those things though, what Solomon had not said is that every person is born with a wicked heart and a sin nature. Most people like to think that they are pretty good. But without Christ, Solomon's words about the wicked person apply to every human being ever born. Romans 3:23-26 says, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God...." However, through the shed blood of Jesus on the cross at Calvary, a person can seek Him, commit to Him, trust in Him, and enter into a personal relationship with Him. Then his or her wicked heart is replaced with a godly heart, and he or she becomes a new creature in Christ. II Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

Humility and Fear of the Lord Lead to Riches (22 February)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 22:4-6

"By humility and the fear of the LORD are riches, and honour, and life. Thorns and snares are in the way of the froward: he that doth keep his soul shall be far from them. Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

Solomon had opened the twenty-second chapter in the book of Proverbs by talking about having a good name and about receiving loving favor. Then almost immediately after that, he had spoken above about having riches, honor, and life. Those thoughts almost sound contradictory. But they are not because he had not been talking about pursuing worldly riches or worldly honor. Some people might like to have riches in this world. But having riches with the Lord is far better. Riches and honor in this world when correctly gotten usually involve hard work. But riches and honor with the Lord always involve being humble and fearing Him. The Hebrew word used for "humility" in the above passage means to possess a godly gentleness. The Hebrew word used for "fear" in that passage means to have respect or reverence for the Lord. Those things are important.

Solomon also wrote that the perverse or crooked person encounters thorns and snares. While that may not always seem true in this life, it will always be true on the other side of the grave. Therefore, he wrote that the person that cares for his or her life in spiritual matters will not encounter those same thorns and snares in this life. However, it must be pointed out that many of the proverbs that he had spoken had actually been general principles rather than biblical absolutes. What that means is that the saintly person may still have troubles in this life even as he or she is faithfully living for the Lord. The Apostle Paul, for example, had been often beaten and run out of town for preaching the gospel. In the end, he had even been martyred for the same crime of telling others about Jesus. Similarly, many saints in this life have been martyred for having taken their stand for Christ. But in general, those kinds of extremes do not usually happen to the faithful saint.

For that reason, Solomon had encouraged godly parents to train their children in the ways of the Lord. Once again, though, the general but not absolute principle is that the child will grow up to also serve Christ.

Labor Not to be Rich (23 February)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 23:4-5

"Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven."

In the above verses, Solomon wrote about one of the most important matters in most people's lives. Seemingly everyone wants to make and to have a lot of money. Being wealthy and having an easy luxurious life often seem to be very high on the lists of many individuals. But Solomon had actually advised people to resist that urge to get and to have more and more. Instead he had said to no longer be bound by one's own wisdom with regard to wealth and finance. What that means is to sort of but not completely ignore the evidence that is everywhere around. Homes cost a lot of money. Higher education costs a lot of money. Cars can be very expensive. Retirement will require a lot of money. Medical costs are very high. All of those things plus many more require a lot of money. So how could Solomon have said to just ignore them and let things be what they will be?

The answer to that question is that he had not said to just ignore the high costs of living. What he had actually said or meant was for people to give those high costs the appropriate priority. Despite the high costs of almost everything in this life, there are still many things that are much more important than having money. For example, one's daily walk with the Lord is much more important than making or than having a lot of money. One's being ready for the other side of the grave is many times more important than making or than having a lot of money. In talking to His disciples, Jesus would later say in Matthew 16:26, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?..." The obvious answer to that question is that nothing is more important than being ready to leave this life and to enter into eternity. As Solomon had said in the above verses, all of the money and all of the things that one may accumulate in this life are temporal. So without exception, they will all eventually either be lost or left behind.

Thus, money does have a certain amount of importance in this life. But nothing is nearly as important as coming to the Lord by faith, committing to Him, trusting in Him, and then being in a personal relationship with Him.

A House is Built by Wisdom and Understanding (24 February)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 24:3-5

"Through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established: And by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches. A wise man is strong; yea, a man of knowledge increaseth strength."

In Proverbs 24:1-2 Solomon had said that a person should not be envious or jealous of evil people. They are only interested in devising their unsavory ways and in causing their own brand of trouble. Then in the three verses above that had immediately followed those first two verses, he had said that a house is built by wisdom. Thus, the likely meaning of those five verses is that Solomon had wanted to correct anyone that might incorrectly think that a house is built by practicing the works of evil people. In that context, a house would not have been the physical structure. It would have been referring to a family of descendants.

So while some people might like to think that they can lie, cheat, and steal their way to prosperity and to a strong family line, Solomon would have very much disagreed. Also while some people might like to think that they can build a great name for themselves and a great family line by doing what they think in their own eyes is right, he would have frowned on that view, too. One may recall that that had been the mistake of those people that had lived during the days of the Jewish judges. Judges 21:25 says, "In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes." The result to them had been captivity after captivity to their various enemies through many years. Thus, according to Solomon, the only way to properly build a house for oneself is by godly wisdom. That means to do things in the Lord's way and in His time. Solomon had even spoken many proverbs to the end that people might acquire that kind of wisdom.

So godly wisdom will build the right kind of house for those people that practice the Lord's ways and that also teach sound general principles to their children. It will help one better understand the evil ways of this world and to recognize the right way to live. Finally it will increase a person's knowledge about the Lord and help that person recognize what is truly most important in this life. Psalm 32:9-10 says, "Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding...he that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about."

The Heart of Kings is Unsearchable (25 February)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 25:3-4

"The heaven for height, and the earth for depth, and the heart of kings is unsearchable. Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer."

In the above passage, Solomon spoke about the extremes of the heaven and the earth. The heaven is the highest place in this existence that one can go. At the same time, the earth is the lowest place in this existence that one can go. Then somewhere in between those two extremes is the heart of a king or of a high-level leader. Thus, Solomon said that one can go as high as the heaven or as low as the earth and still not understand the thinking of kings or of those people that are in leadership positions. There may be a couple of reasons why he would have said something like that. The first reason is that most people do not have access to the same information as the king or as the person that is in charge. Therefore, those individuals that have been left out of the information flow cannot possibly understand why a particular high-level decision has been made. The second reason is that the Hebrew word that was used for "heart" in the above passage refers to the seat of one's emotions and passions. That means that a leader can sometimes unexplainably erupt into an emotional frenzy that no one can know or understand.

Solomon also said that a silver vessel that has had its dross removed is ready for the finer. The "dross" refers to the waste or to the impure matter that is frequently contained within the silver. It can only be removed by fire. The "finer" refers to the skilled craftsman that will actually prepare the silver to be a usable vessel. However, while Solomon's words might have exactly described a process called smelting, his words also exactly described how the Lord works in a person's life to make that individual into a usable vessel for Him. For the saint to become a servant, the dross in his or her life might be something like a bad habit. It could also be something like spiritual immaturity because the person has only recently come to the Lord by faith. It can be any number of things. But regardless of what it might be, every saint of the Lord should rejoice when God burns the dross out of his or her life. By His doing that, the individual may then become a fitter vessel for the task to be done.

Answer Not a Fool But Answer a Fool (26 February)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 26:4-5

"Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit."

Solomon seems to have contradicted himself in the above passage. How can a person not answer a fool according to his or her folly and also answer a fool according to his or her folly? The answer to that question is fairly simple. The Hebrew verb that was used for "answer" has two principle meanings. The first is to answer someone nonverbally without words. In tennis, for example, one player answers the serve of the other player by returning the ball. The second principle meaning for "answer" is to answer someone verbally with words. When asked a question, a person will normally provide a verbal answer with words. So, both of those instances of the verb "answer" were used in the above verses.

In the first use of the verb "answer," Solomon instructed the person to not respond to a fool according to his or her folly. That means that he was using the first instance of the verb where the answer is meant to be nonverbal. He would have been telling the godly person to not copy or imitate the ways of a fool because doing that would make the copier a fool, too. In the second use of the verb "answer," Solomon instructed the person to respond verbally with words to the fool so that the fool would not see himself or herself as one that is wise. Thus, if not challenged, the fool would probably continue in his or her ways all the time thinking that everything is alright when it really is not. In addition, not answering a fool according to his or her folly also makes the godly person a little responsible for the actions and outcomes of the wayward fool.

In a related but different context to answering or not answering a fool, when a godly person does not encourage an ungodly person about coming to the Lord by faith, then he or she effectively bears some of the responsibility for that ungodly person's eternal destiny. Ezekiel 3:18 says, "When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning...his blood will I require at thine hand." Therefore, the godly person should answer the ungodly person with words of encouragement about coming to the Lord by faith, committing to Him, trusting in Him, and entering into a personal relationship with Him.

Open Rebuke is Better than Secret Love (27 February)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 27:4-6

"Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy? Open rebuke is better than secret love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful."

Often Solomon's spoken proverbs were presented in couplets that could be spoken poetically. To express one's thoughts in a couplet means to begin by making one statement and to end by countering that statement with an opposing statement. The advantage to using couplets and to speaking poetically is that it would have made his proverbs easier to remember. Thus, in the above passage, Solomon had presented his first thought in that form. His opening statement says that wrath is cruel and that anger is outrageous. His countering statement poetically asks who can stand before envy or jealousy. The Hebrew word that was used for "wrath" in that verse means to feel hot displeasure. The Hebrew word used for "outrageous" means to be like an outpouring of water. The point of his couplet is that envy or jealousy is the worst of the three. One's hot displeasure is certainly a troubling emotion. His or her anger is also like an uncontrollable outpouring of water. But the equally uncontrollable emotion of jealousy is worse than those two.

Solomon's second thought in the above passage compared the advantage of being openly rebuked to that of being secretly loved. Every person wants to be loved. But if the love is secret to the individual being loved, then it essentially is not of much value to him or her. On the other hand, though, being openly rebuked or openly corrected is of much greater value to the individual because he or she will have the opportunity to fix any problems that might exist in his or her life. Godly people should want to live for the Lord. Therefore, a godly person would want to know how he or she can live more faithfully for Him. Solomon's third thought in the above passage is another truth that was given in couplet form. In his opening statement, he said that the wounds caused by a friend might initially be hurtful to the person for a while. But then in his opposing statement, he said that the pain of that short term wound is still much better than the deceitful kisses of an enemy. Therefore, according to him, few things in this life that involve interpersonal relationships are worse than someone that will kiss a person on the cheek and then stab him or her in the back.

Evil Men Understand NOT Judgment (28 February)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 28:4-6

"They that forsake the law praise the wicked: but such as keep the law contend with them. Evil men understand not judgment: but they that seek the LORD understand all things. Better is the poor that walketh in his uprightness, than he that is perverse in his ways, though he be rich."

The law mentioned in the above passage was a reference to the Mosaic Law. Solomon said that those people that depart from the law praise the wicked. But those people that keep the law contend or wage war with them. To praise the wicked means to agree with them. So since the Hebrew word used for "wicked" means to be hostile to God, those people that do not keep the law actually make themselves as those individuals that are hostile to God. The irony of those words, however, is that no one satisfies all points of the law. At the same time, though, to be guilty in even one point of the law even one time makes the person guilty of having forsaken the whole law. That is why the Apostle Paul would later write that every person is a sinner. Romans 3:23-26 says, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God...."

But Paul would also solve that conflict between every person and the Mosaic Law when he would explain the reason that the law was given. Galatians 3:23-24 says, "But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." The purpose of the Old Testament law was to teach people that they are guilty before the Lord and that they cannot on their own ever do anything to make themselves righteous in His eyes. Therefore, by making everyone guilty and hopelessly lost, the law was meant to naturally bring everyone to the Christ. Solomon said that those people that seek the Lord understand all things. What he had meant by those words is that one understands his or her hopeless condition without the Lord. So they seek Him by faith, commit themselves to Him, and are set free from their sin burden.

His final statement above simply meant that being set free by the Lord from one's sin burden is far more valuable than having great riches in this life. But those people that have not come to the Lord by faith do not understand that simple truth.

Execute Judgment but Avoid Certain People (29 February)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 29:4-6

"The king by judgment establisheth the land: but he that receiveth gifts overthroweth it. A man that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a net for his feet. In the transgression of an evil man there is a snare: but the righteous doth sing and rejoice."

In the above passage, Solomon said that the land or that the people stands firm when the king or the leader holds court and executes judgment. That truth also holds within the family when those judgments are based upon the Scriptures. One may recall that Moses had judged the children of Israel for a while after they had come out of their Egyptian bondage. Exodus 18:13 says, "And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses sat to judge the people: and the people stood by Moses from the morning unto the evening." They had done well under his leadership. But the work had become too time-consuming for him. So his father-in-law had suggested that he assign the task to judges that would sit in his stead. Since those judges had also been very godly and very well qualified, the land had continued to do well under their righteous judgments. Therefore, right judgment is good for the people. But judges that will accept bribes and gifts can undo all of that good.

By saying that a man spreads a net for his neighbor's feet, Solomon next condemned those people that use flattery or smooth talk to deceive his or her neighbor. The smooth talk means that the flatterer's words are probably not true. The Hebrew word used for "flattereth" means to divide, to distribute, or to plunder. So the whole purpose of the flatterer is to cause his or her neighbor to take down their defenses. Then the net around their feet traps them and they suffer loss. While a neighbor is supposed to be a person's companion or friend, that is definitely not true of someone that will use lies and trickery to deceive him or her. Therefore, Solomon warned people to be cautious around those people that use flattering words.

He also said that the wrongdoings of an evil man bring a snare to him. In that instance, he had been singling out men as the evil people probably because the male gender tends to be more violent and wilder. By contrast to the snare that he brings upon himself, those people that have come to the Lord sing and rejoice.

Hear Instruction and Forsake Not the Law (01 March)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 1:8-9

"My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck."

Solomon generically addressed the above passage to the children in a family. The children were not real, and the family was not real. But they were used for the purpose of his illustration. The image is of a teacher advising a child to hear the instructions of his or her father and to not forsake the law of his or her mother. The Hebrew word that was used for "instruction" means discipline, chastening, or correcting. The Hebrew word used for "law" means direction or instruction. In some applications the latter word can also be used to refer to the Mosaic Law although that does not seem to be the case in this instance. The reference to an ornament of grace and to the chains was a common symbol during those times for something of great value, which in this case were the instructions of the father and the law of the mother.

In Solomon's illustration and also consistent with that culture, the father normally chastened or corrected the children while the mother provided other kinds of direction. Occasionally, though, the father would be away from home on family business for an extended period. Whenever that happened, the mother would assume responsibility for all household duties including care of the children. One should note, however, that Solomon usually spoke according to biblical ideals. In this example, that means that the whole family was serving the Lord. So the father was not trying to be a dictator over his family. The mother was not trying to prove that she could outdo her husband. The children were not rebelling against parental authority. So there were not any internal conflicts. It was simply the family against the world rather than the family members against each other.

That ideal is how all families should try to be. But for it to happen, each family member must be in a personal relationship with the Lord. That means that each member will have to come to Him by faith. Each member will have to commit themselves to Him. Each member will have to be trusting in Him. Doing those things will bring peace and harmony to any group of people including a family. However, apart from Christ, no family really stands much chance in this world.

God Gives Sound Wisdom to the Righteous (02 March)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 2:7

"He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly."

As was indicated earlier, when people choose to receive the godly words of the teacher and to possess his commandments, they learn the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. When they choose from a pure heart to seek godly wisdom and understanding, they learn what it means to be born again. Thus, those are two good choices for every person to make. But it is important to understand that those things do not involve one's intellectual capacity. Instead they pertain mostly to the individual's internal spiritual being. In a world where many and maybe even most people seek money and possessions and more money and more possessions, the wisdom, knowledge, and understanding that the Lord freely gives is still much more valuable than anything else.

The above passage says that He also lays up sound wisdom for the righteous and that he is a buckler to those people that walk uprightly. Interestingly the Hebrew word used for "wisdom" in that passage differs from the Hebrew word just used for "wisdom" in the preceding verse. Proverbs 2:6 says, "For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding." So how do those two words for "wisdom" differ? The answer is that in Proverbs 2:6 the wisdom given by the Lord causes a person to be ethically and religiously wise, to be subtle, or to be prudent. But in Proverbs 2:7 the sound wisdom that He lays up for the righteous is efficient wisdom or abiding success. The idea of being ethically and religious wise holds eternal and temporary value whereas abiding success is mostly temporal. Thus, the former word emphasizes internal substance whereas the latter seems to focus more on external substance.

Similarly the Hebrew word used for "buckler" in the above passage also seems to focus more on temporal results and external substance. A buckler is a shield that can be used to protect someone from the weapons of his or her enemies. Such a shield literally protected ancient warriors in battle. Today that shield given by the Lord figuratively offers the same kind of protection. Psalm 18:30 says, "As for God, his way is perfect...he is a buckler to all those that trust in him."

Trust the Lord Even before Trusting Oneself (03 March)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 3:5-8

"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil. It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones."

John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." When the Apostle John wrote the above verse, he used a Greek word that means much more than what many people might think. It is easy to read his words and conclude that a person will be saved if he or she simply believes that Jesus once existed or even that He still exists. But that is not correct. The Greek word that he used for "believeth" actually means to commit to and to trust in the object of one's belief. So "believeth" does mean to believe that Jesus once existed and that He still exists. But it also means to commit oneself to Him and to trust in Him.

Thus, a person can believe in the existence of Jesus or the existence of God all that he or she wants. But without those important elements of commitment and of trust, there is no salvation. James 2:19 says, "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble." A simple example of that occurs with the weather. If the forecaster says a chance of rain, then the person may or may not carry an umbrella. But if the forecaster says that it will rain then the person that truly believes in the forecast will carry an umbrella. In the same way, the person that truly believes in Jesus in the correct biblical context will commit to Him and will also trust in Him. That is what it means to be saved.

Solomon said above to trust in the Lord with all of one's heart and to not lean unto one's own understanding. For the person that has not come to Him by faith, that admonition says to come to Him by faith. For the person that has come to Him by faith, it encourages trusting Him in all the important areas of life. A godly person trusting in the Lord should commit his or her life to Him and trust in Him. That commitment and trust pertain to decisions about education, career, finances, and anything else that can go wrong with a bad decision. When a person must choose between one's own path and the Lord's path, always go in the way of His leading.

Get Wisdom and Do Not Forget Understanding (04 March)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 4:5-6

"Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth. Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee."

Proverbs 4:3 says, "For I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother." In that verse, Solomon had indicated that his father David had given him some wise counsel. He had told him to keep his words in his heart. He had told him to keep his commandments. Because David had been a very godly man, he had also given his son some sound godly advice. The most important thing in this life is for a person to be in a personal relationship with the Lord. When that has happened, it means that the person has sought the Lord with all of his or her heart. It means that the person has committed himself or herself to Him. It means that he or she is trusting in Him. So those are some very important steps for every person to take. They will put his or her steps on solid ground in this life. They will also prepare him or her for eternity on the other side of the grave. Nothing is more important than that.

So in the above passage when David had told Solomon to get wisdom, to get understanding, and to not forget either, he had been preparing his son for this life as well as for the afterlife. The Hebrew word that he had used for "wisdom" means to be ethically and religiously wise, to be prudent, and to be shrewd. The Hebrew word that he had used for "understanding" means to have discernment and knowledge. Very importantly, then, the wisdom and understanding about which he had spoken are free gifts from the Lord. All one must do upon being in a personal relationship with Him is ask. James 1:5-6 says, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed." Thus, David had known that any leader will be a better leader if he or she is a godly leader.

The wisdom that is from above is not like the wisdom of this world. While the wisdom of this world often teaches one to only care about self, the wisdom that God gives leads a person to love and reverence Him and to love and serve others.

The Ways of a Strange Woman cannot be Known (05 March)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 5:5-6

"Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell. Lest thou shouldst ponder the path of life, her ways are moveable, that thou canst not know them."

Solomon told his son and by extension all young men that the lips of a strange woman are sweet like honeycomb and that her mouth is smooth and appealing. In speaking about such a woman, he implied that sexual relationships are meant to be between a man and a woman that are married to each other. Hebrews 13:4 says, "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." So he had spoken those words to his son rather than to any of his daughters because young men are much more prone to initiate improper and ungodly sex-related associations. In the end, though, the young man's indiscretion with the strange woman will lead to bitterness and sorrow. By saying in the above passage that her feet go down to death and that her steps take hold of *sheol*, he had also told his son the normal end of such behavior.

It is important to understand, however, that Solomon was not telling his son or other young men that they would die lost for having sex with women to whom they were not married. Salvation is now and always has been by God's grace through the individual's faith. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." So if good works cannot save a person, then bad works cannot cause him or her to lose what God has freely given. But what he had been telling the young man is that a lifestyle based on immoral, ungodly choices is consistent with how a person lives that has rejected the Lord. So people do not die lost because they are bad, wicked sinners. They die lost because they will not come to the Lord to be saved. However, at the same time, sexual immorality and other types of ungodly behavior often accompany that decision to reject Christ.

After warning against ungodly sexual behavior, Solomon next said that the ways of a strange woman are movable and cannot be known. What that basically means is that the young man will never be smart enough or mentally quick enough to keep up with such a woman. She will always be able to outsmart him simply because of his natural male-driven vulnerability to sex.

The Ant is Not a Sluggard (06 March)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 6:6-9

"Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest. How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?"

In the above passage, Solomon expressed a very low regard for the sluggard. The Hebrew word that he had used for "sluggard" means someone that is lazy and will not work. So he or she will not even get out of bed to provide for some of his or her most basic needs. In some of his other writings, Solomon often expressed the same low regard for those individuals that will not work. Proverbs 10:26 says, "As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that send him." In that verse, the lazy person that does not return in timely fashion with an important message is like vinegar that destroys the teeth and like smoke that irritates the eyes. Proverbs 13:4 says, "The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat." The sluggard like others has wants and desires, too. But he or she has nothing because of laziness. Then Solomon wrote in Proverbs 20:4, "The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing."

So in Solomon's opinion, there is not much good that one can actually say about an able-bodied person that will not work. As was seen above, he had described numerous faults about such people. But those faults were not complete because he had said several other negative things about them, too. However, in the above passage, he also emphasized the very industrious ant and commended her for her willingness to work even without any rulers or supervisors. She works in the spring, summer, and fall to gather her food. That way she has plenty to eat all year round since she sleeps or hibernates during the winter. But while she is busily working away making the most of her time, the sluggard lays on his bed praying that he or she will not have to get up for anything anytime soon. Matthew 25:23 says, "His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." Unfortunately, the sluggard will never hear those words because he or she will be too lazy to do what the Lord wants.

Wisdom and Understanding to Avoid Wrong Women (07 March)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 7:4-5

"Say unto wisdom, Thou art my sister; and call understanding thy kinswoman: That they may keep thee from the strange woman, from the stranger which flattereth with her words."

Even though Solomon's advice in the first three verses of the seventh chapter of the book of Proverbs could have been applicable to male and female children, the above passage applied more directly to male children. In particular, he seems to have been greatly concerned about his son being attracted to the wrong kind of females. Many years earlier, Isaac and Rebekah had watched as their son Esau had purposely married the kind of women that had most upset them. Genesis 28:8-9 says, "And Esau seeing that the daughters of Canaan pleased not Isaac his father; Then went Esau unto Ishmael, and took unto the wives which he had Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael Abraham's son, the sister of Nebajoth, to be his wife." So Solomon had not wanted the same wrong kind of women for his son. One should note, however, that the two traits of the wrong kind of woman are that she has not sought the Lord by faith and that she is not living for Him. That being the case, any wrong kind of woman can quickly become the right kind of woman simply by choosing to come to the Lord by faith and then by living for Him.

But so long as a woman chose to not come to the Lord, Solomon encouraged his sons to not be fooled by her flattering words. The Hebrew word that he used for "wisdom" means to be prudent in religious matters, to be shrewd, or to be ethical. The Hebrew word that he used for "understanding" means to possess knowledge and discernment. On another occasion he had already told his children to get wisdom and understanding and to not forget or forsake either. Proverbs 4:5-7 says, "Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth. Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee. Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding." So Solomon's obvious conclusion was that pursuing wisdom and seeking understanding lead a person into the right paths of life and also keep him or her out of those situations or predicaments in which they do not belong. Not surprisingly, those things will still keep one on the straight and narrow paths in life. Therefore, come to the Lord and let His wisdom lead.

Godly Wisdom and Understanding Lead to the Lord (08 March)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 8:7-8

"For my mouth shall speak truth; and wickedness is an abomination to my lips. All the words of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing froward or perverse in them."

In the above passage, godly wisdom and godly understanding proclaim that they speak the truth and that wickedness is an abomination to their lips. They also speak in righteousness but never perversely. So the question pertains to knowing what Solomon had actually meant by truth and wickedness. By truth, he had not simply meant those things that are factually correct. Similarly by wickedness, he had not simply been speaking about those activities in this life that are really bad. Instead he had been talking about spiritual truth and spiritual wickedness. So he had been talking about the only kinds of truth and wickedness that really matter. In other words, it does not do a person any good to be honest in a worldly sense and then to die lost and apart from Christ. It also does not do him or her any good to be really, really good and then to die lost and apart from Christ. Once one filters out all of the worldly noise of this existence, it becomes quite clear that what really matters is coming to the Lord by faith and then being ready to stand before Him in eternity.

So no matter what kind of life a person has in this existence, it all gets left behind once he or she is on the other side of the grave. For that reason, a person really needs to open his or her spiritual ears to what godly wisdom and understanding are teaching because they will always lead a person to the Lord. The whole Bible was given by the Holy Spirit to show how to be rightly related to the Lord. It was not given just to tell people what to do or what not to do. Jeremiah 29:12-13 says, "Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Revelation 3:20 says, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." So if a person lives his or her entire life and never comes to the Lord by faith, then he or she will have missed the best parts of life.

Forsake the Foolish and Pursue Understanding (09 March)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 9:6

"Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding."

According to Solomon, godly wisdom tries to get the attention of the simple person and of the individual that lacks understanding. Both conditions are symptomatic of people that have never come to the Lord by faith. So wisdom's desire is to draw them to herself so that they will no longer be simple and at the same time so that they can become people of understanding. Therefore, what a tragedy that a personal relationship with the Lord is freely available to everyone but that so very few people actually choose to come to Him. Romans 10:13 says, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Revelation 3:20 says, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

It is important to understand, though, that the fault lies with the individual rather than with the Lord. He has done all He can to make an open path to Himself both possible and available. He has also been very patient. II Peter 3:9 says, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." It is clearly God's desire for every person to be saved. But He does not force Himself on anyone. Because He loves everyone, however, He gives to each person the free will either to accept Him or to reject Him. In fact, some people might be exercising their choice in that regard one way or the other right now. Throughout the proverbs Solomon consistently described those people that choose to come to the Lord as the righteous, the wise, and the people with understanding and knowledge. At the same time, he also consistently described those people that choose to not come as the simple, the foolish, and the wicked.

In the above passage, the two verbs that were used both show individual choice. Solomon said to forsake the foolish and live. Thus, the person has a choice to forsake the foolish and live or to not forsake the foolish and die. Similarly, he or she has a choice to go in the way of godly understanding or to not go in that way. Thus, any person that leaves this existence outside of Christ will have done so by choice. But the much better plan is to choose to come to Him by faith and to live.

The Just, the Wise, and the Upright Benefit in Life (10 March)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 10:7-9

"The memory of the just is blessed: but the name of the wicked shall rot. The wise in heart will receive commandments: but a prating fool shall fall. He that walketh uprightly walketh surely: but he that perverteth his ways shall be known."

In the first part of the above passage, Solomon continued his comments about those people that are just. The Hebrew word that he used for "just" means to be vindicated by God. Therefore, he was talking about someone that has already come to the Lord by faith and that is already in a personal relationship with Him. In the preceding verse, he said that such a person is blessed. In the current passage, he said that the memory of that person is also blessed. But the question is blessed by whom. Many people in this life are not interested in the things of God or in those people that have faithfully served Him. So it is not likely that the memory of the just will mean anything to them. Therefore, the likely meaning of Solomon's words is that the memory of the just will be a blessing to other people that have also already come to the Lord by faith. That means that the godly will fondly remember their godly friends and acquaintances that have departed. By contrast, when a wicked person dies, no one will care. So their name will rot.

Solomon next said that a wise person will receive commandments but that a foolish person that despises godly wisdom will fall. Once again, though, he was comparing those people that have and that have not come to the Lord by faith. In his doing that, one should note that the order of becoming wise and of receiving commandments is important. Psalm 111:10 says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom...." The first step is to become wise by fearing or revering the Lord. Then as the indwelling Holy Spirit guides, the person will become even wiser by receiving commandments and by being teachable. The ungodly fool, however, will not receive those benefits because he or she has foolishly chosen to not come to the Lord by faith. Solomon next said that the steps of an upright person will be secure. Therefore, he or she will not stumble on the usual pitfalls in life. An upright person by being in a personal relationship with the Lord will be led in the right paths of life and be led away from the wrong paths. As a result, that leading will be his or her protection against disaster. By contrast, the ways of an ungodly person will be easily known by others because they cannot be hidden.

The Wicked are Forgotten and the Right Delivered (11 March)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 11:7-9

"When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish: and the hope of unjust men perisheth. The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in his stead. An hypocrite with his mouth destroyeth his neighbour: but through knowledge shall the just be delivered."

Solomon often suggested that ungodly, unjust, or wicked people put their trust in their riches but that those riches will ultimately fail them. Proverbs 11:4 says, "Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death." Proverbs 11:28 says, "He that trusteth in his riches shall fall: but the righteous shall flourish as a branch." Proverbs 13:7 says, "There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches." So, those ungodly, unjust, or wicked people that put their trust in their riches are destined for an eternity of doom and condemnation. Solomon also said that their expectations or their hopes will die when they die. However, one should note that he did not just limit the bad ending in life to those people that trust in their riches. He actually said that all ungodly, wicked, or unjust people will share in the same eternal condemnation whether they are rich or not and even if they do not care anything about earthly wealth.

So in that regard, the person's riches are not the real discriminator. It is that the individual does not seek the Lord, commit to Him, trust in Him, and enter into a personal relationship with Him. Whenever Solomon spoke about the righteous as he did in the above passage he was always talking about those people that have come to the Lord by faith and that are in a personal relationship with Him. Thus, those people will in a general sense be delivered out of all of their troubles. That does not mean that they will not have any problems in this life. But it does mean that they will be led through all of their difficulties by the indwelling Holy Spirit and that He will always show them how to best handle any situation. That truth has been demonstrated over and over again millions and millions of times in the lives of those godly people that have trusted in Him or that are trusting in Him. For that reason, one would do very well to pursue the Lord first in this life and to pursue all other things second. Matthew 6:33 says, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

The Wicked are Overthrown and the Right Stand (12 March)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 12:7-8

"The wicked are overthrown, and are not: but the house of the righteous shall stand. A man shall be commended according to his wisdom: but he that is of a perverse heart shall be despised."

In the opening verses of the twelfth chapter of the book of Proverbs, Solomon made numerous comparisons between the righteous and the wicked. But one should note that he always identified righteous people as those people that have come to the Lord by faith and that have entered into a personal relationship with Him. At the same time, he always identified wicked people as those individuals that have not done those things. That being the case, he said that the righteous love to be corrected when they are in the wrong. But the wicked do not. He said that the righteous receive favor from the Lord. But the wicked do not. He said that the thoughts of the righteous are right. But he said that the thoughts of the wicked are not. Thus, one can easily see that he believed that every person should seek the Lord, commit to Him, trust in Him, and be in a personal relationship with Him. To do otherwise is to miss out on all of the above blessings of the righteous.

But he did not stop with just those blessings. In the above passage, he said that the house of the righteous will stand but that the wicked are overthrown. Those words imply that righteous people will always come out on top and that wicked people will always lose. However, that rarely seems to be the case in this life. Much more often it seems to be the other way around. So how can one know about what Solomon was talking? There are two ways to answer that question. First, since he often spoke in general principles rather than in spiritual absolutes, the general principle is that the Lord does not bless the wicked in this life. Most people probably think that financial prosperity is a great blessing. But God does not limit Himself to this world's financial system. He can bless or not bless in many ways that have nothing to do with money. Second, the righteous and the wicked will be eternally separated in eternity and that is where the much greater blessing will be. The righteous will be eternally blessed but not so for the wicked.

So Solomon's next thought above was most appropriate to the current discussion. It is better to possess godly wisdom than to have a wicked heart and die lost.

Righteousness Keeps in the Way but Wickedness Fails (13 March)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 13:6-7

"Righteousness keepeth him that is upright in the way: but wickedness overthroweth the sinner. There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches."

Having integrity is an important human quality. In the above passage, Solomon spoke about those people that are in the way and about those that are overthrown. Obviously no one wants to be overthrown. But the problem is that people many times are not that concerned about being in the way either. That is where integrity comes into play. Proverbs 11:3 says, "The integrity of the upright shall guide them...." So if a person has true biblical integrity, then he or she will want to do what is right. He or she will want to be in the way.

But there is only one way for someone to do that. It is by seeking the Lord with all of one's heart, by committing oneself to Him, by trusting in Him, and by entering into a personal relationship with Him. Whenever Solomon spoke about being righteous and upright, he was always talking about those people that have come to the Lord by faith. Whenever he spoke about the wicked, he was always talking about those people that have not come to the Lord by faith. So coming to the Lord by faith puts someone in the way and also keeps him or her in the way. But it does another thing that is much more important than just being in the way. It gives him or her home with the Lord in heaven on the other side of the grave.

That thought naturally leads into the second part of the above passage. Solomon said that there is a way that makes a person rich but gives him or her nothing and that there is a way that makes a person seemingly poor but gives him or her great riches. Given the general nature of all of Solomon's sayings, he was obviously drawing a distinction between those people that come to the Lord by faith and those that do not. A great many people believe that they are smart if they make a lot of money, get a great education, have a great job, and on and on. But without directly diminishing any of those things, all of them will leave a person with nothing when he or she stands before the Lord in judgment. By contrast, many people would look down on the person that has come to the Lord by faith because he or she would see that person who has gained everything as being very poor.

Scorners and Fools Do Not Find Wisdom (14 March)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 14:6-8

"A scorner seeketh wisdom, and findeth it not: but knowledge is easy unto him that understandeth. Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge. The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way: but the folly of fools is deceit."

A scorners is someone that complains, mocks, and criticizes things all of the time. The point, however, is not so much on whether or not he or she is correct. It is more a matter of the scorners being scornful at all. Someone that is constantly critical often has a bad attitude to go along with his or her negative disposition. So Solomon said above that such a person looks for wisdom but does not find it while a person of understanding easily finds knowledge. One should note that the wisdom and knowledge being sought and about which Solomon spoke are godly wisdom and godly knowledge. Many people in this life might want to learn what is true. So in his above statement, Solomon implied that it begins at the personal level with having the right attitude. It then continues with having the right focus. Both are important. Right attitude means to sincerely seek. Right focus means to look to the Lord. Jeremiah 29:12-13 says, "Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."

When one does that, he or she will find the godly wisdom and godly knowledge that are so important. But Solomon advised to stay away from those that will not seek Him by faith because they will only be trouble for the individual. In this life, it is important as the above verse says to seek the Lord with all of one's heart. After that, a person should next commit himself or herself to Him and trust in Him. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." That verse says that God gave His only begotten Son to die on the cross at Calvary so that people can come to Him by faith and have eternal life. However, one should note that the Greek word used for "believeth" in that verse literally means to commit to and to trust in the object of one's belief. Thus, a person that truly believes that it will rain carries an umbrella while one that only thinks that it will rain may not. Similarly, true belief always leads to commitment and trust.

The Wise Teach and the Upright Please (15 March)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 15:7-9

"The lips of the wise disperse knowledge: but the heart of the foolish doeth not so. The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is his delight. The way of the wicked is an abomination unto the LORD: but he loveth him that followeth after righteousness."

In the above passage, Solomon spoke about the lips of the wise and about the heart of the foolish. By referring to the lips of the wise, he was talking about what those kinds of people tend to say. By their wisdom they either teach their knowledge to others or they share it with others. But that knowledge is not like those things that one might learn in a school classroom or from a textbook. Their knowledge comes from the Lord and actually shows their wisdom. It also points other people to the Lord. Proverbs 1:7 says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction."

So by fearing the Lord or by revering the Lord, a person will naturally seek Him with all of his or her heart. Then fearing or revering Him will cause the person to commit to Him and to trust in Him. The knowledge that comes from that seeking, committing, and trusting will keep the person in the right paths in life. The Hebrew word used for "knowledge" means perception, discretion, or wisdom. So the knowledge that comes from seeking, committing, and trusting the Lord will keep the young person from those people that destroy property and hurt others. It will keep the young man from the wrong kind of woman. It will also make the wrong kind of young person whether male or female into the right kind of person. By contrast, Solomon said that the foolish person cannot understand such things.

Therefore, the best offerings of a foolish person or of a wicked person will only disgust the Lord. God can never be pleased with any kind of action or thing if it originates from a heart that does not love Him and is not committed to Him. So it is not the sacrifice or the gift that really matters. It is the spirit and the attitude with which it is given. Solomon said that the most valuable gift of the ungodly person in heart will never be worth as much to the Lord as the simple prayer of the person that loves Him. So the ways of wicked people are always dissatisfying to Him. But the ways of the righteous, godly person always greatly please Him.

Enemies, Being Righteous, and Being Led (16 March)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 16:7-9

"When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him. Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without right. A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps."

In looking at the above passage, one should understand that Solomon often spoke in general principles rather than in spiritual absolutes. One example of that is when he said the Lord will make even a person's enemies be at peace with him or her if He is pleased with the person's ways. While that is true in most cases, the Apostle Paul did not often experience it. Just for trying to tell others about the Lord, he was often chased out of town or put into jail because his audience was not interested in his message. Despite that, though, he remained faithful to the Lord until he was martyred. However, a couple of points are significant in his case. First, the Lord was always with him right up until the end. Second, he had learned that God's grace is sufficient for any situation. But the most important point to each person, though, is that Solomon's above saying is true in most cases.

Solomon next spoke about the important of being declared righteous. He said that being declared righteous but poor is better than being declared unrighteous and rich. The Hebrew word that he used for "righteousness" means to be vindicated by or to be justified by the Lord. Thus, while many people might not see being righteous as being better than being wealthy, Solomon disagreed. The reason that most people put more value on wealth is because they are shortsighted. They are only looking at today rather than taking the long view of eternity. They fail to see that whatever riches are accumulated in this world will either soon be gone or soon left behind. Also the decisions made in this life about the Lord either for good or for bad will last for all eternity. Therefore, the wise person will always choose being righteous and poor over being unrighteous and having great riches.

Finally Solomon said that a man plans his way but that the Lord makes firm his steps. Those words are intended for the person that is committed to Him and also trying to serve Him. Proverbs 3:5-6 says, "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." One cannot effectively serve God without divine help.

Mocking the Problems of Others and Grandchildren (17 March)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 17:5-6

"Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker: and he that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished. Children's children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers."

Solomon said above that people that make fun of another person's poverty or misfortune will have calamity of their own. Another way of saying the same thing is that what goes around comes around. However, is that really always true? Does the wealthy person that laughs at the poor person really become poor? Does the person that enjoys other people's difficulties really have difficulties of his or her own? Seemingly, his words do not appear to be always true. But when one looks at the whole picture from a temporal and eternal perspective, they are true.

The fact is that life can be very difficult for everyone regardless of their financial status. A very wealthy person may have other problems in life that have nothing to do with money. For example, he or she or a loved one may become gravely ill. He or she may have children that bring disgrace upon the whole family. He or she may become addicted to alcohol or drugs. Thus, many, many negative things can happen to wealthy people just like they do to poor people. Then of course, the worst of all negatives is that both financially rich and financially poor people will die lost if they do not come to the Lord by faith while in this life. Therefore, Solomon's point is that no one should ever laugh at or make fun of other people's misfortunes. Instead they should love, encourage, and help each another.

He next said that an elderly person rejoices in his or her grandchildren and that children rejoice when they have grown up in a godly home. Solomon called grandchildren a crown to their grandparents. That means that the grandparent openly rather than secretly rejoices over them. During his times, the winner of a sporting event would receive a crown that could be worn within the community. It was an outward symbol of honor that was bestowed upon the athlete. So in the same sense, Solomon had that kind of outward symbol in mind for grandparents. The second part of his above statement was that the glory of children is their godly parents. Of course, one should note that he was probably talking about grown children as they fondly remembered or looked back on their life at home.

Judging Wicked and Righteous and Guarding Words (18 March)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 18:5-6

"It is not good to accept the person of the wicked, to overthrow the righteous in judgment. A fool's lips enter into contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes."

Solomon said above that it is not good to accept in judgment the wicked person or to overthrow the righteous person. To accept the wicked person in judgment means to accept his or her wicked ways. To overthrow the righteous person in judgment means to reject his or her righteous ways. Anyone that would do either or both of those things would be as wicked as the wicked person that is accepted. The likely reasons that one would be inclined to accept the ways of a wicked person are money and power. Many times the evil deeds of the rich and powerful are overlooked because they are rich and powerful. At the same time, the righteous person is often overthrown because he or she lacks similar resources. The basic meaning of Solomon's saying is that the judicial system should not be for sale. All people before the courts should be measured by the same standards. Plus the merits of their case should be the ultimate determination of the court's decision. To do otherwise makes the judge and the court a respecter of persons, and that is not good. James 2:8-9 says, "If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors."

Solomon also said that a fool's lips enter into contention and that his mouth calls for strokes. In expressing that view, he was talking about the "dumb fool" that is either a simpleton or just plain stupid. Such a person will often be guilty of speaking without thinking or speaking before thinking and by so doing cause strife or controversy. Whenever that happens, Solomon said that the person's mouth is calling for strokes or for punishment. He was not literally suggesting a smack in the mouth. But he was using that expression to suggest that the matter should not be totally ignored. Some form of correction would be appropriate. It may just be a matter of instructing the person to refrain from talking so much. Proverbs 10:19 says, "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise." People that tend to go on and on without guarding their words will sooner or later say something that causes trouble. For the "dumb fool," however, it may be sooner than later.

False Witnesses and the Chief Giver of Gifts (19 March)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 19:5-6

"A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall not escape. Many will intreat the favour of the prince: and every man is a friend to him that giveth gifts."

Solomon spoke above about people that do not tell the truth. He first indicated that a false witness will not go unpunished. In a court of law, witnesses are usually very important. Depending upon what they say, they have the power to either invoke justice or to pervert justice. For example, when Jesus was on trial before the Sanhedrin, two false witnesses had been hired to lie against Him. Because they were false witnesses, though, they had perverted justice. Solomon said above that such people will not go unpunished. Similarly he also said that the person that tells lies will not escape either.

Therefore, one might reasonably ask what he meant when he talked about a false witness being punished and about a liar not escaping. Punished by whom? Not escaping from what or from whom? In this existence, being caught lying in court can cause a person to be put in jail. Outside of court it can cause someone to lose friends. It can even damage one's reputation. So being dishonest in this life can be very costly to the individual. But in the existence on the other side of the grave, being caught lying about the Lord will be much more devastating. The chief lie against Him is that He is not the Lord. For that one will be eternally condemned to an existence of torment and suffering. Therefore, a person should be honest in all of their earthly dealings. But beyond that, he or she should be especially honest about the Lord. Because He is the Lord, one should seek Him with all of his or her heart and come to Him by faith. Failure to do that is the same as lying about His deity and His Lordship, and that will not go unpunished.

In the second part of the above passage, Solomon said that many people will seek the favor of the prince and that the giver of gifts has many friends. While that might be true on a personal level in this life, there is no greater prince to pursue for favor than the Prince of peace. There is not greater gift giver than the Lord Jesus. His favor is unmatched. His gifts are forgiveness of sins, a personal relationship with Him, and an eternity with Him on the other side of the grave.

The Just Man Walks in His Integrity (20 March)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 20:7-8

"The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him. A king that sitteth in the throne of judgment scattereth away all evil with his eyes."

Solomon wrote that a just man walks in his integrity. But it is important to realize that no person is just or righteous when he or she enters into this world. Because of Adam, every person is born a sinner and is separated from God. However, because of the shed blood of Jesus on the cross at Calvary, every person can be reconciled to God and become a just or righteous person. Romans 5:12-18 says, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned... Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life."

So, one great part about being reconciled to the Lord is that His salvation is a free gift to everyone that will come to Him by faith. People might try to do all sorts of things to earn their way into heaven. But the salvation of God is a free gift. It can be accepted by faith. But it cannot be earned. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." Once a person has come to the Lord by faith and has committed himself or herself to Him, he or she becomes that just or righteous person that walks in integrity. Then the person is blessed and his or her children are also blessed. Another great part of being reconciled to the Lord is that the person will forever be with God in heaven once this life is over.

Solomon next said that a king or a godly leader that judges righteously will chase away evildoers and wrongdoers with his or her eyes. The analogy is that the light of righteousness always chases away the darkness of evil. John 3:19-21 says, "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil...But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." John 8:12 says, "Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." So a righteous leader will naturally discourage ungodly behavior.

The Wicked are Destroyed but Everyone is Wicked (21 March)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 21:7-9

"The robbery of the wicked shall destroy them; because they refuse to do judgment. The way of man is froward and strange: but as for the pure, his work is right. It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house."

Solomon said above that the robbery of the wicked shall destroy them. However, the Hebrew word that he used for "robbery" is better translated as destructive or violent. So he was actually saying that the destructive or violent nature of the wicked shall destroy them because they refuse to do judgment. By refusing to do judgment, he meant that they refuse to do those things that are just and right. They hurt others either directly or indirectly and do not even consider the agonies that they bring upon their victims. Their whole being is bent on doing as much evil as they can. Therefore, their ways will destroy them. But one should note that their destruction will not just be in this existence. Because they do not seek the Lord, they will die lost and be forever separated from Him unless they repent.

Solomon followed that saying about the evil ways of wicked people by saying that the way of a person is froward and strange and that the work of pure people is right. The Hebrew word used for "froward" means to be perverse or to be wicked. So once again he was speaking about wicked people. But it is important to see that he was actually saying that the ways of all people are froward and strange. He was not talking about a small, select group of individuals. He was talking about the ways of everyone. He then said that the work of the pure is right. The obvious question from those two statements then is how anyone can ever be pure if everyone is already wicked. The answer is by coming to the Lord by faith. All people are born separated from God because of the sin nature they inherited from Adam. But if they seek the Lord and come to Him, they are changed into what Solomon called pure. Then they are no longer perverse or wicked in God's eyes.

Solomon concluded the above passage by talking about a brawling or contentious woman in a wide house. The expression "wide house" refers to a dwelling place that is large enough for several families. So his opinion was that living in peace in a small area is much better than having lots of room in a place of great tension.

The Borrower is Servant to the Lender (22 March)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 22:7-9

"The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender. He that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity: and the rod of his anger shall fail. He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor."

The proverbs of Solomon are often practical for this life as well as for the life to come. When he had said that the rich rule over the poor and that the borrower is a servant to the lender, he had actually been making a very practical observation. With worldly riches usually come worldly respect and worldly position. The rich are usually acknowledged publicly for their contributions to charities. Their advice is usually valued by people at all levels of society. They often hold high positions in big corporations. But by contrast, none of those truths typically apply to the less affluent. Instead they are simply ruled over by the more affluent.

An important caveat to the plight of the rich over the poor, though, is that the poor usually do not have any choice about their being or not being poor. From their perspective, they are simply stuck in their financial predicament. However, that being stuck condition is not usually true of the borrower. While the choices may sometimes seem very few, the borrower can always choose to simply not borrow. For sure whether he or she borrows or not, the godly person should still always live within his or her means. Many times that may mean that they do not borrow anything from anyone for any reason. Other times, they may borrow for special situations. But regardless they should always be wise and frugal in the handling of their finances because being a servant to the lender is not usually very pleasant. Romans 13:8 says, "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law."

The person that spreads injustice, unrighteousness, or wrong behavior shall in general produce trouble and sorrow for himself or herself. In other words, there is no real benefit to living that kind of life. Whatever excess he or she may have will usually be consumed and quickly become worthless. But it shall not be so with the godly person that has a bountiful eye or a good eye. That person shall be blessed by the Lord with whatever he or she has and even have enough left over to share with the less fortunate.

Eat Not the Bread of an Evil, Greedy Person (23 March)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 23:6-8

"Eat thou not the bread of him that hath an evil eye, neither desire thou his dainty meats: For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee. The morsel which thou hast eaten shalt thou vomit up, and lose thy sweet words."

Solomon's words in the above passage sound very similar to his words to an invited guest in Proverbs 23:1-3. But they were not. In the earlier passage, he warned about being gluttonous at someone's dinner and also about possibly eating meats that had been offered to idols. While on the surface there is nothing wrong with eating meats that someone else has offered to an idol, the Apostle Paul would later write that such a practice could cause a weaker brother or a weaker sister to stumble. For that reason, a godly person should not want to do so. I Corinthians 8:8-13 says, "But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse. But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak...Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." In his opinion, though, it would have probably been more wrong to be gluttonous at such a meal than to possibly eat meats that someone else has offered to an idol.

But one should take care about his or her behavior either way. In the above passage, however, Solomon was not talking about eating meats that had been offered to idols or about being gluttonous at someone's dinner. Instead he was talking about the stingy or the greedy host that quietly does not like sharing his or her food with anyone. That is what Solomon meant when he described the host as encouraging the guest to eat but that his or her heart was not with the guest. In fact, the joy of the whole occasion gets lost when the guest realizes that the host resents every bite that he or she takes. Who can enjoy any kind of meal knowing how the host feels? That kind of attitude can definitely ruin the whole spirit of the occasion. But worse than that is that that kind of attitude does not even make good sense. No person has ever figured out a way to carry his or her wealth to the other side of the grave. Therefore, whatever he or she accumulates in this life will either soon be gone or soon left behind. So the greedy host needs to lighten up.

In the Multitude of Counselors is Safety (24 March)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 24:6-7

"For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war: and in multitude of counsellors there is safety. Wisdom is too high for a fool: he openeth not his mouth in the gate."

One should note that the Hebrew word used for "wise counsel" in the above passage can also mean "good advice." That is clearly seen in another proverb expressed by Solomon with respect to making war. Proverbs 20:18 says, "Every purpose is established by counsel: and with good advice make war." But that same Hebrew word does not have to automatically mean that the counsel or the advice is either good or bad. In the following two examples, how the advice or the counsel is meant has not been indicated. Proverbs 11:14 says, "Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety." Proverbs 12:5 says, "The thoughts of the righteous are right: but the counsels of the wicked are deceit."

So the choice of using the words "wise counsel" and "good advice" or just "counsel" and "advice" in the above verses, respectively, represents a decision by the King James Version (KJV) translators. Their decisions in Proverbs 24:6-7 and Proverbs 20:18 had probably been because going to war is a very serious decision. One would not want to commit serious troops and other resources to such an undertaking if the results were likely to be disastrous. Therefore, a national leader would want "wise counsel" or "good advice" before engaging in battle. In addition, Proverbs 12:5 which was just quoted above says that the counsels of a wicked person are deceitful and treacherous. So a good leader would not want to make important war-like decisions based upon their input.

Solomon had also indicated that godly wisdom is too high for a fool. So in the context of making important decisions, the Apostle Paul had also given similar advice to husbands and wives. Ephesians 5:17-21 says, "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is....Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God." In godlier homes, husbands and wives work together and make important decisions together to build their home based upon the simple precepts of the Lord. To do so is wise. But to not do so is foolish.

Righteous Rule and Taking Too Much upon Oneself (25 March)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 25:5-7

"Take away the wicked from before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness. Put not forth thyself in the presence of the king, and stand not in the place of great men: For better it is that it be said unto thee, Come up hither; than that thou shouldest be put lower in the presence of the prince whom thine eyes have seen."

Solomon said that a king's throne would be established in righteousness if the wicked people were removed. On the surface his statement is clearly true. But in the history of mankind, such a condition of absolute righteousness within a kingdom has probably never been achieved. Thus, the Holy Spirit had probably inspired Solomon to say those words because the day will come when the wicked will be removed and when the throne will be established in righteousness. That day will be when Jesus sits on the throne of David during His one thousand years millennial reign. Jeremiah 23:5 says, "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth." Jesus will be the righteous Branch and King that will execute judgment and justice in the earth. He will also be the one that rules all nations with a rod of iron. Revelation 12:5 says, "And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne."

Solomon also cautioned a person about taking too much upon himself or herself. But he had not been talking about those people that work too hard or that try to do too much. Instead he had been referring to those individuals that want to appear more important than others. He had told them to be humble so that they could avoid being embarrassed or humiliated. No one would ever want to be told by the leader to move over or to step down to make room for someone else of greater importance. So do not put oneself in that position. Many years after Solomon, Jesus would condemn the Pharisees for having been so bold. Matthew 23:1-7 says, "...The scribes and the Pharisees ... love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi." Thus, even though they had been spiritually dead, they had still wanted to be seen in high places and to appear closer to God than others.

Do Not Use a Fool to Deliver an Important Message (26 March)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 26:6-7

"He that sendeth a message by the hand of a fool cutteth off the feet, and drinketh damage. The legs of the lame are not equal: so is a parable in the mouth of fools."

More words from Solomon about a fool. One may recall that separate Hebrew words can be used to distinguish between an "evil fool" and a "dumb fool." In the above passage, he had been speaking about the "dumb fool." So the implication is that one would not want to trust the delivery of an important message to a "dumb fool" because the message probably would not be correctly delivered. It would most likely either go to the wrong place, to the wrong person, at the wrong time, or not at all. Thus, in Solomon's words, having a "dumb fool" deliver the message would be the same as cutting off one's feet and drinking the damage.

In considering his words about the "dumb fool," though, no one would choose to be a "dumb fool" because no one would choose to be stupid. But it is important to realize that Solomon had not been calling the fool dumb because he or she lacked intelligence. Proverbs 1:22 says, "How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?" That verse says that the "dumb fool" is dumb because he or she hates knowledge. Proverbs 15:14 says, "The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge: but the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness." That verse says that the "dumb fool" is dumb because he or she feeds on foolishness. Thus, hating knowledge and feeding on foolishness are two bad choices that the "dumb fool" makes, and both contribute to his or her dumbness condition.

Therefore, the "dumb fool" could make different choices and no longer be a "dumb fool." Proverbs 2:1-5 says, "My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God." So the solution to no longer being a "dumb fool" is to seek the Lord by faith and to commit to Him. Then the person will become a new creature in Christ and the Holy Spirit begins His de-dumbing process.

Hungering after Righteousness and Not Wandering (27 March)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 27:7-8

"The full soul loatheth an honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet. As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place."

Solomon said above that even the best food is objectionable to someone that is not hungry. However, to the person that is hungry even the most objectionable foods are pleasant to behold and to eat. So while Solomon may have only been talking about the eating or the not eating of food, his words still have application in another important area of this life. Several hundred years later, Jesus would say in Matthew 5:6 during His sermon on the mount, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." The Greek word used for "righteousness" in that verse means that the person hungering and thirsting is actually desirous of having a right standing with the Lord. Since Solomon had used the Hebrew word that means "soul" in his proverb, the belief is that he was also talking about those people that hunger and thirst after a right standing with the Lord. If that is true, then he was saying that the salvation of God might be objectionable to some people because their seemingly full soul does not care anything about being right with God. But to those individuals that are hungering for God's salvation, it is more satisfying than anything else in this life.

Solomon's second thought in the above passage spoke to those individuals that sometimes stray or wander from where they are supposed to be. One should note from the Hebrew word used for "man," though, that he had apparently been directing his remarks mostly to men. His proverb did not apply to women as much because they are much less likely to wander from where they belong. In this life, however, being in one's rightful place can sometimes be very important. II Samuel 11:1-4 says, "And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that...David tarried still at Jerusalem...he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon...And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her...." If David had been in the place where he had belonged, then his sin with Bathsheba would not have happened. Furthermore, if he had been where he had belonged, he also would not have been directly implicated in her husband's death.

Keep the Law and Be Not Greedy for Gain (28 March)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 28:7-8

"Whoso keepeth the law is a wise son: but he that is a companion of riotous men shameth his father. He that by usury and unjust gain increaseth his substance, he shall gather it for him that will pity the poor."

Solomon said in the above passage that a person that keeps the law is wise. However, his words are a little cryptic because Romans 3:23-26 implies that no person can satisfy all points of the law all of the time. Besides that, Galatians 3:23-24 says that the law was given to be a schoolmaster to point people to Christ. So how can one reconcile the above statement about keeping the law with those two passages from the New Testament? The answer to that question is somewhat simple. Solomon had also said in Proverbs 9:10 that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Thus, he had understood the truths of Romans 3:23-26 and Galatians 3:23-24 before those words were ever written. He knew that any person that sincerely and faithfully tries to keep the law will soon be driven to his or her knees to humbly seek the Lord. As a result, it is the seeking of the Lord by faith and committing oneself to Him that actually makes the person wise. Solomon also said that the young person that socializes with vile, worthless individuals will cause his father to be ashamed. But it must be pointed out that the Lord will even receive those vile, worthless individuals if they come to Him by faith.

Solomon next spoke negatively about those people that charge excessive interest on loans and that use other means to wrongfully make money. In the end, he said that they will lose what they have inappropriately gained to the person that pities the poor. When reading verses like that, however, a person should remember that the book of Proverbs is a book of general principles rather than a book of absolutes. Thus, it would unfortunately be incorrect to assume that every person that wrongfully appropriates money from others will someday have their money taken from them by someone that pities the poor. Many people in this life have greatly profited by taking advantage of others. Most of them have seemingly gotten away with it. But the truth is that they have not gotten away with anything. Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 says, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment...whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

Consider the Poor and Turn away Wrath (29 March)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 29:7-8

"The righteous considereth the cause of the poor: but the wicked regardeth not to know it. Scornful men bring a city into a snare: but wise men turn away wrath."

It is important to know that the book of Proverbs is a book of general principles rather than a book of spiritual absolutes. That truth is very apparent in the first part of the above passage. The Hebrew word used for "righteous" means to be right with the Lord. So those are the people that have come to Him by faith and have committed themselves to Him. By contrast, the wicked are those people that are actually hostile towards God. In comparing the two, Solomon said that the righteous consider the poor but that the wicked do not. While that might usually be true, it is not always true. Sometimes the most generous people in this world are also the most ungodly while the godliest people are sometimes much more reluctant to share what they have with anyone.

Therefore, because money can be a stumbling block for many people whether they have it or not, the Apostle Paul would later encourage those people that are well off financially to not let their wealth come between them and their devotion to the Lord. I Timothy 6:17-19 says, "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." Thus, in the grand scheme of things it is much better to be among the righteous than to be among the wealthy.

In the second part of the above passage, Solomon said that scornful men bring a snare to a city but that wise men turn away wrath. Proverbs 1:22 says, "How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning...?" People that are scorers tend to complain a lot and to make fun of things. They are also inclined to be braggers and troublemakers. Because of such undesirable traits, they can also cause a lot of trouble. But wise, shrewd people please the Lord and can turn away His anger. Therefore, it is much better to be able to turn away God's anger than it is to be a complainer or a bragger.

Every Word of the Lord is Pure (30 March)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 30:4-5

"Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell? Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him."

The above passage is both informative and interesting. The informative part will be shared first. Then the interesting part will be shared. Solomon began by asking some simple questions. The first question asked who has ascended into heaven or descended. The Apostle Paul would later identify Jesus as the one that had done that. Ephesians 4:8-16 says, "...Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things..." So Jesus had done those things. The next three questions pertained to Creation and the Creator. Who can gather the wind in His fists? Who can bind water in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? Only the Lord as Creator could have done those things. Finally Solomon asked the name of the Son. His name is Jesus. He is the only begotten Son of God. Then following all of that he declared that the word of God is pure and that His saints can trust Him.

Now the interesting part of the opening passage is that Solomon would not have known to ask such pointed questions as those above. As was just indicated, Jesus is the only begotten Son of God. But He was not incarnated until about nine hundred years after Solomon had lived. Therefore, Solomon could not possibly have known about anyone ascending into heaven or descending into the lower parts of the earth. He also would not have known about the Incarnation of Jesus. In fact, no one even understood the Trinity until about fourteen hundred years after Solomon had lived which would have also been about five hundred years after Jesus had been crucified and resurrected. So what the above questions and Solomon's lack of knowledge show is that the Holy Spirit had inspired him to ask those questions and to also mention God having a Son. No one knows exactly how the Holy Spirit had operated during those early days. He did not indwell His saints permanently until after Pentecost. But even nine hundred years before the Incarnation, He seems to have come upon His saints for brief periods of time.

It is Not for Kings to Drink Alcoholic Beverages (31 March)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 31:4-7

"It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink: Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted. Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more."

If as some scholars believe the thirty-first chapter of the book of Proverbs had been Bathsheba giving her son some godly advice then she had been a very wise woman. Many people might think that she had just been a one-night stand with King David before becoming another of his multiple wives. However, she seems to have been higher on his list than just another wife. She also seems to have been a woman of great wisdom and influence. When David had been about to die, she had petitioned with him to make Solomon the new king. David did as she had asked. Once Solomon was the king, she was able to even influence some of his early actions and decisions. One of his brothers by another mother named Adonijah had tried to beat him to the throne. When he had failed, his relations with his brother and king had been understandably strained. So he had asked Bathsheba who was not his mother to speak to the king on his behalf. She did as he had asked and Solomon granted her petition for Adonijah.

Thus, Solomon listened to his mother, and she did not steer him wrong. In the above passage, she told him as king to not drink wine or intoxicating beverages. However, one should understand why she had advised him to not drink alcoholic beverages of any kind. It was not that she was worried about him dying lost. She knew that people are neither lost by drinking alcoholic beverages nor saved by not drinking them. Romans 10:13 says, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." So, people are saved when they come to the Lord by faith, commit to Him, and trust in Him. They are lost when they fail to do those things. But Bathsheba gave him that advice because she knew that wine and strong drink clouds a person's judgment. That was true for kings. It is also true for anyone that drinks such drinks. Solomon had said in Proverbs 20:1, "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise." Perhaps he had learned that very important truth from his godly mother.

Do Not Go Along with the Evil Crowd (01 April)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 1:10-16

"My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. If they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause: Let us swallow them up alive as the grave; and whole, as those that go down into the pit: We shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil: Cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse: My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path: For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood."

In the above passage, Solomon advised a young person to avoid certain crowds and certain situations. The young person did not really exist. But Solomon had used him for the purpose of his illustration. His message was simple. In every time and in every generation, there are always those people that do not want to be very smart with their lives. Solomon had called them "sinners" from the Hebrew word that means to be sinful or to be exposed to eternal doom and condemnation. Thus, he had used that general label to indicate that they did not know the Lord as their personal Savior.

The way that sinners usually operate is to tempt a person not in their group to become part of their group. It is not wrong to be tempted to go along with them. But it becomes wrong when the person chooses to go along. James 1:13-15 says, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

Those people that Solomon had called sinners are prone to do all sorts of evil. In the above verses, their plan was to attack and rob an innocent person even though they had not been wronged by that person. But robbery is only one kind of crime among many. What the young person tempted to join that crowd should do is consider two very important truths. The first is that one mistake when young can sometimes require a lifetime of repayment. The second is that people living for the Lord should not have anything to do with that wayward crowd anyway. II Corinthians 6:15 says, "...what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?"

The Lord Keeps the Way of His Saints (02 April)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 2:8

"He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints."

Seeking the Lord with all of one's heart, committing to Him, trusting in Him, and entering into a personal relationship with Him has many, many advantages. The most obvious advantage is that a person can live each day of life at peace with his or her Creator. Many people might understate the significance of that but only if they are not currently doing that. Nothing in this life surpasses being at peace with the Lord. After that the benefits split between being eternal and temporal.

The eternal benefit is to be forever present with the Lord in paradise. Galatians 6:7-8 says, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." II Corinthians 5:8 says, "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." For the person that is in Christ, to be absent from the body is to be present with Him. While much uncertainty might exist about exactly what that means, the best part of all of it will be to be with the one that had willingly offered Himself on the cross at Calvary as a sin sacrifice for everyone that will come to Him by faith. To be saved means to be committed to Him and to trust in Him. But who could not do those things when He has done so much to make a personal relationship with Him possible? The answer to that question should be no one.

The temporal benefits of coming to the Lord by faith are numerous. As was shown in the preceding verses of the second chapter, He gives eternal godly wisdom, knowledge, and understanding to those people that seek Him. He gives temporal wisdom or abiding success to those that have come to Him. He is a buckler or a shield of protection to His people. Then to those things, the above passage says that He keeps their path of judgment and preserves their way. That means that He watches over those people that are committed to Him. Some think that they can lose their salvation after having been saved if they are bad enough. But the above opening passage argues against that belief. Because He watches over His people, He will correct rather disown those individuals that do wrong.

Honoring with Substance and Enduring Chastening (03 April)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 3:9-12

"Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine. My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth."

The Apostle John wrote in John 3:16 that one can be eternally saved by committing to the Lord and by trusting in Him. Solomon said that a godly person should trust in the Lord's leadership even before trusting in his or her own. The test of that commitment and that trust is given in the above passage. Solomon said to honor the Lord with thy substance and with the first fruits of thy increase. That admonition directly affects a person's pocketbook. However, people that have freely received the gift of salvation from the Lord should also be quick to freely give of their substance. While some people might think that reconciliation with the Lord is something that must be earned, the Apostle Paul was clear about the fact that no one can earn it.

Romans 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." Solomon said that the reward of freely giving is plenteousness which means filled barns and presses bursting with new wine.

He next spoke about the chastening of the Lord. In life when people make a mistake, they need to learn from it so that they will not repeat it. Parents correct their erring children. Employers correct their erring employees. In the same way, the Lord corrects His erring children. An important aspect to His correction, though, is that He only corrects those people that have come to Him in faith. Solomon compared that correction to a parent correcting his child because the Scriptures always express God as a heavenly Father. He is not a super cop trying to lock people up when they make a mistake. Instead, He lovingly corrects and instructs so that their life will be better. So even though being corrected may not be pleasant at the moment, the person will always be better off in the long term.

Wisdom is the Principle Thing (04 April)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 4:7-9

"Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding. Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her. She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee."

Proverbs 4:3 says, "For I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother." Based upon that verse, the conclusion is that David had been speaking to his son Solomon. His father had told him to keep his commandments which of course would have been the Lord's commandments. Psalm 1:1-2 says, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night." Psalm 19:7 says, "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple." Psalm 37:31 says, "The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide." Psalm 40:8 says, "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." David had told Solomon to get wisdom, to get understanding, and to not forget either. All of that had been very good advice to a son from a father whose heart had loved and sought the Lord.

As he had concluded his message to his son, though, David's final words on that occasion had once again been for him to get wisdom and to get understanding. He had just said that in the preceding verses. But the reason that he had repeated himself indicates the importance of the message. The Hebrew word used for "wisdom" means to be ethically and religiously wise, to be prudent, and to be shrewd. The Hebrew word used for "understanding" means to gain knowledge and discretion. According to the above passage, godly wisdom will promote the person that holds it in high esteem. It will bring a person honor, grace, and a crown of glory. It will plant a person's feet on solid ground in this life and prepare him or her for the afterlife on the other side of the grave. Thus, godly wisdom will lead the person to seek the Lord by faith with all of his or her heart. It will cause the person to commit himself or herself to Him. It will give him or her faith and confidence to trust in Him. The result will be that the individual will enter into a personal relationship with the God of Creation that will never end.

Depart Not from the Words of Wisdom (05 April)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 5:7

"Hear me now therefore, O ye children, and depart not from the words of my mouth."

Interestingly Solomon addressed his comments from the start of the fifth chapter of the book of Hebrews to his child by using a Hebrew word that could mean either son or daughter. Bible translators, though, had examined the context and had determined that his message would most likely have been to his son. But in the above passage, the Hebrew word used for "children" more narrowly focuses on the male gender. But the translators had come up with the non-gender specific word "children." Most of the more modern translations, however, have used the word "sons" in their translations. So even though the above passage seems to be addressed to children it is actually still speaking to Solomon's son and to the other young men. One can know that for sure because the very next verse continues to advise them to stay away from the door of the strange woman.

Nevertheless when Solomon encouraged his son and the other young men to not depart from his words, he had actually shown that people have a conscious choice between godly living and ungodly living. Solomon's son could have chosen to chase strange women, to be involved with idols, or to pursue any other kind of wayward lifestyle. He also could have chosen to seek the Lord while still young and commit his life to Him. But those are the same choices of every person. Anyone can choose to come to the Lord to be saved because God has taken the initiative to reveal Himself to every person through His Creation. Romans 1:20-21 says, "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse...but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." So all anyone must do to be saved is to call upon the Lord which means to seek Him with all of his or her heart. Romans 10:13 says, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Every person that has ever been saved has been saved by way of the cross. When Jesus died as payment for the sin of the world, He did not save anyone. But by His death, He made it possible for anyone to come to Him by faith and be saved.

Poverty to the Lazy and Froward Mouth to the Wicked (06 April)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 6:10-12

"Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man. A naughty person, a wicked man, walketh with a froward mouth."

In the above passage, Solomon continued his criticism of the sluggard. The Hebrew word that he used for "sluggard" means someone that is too lazy to even provide for his or her own basic needs. In Proverbs 6:6-9, he had compared that lazy person that will not so much as get out of bed to the very industrious ant that works hard in the spring, summer, and fall to provide year round food for herself. Her diligence stands in stark contrast to the sluggard that will not do anything to advance his or her cause. In his above criticism, Solomon said that the sluggard sleeps too much. Therefore, poverty will gradually come upon him or her like when a person travels. That comparison was related to the slowness of travel during those days and implied that the sluggard's poverty would be very slow but gradual. The comparison to the armed man implied that his or her lacking like during an armed robbery would be without solution and unable to be resisted.

In the second part of the above passage, Solomon spoke about the naughty person and the wicked man. Both "person" and "man" in those verses had come from Hebrew words that are not gender specific. That means that the entire proverb applies to both men and women. The Hebrew word used for "naughty" means worthless, good for nothing, or unprofitable. Throughout the Old Testament, that word was often translated as the sons, daughters, or children of Belial. Such people were generally regarded as troublemakers. Judges 19:22 says, "Now as they were making their hearts merry, behold, the men of the city, certain sons of Belial, beset the house round about, and beat at the door, and spake to the master of the house, the old man, saying, Bring forth the man that came into thine house, that we may know him." I Samuel 1:16 says, "Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto." The Hebrew word used for "wicked" means evil, unrighteous, or idolater. So in general, Solomon was talking about ungodly people. He said that they walked with a crooked mouth which implies that their words could not be trusted.

Simple Men are Easily Fooled by a Harlot (07 April)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 7:6-10

"For at the window of my house I looked through my casement, And beheld among the simple ones, I discerned among the youths, a young man void of understanding, Passing through the street near her corner; and he went the way to her house, In the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night: And, behold, there met him a woman with the attire of an harlot, and subtil of heart."

In the above passage and while still talking to his son and to other young men, Solomon began the story of a young man that had not been very smart. In fact, he had called him someone that was among the simple ones or among those that are fools. As the young man walked through the streets, he came close to the house of the wrong kind of woman. Solomon said that she approached him in her harlot's attire. He also said that she had been very subtle in her demeanor which means that she was smarter than he and also that she had been observing him from a distance. One should note, however, that the two traits of the wrong kind of woman are that she has not sought the Lord by faith and that she is not living for Him. That being the case, any wrong kind of woman can quickly become the right kind of woman simply by choosing to come to the Lord by faith and then by choosing to live for Him. By the way, the same is true for the wrong kind of man.

But because the woman in the above scenario had not done those things and because the young man was not very smart, the inevitable would soon happen. She would entice him with her flattering words and he being weak would soon find himself in her clutches. From Solomon's point of view, the playing out of that scenario was the worst thing that could happen to his son. He had grown up watching the relationship mistakes of his own father. He had learned from him the troubles that those kinds of mistakes can have on one's own life as well as on the lives of others. He had also made or would make some poor choices himself with respect to having so many ungodly wives. They had led or would ultimately lead him into idolatry. So he knew firsthand the problems of being so easily drawn from the straight and narrow paths in life by the wrong kind of women. He also knew that a person's only hope against the above kinds of indiscretions is to seek the Lord, receive wisdom, and get godly understanding. So a person would be wise to do those things before going too far down the wrong paths in life.

Instruction over Silver and Knowledge over Gold (08 April)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 8:9-10

"They are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge. Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold."

According to Solomon, godly wisdom and understanding speak words that are clear to those individuals that have come to the Lord by faith. To have said that their words are plain means that they are straightforward and easy to understand. They come forth with no hidden agendas or trickiness about them. So they are easy to accept and right to everyone that has knowledge. For that reason, their instruction is more valuable than silver and their knowledge is more valuable than gold. Many people in this world would gladly choose silver and gold over godly instruction and knowledge. But when they do, they do so to their own undoing.

Solomon often spoke about the importance of acquiring godly instruction. The Hebrew word that he used for "instruction" in the above passage and in the below verses means chastening, discipline, or correction. So he had not spoken about instruction as being shown how to do something. Instead he had spoken about it as reproof or correction by godly parents that will show the young person how to live for the Lord. Thus, Proverbs 1:8-9 says, "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother...." Proverbs 4:13 says, "Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life." Proverbs 8:33 says, "Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not." Proverbs 13:1 says, "A wise son heareth his father's instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke." Proverbs 15:5 says, "A fool despiseth his father's instruction: but he that regardeth reproof is prudent." Those verses are just a very few of his many sayings about instruction. But they show that a young person should hear the instruction or the correction of godly parents so that he or she will be wise. They also show that godly instruction or correction should be a way of life for the godly young person.

In closing, it is important to understand that if a person leaves this life outside of Christ, then how much silver and gold that he or she had accumulated while in this existence will not matter. In the end, all of those tangible properties will be left behind and all that will matter is one's personal standing with the Lord.

Reproving a Scorners and Rebuking the Wicked (09 April)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 9:7

"He that reproveth a scorner getteth to himself shame: and he that rebuketh a wicked man getteth himself a blot."

In the above passage, Solomon said that a person will usually be embarrassed or put to shame if he or she tries to reprove or to correct a scorner. Similarly he said the same thing about the godly person that tries to correct or to convict an evil or wicked person. As it turns out, his warnings were quite true. Those people that have not come to the Lord by faith frequently seem to have the uncanny ability on those occasions to make the godly person look like the greater fool. But that does not mean that the godly person should not try to encourage the ungodly person to come to the Lord by faith, which of course is much different than just trying to clean up their outward behavior. People are usually as they are because they have chosen to be that way. So just trying to change their outward behavior without showing them how to have a real heart change will not and should not work.

Solomon's point is that it is usually futile to try to correct the ways of an ungodly person. But that is alright because too many times the godly people of this world will try to do just that. In so doing, though, they are merely trying to eliminate the outward symptoms of the problem rather than actually dealing with the problem. For example, a godly person might try to and be able to persuade an ungodly drunkard to stop drinking alcoholic beverages to excess. But if the ungodly drunkard still dies without ever having come to the Lord by faith, then what purpose has been served? The answer is none. Just to rid the world of one more person that drinks alcoholic beverages to excess without having seen his or her name added to the Lamb's book of life is spiritually a waste. Thus, the goal of everyone that has called upon the name of the Lord should be to encourage and to motivate others to do the same. Once that has been done, then the indwelling Holy Spirit is quite capable of putting the godly drunkard's life on the right track.

But the real problem with respect to trying to correct ungodly people seems to be that godly people are much more anxious to tell them their faults than to tell them about the Lord. So Solomon's simple solution was for the godly person to tell the ungodly person about the Lord instead of just trying to clean up their lives.

Godly People and Godly Words Go Together (10 April)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 10:10-11

"He that winketh with the eye causeth sorrow: but a prating fool shall fall. The mouth of a righteous man is a well of life: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked."

Solomon said in the first part of the above passage that the winking of the eye causes sorrow and that a prating fool shall fall. The suggestion of winking one's eye or of shutting one's eye means either to overlook something that is wrong or to make light of something. Thus, instead of correcting a faulty behavior, the individual just winks his or her eye and ignores the wrongdoing. The idea as seen in the following verses is that he or she winks with his or her eye and then does the very thing that is wrong. Proverbs 16:30 says, "He shutteth his eyes to devise froward things: moving his lips he bringeth evil to pass." Proverbs 6:13-14 says, "He winketh with his eyes, he speaketh with his feet, he teacheth with his fingers; Frowardness is in his heart, he deviseth mischief continually; he soweth discord." So because the wrong or mischievous actions are often against the innocent, they many times cause much sorrow. Solomon concluded his thought by saying that the prating fool will fall. Prating refers to speech. That means that people that reject godly wisdom will fall or stumble because of their foolish conversation.

Thus, their own words will reveal their ungodliness. So in contrast to the falling of the prating fool, Solomon next said that the mouth of the righteous is a well of life. Whenever he spoke about the wise, the just, or the upright, he was always talking about those people that have sought the Lord with all of their heart, that have committed themselves to Him, that are trusting in Him, and that have entered into a personal relationship with Him. The Hebrew word used for "righteous" means to be justified or vindicated by God. So he was also talking about saved people whenever he spoke about the righteous. It is important to understand, though, that the mouth of the righteous is not automatically a well of life because godly people can occasionally say some very ungodly things, too. So Solomon was actually saying that ungodly thoughts and ungodly words are not a natural byproduct of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Thus, while godly people might still occasionally stumble, they will not always stumble. In direct contrast to the ungodly, the hallmark of godly people will be godly thoughts and godly language.

Righteous Leaders are Preferred over the Wicked (11 April)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 11:10-11

"When it goeth well with the righteous, the city rejoiceth: and when the wicked perish, there is shouting. By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted: but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked."

Whenever Solomon spoke about the righteous, he was always talking about only one kind of person. He was always talking about those people who have sought the Lord with all of their heart, who have committed themselves to Him, who are trusting in Him, and who have entered into a personal relationship with Him. One can know that for certain because the Hebrew word that he used for "righteous" means someone that has been justified or vindicated by God. Therefore, by definition he could have only been talking about godly people that have already come to the Lord by faith. It is important to understand, though, that yesterday's ungodly person can be today's godly person simply by today coming to the Lord by faith. II Peter 3:9 says, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Then all of the promises that Solomon made to the righteous person under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit will become very real and very personal.

In the above passage, he said that the city rejoices either when things go well for the righteous person or when the wicked person is gone. The reason for that is somewhat obvious. Righteous people tend to share their blessings with others. They tend to rule with everyone else's welfare in mind. They are also under the constant watch care of the Lord. Psalm 5:12 says, "For thou, LORD, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield." Psalm 34:15 says, "The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry." By contrast ungodly people, by virtue of the fact that they do not personally know the Lord, tend to hoard their blessings and to rule with only themselves in mind. Psalm 10:3-4 says, "For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the LORD abhorreth. The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts." Therefore, when given the choice between such individuals, most anyone would choose to be under the leadership of a godly, righteous person.

Having a Servant and Lacking Bread (12 April)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 12:9-10

"He that is despised, and hath a servant, is better than he that honoureth himself, and lacketh bread. A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel."

Solomon often spoke words that went against conventional wisdom. Perhaps that is why he was considered the wisest person of his times and possibly the wisest person of all times. Conventional wisdom often says that worldly riches are to be preferred to being financially poor and that being a powerful person is better than being someone with little or no power. But Solomon did not teach or advocate such lofty ideals. He always taught that coming to the Lord by faith should be the primary objective of any person's life. He always taught that being industrious and hardworking was better than being lazy. He always taught that young people should honor their parents and be obedient to them. So while those ideals might sound offbeat and boring to many people, they will help any person live the very best life possible. They will also keep that person out of trouble and in the right places in life for most or for all of the time.

Above Solomon said something else that went against the conventional wisdom of those days. He said that the despised person that has a servant is better off than the person who honors himself or herself and does not have enough food to eat. In saying that, however, he was not advocating slavery. Instead being despised meant the same as being poor. Having a servant meant that the poor person had had some way to provide for his or her own needs. So Solomon's illustration was comparing a poor person that could and would work with those people that honor themselves because they have been born into an elite family. Such people often think that they are too good to work for their own needs. Therefore, Solomon said that poor people or despised people who are able to care for themselves are better off than people in elite families that think that they are too good to do so.

His next saying was one of degrees. He simply said that a righteous person treats his or her animals with greater love and concern than a wicked person does of the people that are in his or her life. The simple fact according to Solomon is that the good works of ungodly people are cruel when compared to those of godly people.

The Poor Do Not Hear any Rebuke (13 April)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 13:8-9

"The ransom of a man's life are his riches: but the poor heareth not rebuke. The light of the righteous rejoiceth: but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out."

Solomon said above that the ransom or the deliverance of a man's life is in his riches. Since he used a gender specific Hebrew word for "man," he had intended his message to be specifically for men. The reason for that is because in some ancient cultures financially affluent men were sometimes arrested based upon some trumped up charges. Then they would have to use their own wealth to buy their way to freedom. In a very real sense, the rich men in those cultures had been victimized by their own government because of their wealth.

By contrast, Solomon said that the poor men in those cultures did not have the same problem. Because they did not have any real money, their government did not bother to bring them into custody. So the message of wisdom is that a person is probably wasting his or her time trying to make and keep a lot of money. That is especially true if their money is going to be legally stolen from them anyway. But even if it is not stolen, the pursuit of money is still less wise because the funds in most cases are either soon gone or left behind. Proverbs 23:4-5 says, "Labour not to be rich...for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven."

Therefore, the only lifestyle that truly makes sense is the one that puts the Lord first and above everything else. To some legal hypocrites of His day, Jesus said in Matthew 22:36-39, "Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." The simple fact is that most of the things that people get caught up in this life unless they directly involve the Lord will come to nothing anyway because people do not live forever in this existence. Therefore, it only makes sense to commit oneself to those things that do last forever. To those people that seek the Lord with all of their heart, Solomon said that they will rejoice. Their names will also be written in the Lamb's book of life. But to those that do not, their lamp will be put out.

Fools Joke about their Sins (14 April)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 14:9-11

"Fools make a mock at sin: but among the righteous there is favour. The heart knoweth his own bitterness; and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy. The house of the wicked shall be overthrown: but the tabernacle of the upright shall flourish."

Solomon correctly said above that foolish people make a joke out of sin. They often like to boast about their exploits and try to make themselves appear free to do whatever they please. But they are only fooling themselves. In fact, there is possibly nothing less intelligent than letting the devil deceive someone into thinking that his or her wicked lifestyle is the way to go. People that drink alcoholic beverages to an unhealthy extreme usually become alcoholics. People that take drugs sometimes take too many at one time and then die of an overdose. Another possibility of course is that they will become drug addicts for life. Thus, every kind of sin known to humanity has a high price to pay somewhere down the line. So it is as was just stated. Those people that make light of such things are only fooling themselves. But by contrast, Solomon also correctly said that those individuals that have come to the Lord by faith and that are living for Him as they should have favor with Him.

The heart knows its own bitterness. By that, Solomon meant that a person's heart is broken when he or she realizes the burden of his or her sin. But when that person comes to the Lord by faith, the joy that replaces that bitterness is beyond compare. It is also a joy that those people not in Christ cannot understand. So even though the fool might think that sin is great fun, greater fun is to know that one's name is written in the Lamb's book of life. Revelation 21:1-27 says, "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea...And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." So for the person that makes a joke out of sin, there may be some temporary pleasure. But for the person that comes to the Lord by faith, there is eternal joy that never ends. Thus, in the final consummation of this life, the wicked will be overthrown. But the righteous will flourish.

Correction and Destruction are before the Lord (15 April)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 15:10-11

"Correction is grievous unto him that forsaketh the way: and he that hateth reproof shall die. Hell and destruction are before the LORD: how much more then the hearts of the children of men?"

Solomon said that correction is unpleasant to the person who has gotten himself or herself out of the way. But on the other side of that coin, he also said that the person that hates to be corrected or that refuses to be corrected will die. With those words, he was making a statement about eternal security that cannot and should not be overlooked. Job 5:17-18 says, "Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty: For he maketh sore, and bindeth up: he woundeth, and his hands make whole." Proverbs 3:11-12 says, "My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth."

When a person comes to the Lord by faith and enters into a personal relationship with Him, the above passages say that God treats the person like His own child. That means that He corrects him or her when they make a mistake rather than throwing them away like a useless piece of garbage. The Bible always identifies God the Father as a loving heavenly father and never as a super policeman ready to strike down His kids when they mess up. So while that is not reason to do wrong, it is reason to rest securely in Christ and not to worry about losing one's standing or position in Him. By contrast, though, those people that hate reproof have every reason to be afraid because they have by their own free will choice chosen to not come to the Lord by faith. That is a tragic, fatal mistake to make.

Solomon next said that the grave and the place of destruction are before the Lord. Since those are eternal entities, they show that God is the Creator of the world and that He is the first uncaused Cause. By calling Him the first uncaused Cause, one recognizes that He was not created but that He has always been and will always be. The fact that the hearts of all people for all time are before Him shows that no one can hide any of his or her misdeeds from Him. He knows everything that every person does. Therefore, wisdom says to repent and come to Him by faith.

Making Good Judgments and Being Honest (16 April)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 16:10-12

"A divine sentence is in the lips of the king: his mouth transgresseth not in judgment. A just weight and balance are the LORD'S: all the weights of the bag are his work. It is an abomination to kings to commit wickedness: for the throne is established by righteousness."

The Hebrew word that Solomon used in the above passage for "divine" can mean either divination or witchcraft if one chooses the bad sense or the oracles of a king if one chooses the more positive sense. Because he referred to a king, one would not be incorrect to conclude that he was using the word in the more positive sense. Furthermore, because the second part of his saying says that the king does not sin in making a judgment, the logical conclusion is that he was specifically talking about a godly king. Thus, he said that godly kings make good judgments that do not transgress against the Lord. But while his words sound good, they have not always applied because not all kings have followed the Lord.

The Pharaoh during the time of Moses that had refused to let the children of Israel leave Egypt had been an ungodly leader. Also even though King Nebuchadnezzar might have sought the Lord later in life, he had initially been a very brutal and wicked king. Therefore, Solomon was not talking about either of those kings in the above passage. Interestingly enough, though, he could have included himself with his description. When two women had brought a child before him both claiming to be the mother, he had made a very wise decision. He had told them to cut the baby in half and each one take half. But the real mother chose to give up her baby rather than do what Solomon had said. So, the case was solved, she got back her baby, and his throne was established in righteousness and wisdom.

Another issue that he addressed in the above passage was honesty or fairness. He said that the Lord uses just weights and balances. That means that He always deals honestly and makes right judgments. In business, merchants in those days often used scales to weigh the products that they sold. So while some merchants might have rigged the scale to get a higher price for their merchandise, the Lord sets the standard by which everything is measured whether it is in the selling of things in the market place or the making of judgments within the judicial system

Excellent Speech, Lying Lips, and Spiritual Gifts (17 April)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 17:7-8

"Excellent speech becometh not a fool: much less do lying lips a prince. A gift is as a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it: whithersoever it turneth, it prospereth."

Solomon indicated above that people's words usually match their deportment in life. For example, a fool will usually speak foolishly. He or she usually will not use what would be called excellent speech. Similarly, people of nobility usually do not speak deceptively or dishonestly. They are usually very forthwith and their words are usually very trustworthy. However, to really understand what he was saying, it is necessary to look beyond the simple labels of fool and prince. To Solomon, a fool was anyone that had not come to the Lord by faith in the right spirit and with the right attitude. Therefore, he would have possibly used that label on a very highly educated individual if the condition applied. His logic is that only a fool would not seek the Lord and commit to Him. Similarly, he would have called the lowliest person in town one of nobility if that person had come to the Lord by faith and had entered into a personal relationship with Him. His logic in that case is that an individual in Christ is a child of the King. So in seeing how he defined a fool and a prince, one can better understand his above statement. Godly people speak well and are very honest. Ungodly people speak as fools.

He next said that a gift is as a precious stone to the one that has it. He then added that it brings a return wherever it is used. Obviously, he was talking about a personal attribute rather than a physical present. For example, a person might have the gift of music or of leadership or of something else that might have come to him or her from the Lord. The Apostle Paul wrote that the Holy Spirit bestows gifts upon people that seek the Lord by faith and that come to Him. I Corinthians 12:7-11 says, "...For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." So the purpose of spiritual gifts is to worship the Lord and to bring others to Him.

A Fool's Mouth and a Talebearer's Words (18 April)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 18:7-8

"A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul. The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly."

In the above passage, Solomon spoke about the "dumb fool" that is either a simpleton or just plain stupid. By doing that, he was continuing his thoughts from the previous verse. Proverbs 18:6 says, "A fool's lips enter into contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes." According to that verse, the simpleton or the stupid person sooner or later gets himself or herself into trouble by saying the wrong thing. Whenever that happens, he or she needs to be corrected. Above Solomon added that foolish people are actually destroyed or brought down by their mouth and that their lips are a snare to them. So a very simple solution for all people in general is to not talk so much. But clearly the "dumb fool" would be much wiser to be a person of fewer words. Solomon implied that they just do not have that much worth saying or worth hearing. Proverbs 10:21 says, "The lips of the righteous feed many: but fools die for want of wisdom." Therefore, he even advised getting away from them as quickly as possible. Proverbs 14:7 says, "Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge."

He next said that the words of a talebearer are as wounds that penetrate into the innermost parts of the belly. A talebearer is a person that murmurs, whispers behind someone's back, slanders, or hurts another person by his or her words. To slander someone means to make false statements about a person that hurts his or her reputation. So the point of the wounds is that the hurtful words about the other person are not even true. In fact, if someone slanders someone in writing, then it is called libel and is punishable in a court of law. One should note, though, that the Hebrew word used for "wounds" more accurately means sweet morsels. Therefore, Solomon said that the hearer actually enjoys hearing the talebearer's slanderous words because they tickle his or her ears. So the idea of gossiping immediately comes to mind. People should never utter false accusations against anyone else. They should actually avoid all negative communications. However, a talebearer is usually more interested in being heard than in being accurate.

Coming to the Lord is the Best Choice for any Person (19 April)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 19:7-8

"All the brethren of the poor do hate him: how much more do his friends go far from him? he pursueth them with words, yet they are wanting to him. He that getteth wisdom loveth his own soul: he that keepeth understanding shall find good."

Solomon said that a poor person is hated by his or her own family and friends. But one would not be called a friend of a person that is truly hated. So, Solomon had been talking more about a less degree of love than about an out-and-out hatred. For example, Jacob had been married to two women. He had definitely loved one more than the other. But he had not hated the one that was less loved. Genesis 29:30 says, "And he went in also unto Rachel, and he loved also Rachel more than Leah, and served with him yet seven other years." Similarly when Jesus was betrayed into the hands of the Roman soldiers, His disciples had run for their lives. They had put as much distance between Him and themselves as they could. So they had not been very good friends. But they had not hated Him either. Solomon said that the poor friend that tries to impress with words will not be able to do so because he or she is just another poor friend.

He next said that the person that gets wisdom loves his or her own soul. The Hebrew word used for "wisdom" refers to the heart or to the soul of the inner person. Proverbs 2:10-17 says, "When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee...." To love one's soul is to love that part of the person that lives forever. To love one's soul is also to do whatever is best for that part of the person that lives forever. Therefore, the wisdom that such a person seeks is the wisdom that points him or her to the Lord and away from all of the ungodly distractions of this life. On one occasion, Jesus asked what it would profit a person to gain the whole world and die lost. His implied answer was nothing. So the person that gets godly wisdom is the person that seeks the Lord with all of his or her heart, commits to Him, trusts in Him, and then enters into a personal relationship with Him. No one can choose to not do those things and truly love his or her own soul. Therefore, it is good to know that Jesus never turns anyone away that comes to Him by faith in the right spirit and with the right attitude.

Being Cleansed from a Filthy Heart and Being Honest (20 April)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 20:9-11

"Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin? Divers weights, and divers measures, both of them are alike abomination to the LORD. Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right."

Solomon above asked the rhetorical question of who can claim to have made his or her heart clean and who is pure from sin. The maybe not-so-obvious answer is no one. Many people might think that they can do a few good things and not do a few bad things and that that makes them a pretty good person. But according to the Scriptures, they are at most only good in their own eyes. They are not good, clean, or pure in the Lord's eyes nor can they save themselves. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." According to the last part of that passage, if people could make themselves clean then they would boast to the Lord about what they had done. However, that is not the biblical reason why no one can make themselves clean. The reason is because every person born to Adam has inherited his sin nature. The heart that goes with that nature can only be cleansed by coming to the Lord by faith and by committing oneself to Him.

Solomon next said that differing weights and measures are disgusting things to the Lord. In those days, merchants weighed purchased items on a set of scales that determined the weight by using a counterbalance. If the counterbalance were not marked correctly, then it would enable a merchant to exhort more money than he or she should from the customer. While such a thing could be accidental, the Lord called it a disgusting thing if the merchant intentionally used incorrect weights and measures. In the same way, people today are also guilty before the Lord whenever they cheat others out of money. One obvious example would be when an employee does not do the work or work the hours for which he or she is being paid. Each of those actions is a form of stealing. Solomon's final statement in the above passage indicated that a child becomes known by his or her behavior, too. One should note, however, that like those people discussed above they cannot clean their own wicked heart either. One can only be cleansed or made pure by coming to the Lord by faith in the right spirit and with the right attitude.

The Wicked Regard No One and Will Be Destroyed (21 April)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 21:10-12

"The soul of the wicked desireth evil: his neighbour findeth no favour in his eyes. When the scorner is punished, the simple is made wise: and when the wise is instructed, he receiveth knowledge. The righteous man wisely considereth the house of the wicked: but God overthroweth the wicked for their wickedness."

Solomon above said that wicked people desire evil and that their friends do not find favor in their eyes. Right before saying that, though, he said that everyone is wicked unless he or she has come to the Lord by faith. Proverbs 21:8 says, "The way of man is froward and strange: but as for the pure, his work is right." The Hebrew word that he used for "froward" in that verse means to be perverse or to be wicked. So according to him, all people are wicked and perverse unless they have come to the Lord by faith. That being the case, there are only two ways to understand the first part of the above passage. If the friends are also wicked, then Solomon was saying that wicked people have no regard for each other. But if the friend has come to the Lord by faith, then he was saying that wicked people do not have any regard for what he called pure people. Thus, the simple conclusion either way is that wicked, ungodly people do not have any regard for anyone.

He next spoke about a scorner being punished and about a wise person being instructed. One should note that his words were intended to make a comparison between ungodly people and godly people. Whenever he spoke about the person that is scornful or simple, he was always talking about those individuals that have not come to the Lord by faith. Whenever he spoke about a wise person, he was always talking about those people that have come to Him. One can know that for sure because he would never call someone wise if that person would someday die lost and be forever separated from the Lord. He also would not have assigned the negative characteristics of scorning or of being simple to anyone that has come to the Lord by faith. So having made those distinctions, Solomon said that ungodly people are made wiser in a world sense when other ungodly people are punished. By contrast, a godly person will become even godlier when he or she is instructed.

In his final statement above, Solomon said that wicked people will be overthrown. But they can find mercy and grace if they will seek the Lord while they can.

Cast out the Scorners and the Contentious (22 April)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 22:10-11

"Cast out the scorner, and contention shall go out; yea, strife and reproach shall cease. He that loveth pureness of heart, for the grace of his lips the king shall be his friend."

A scorner is someone that talks or mocks arrogantly. As such, David had written to not put oneself into the seat of the scornful. He had also written to not follow the counsel of the ungodly or to remain in the way of sinners. Psalm 1:1 says, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." Thus, godly people should always seek godly counsel and turn away from ungodly counsel. They should always stand in the way of the righteous and strive to live their lives for the Lord. They should always have refreshing words to share with others rather than words that lead to contention, strife, and reproach. Solomon's association of scorners with those three things had been very similar to the later association in the gospel of John between sin and darkness. John 3:19 says, "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." So, just as the light of Jesus chases away sin, the casting out of the scorner gets rid of contention, strife, and reproach.

Solomon had also said that the person with a pure heart will be close to the king. While most people do not have the opportunity to be close to a king or to another national leader, his words had meant that things would mostly go well for those people with a pure heart. Once again, though, as has been earlier noted he had been speaking in general principles rather than in spiritual absolutes. That means that the principle is true in most but not all cases. It had been true for Joseph and Daniel. Genesis 41:41 says, "And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt." Daniel 2:48 says, "Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon." But it had not been true for the Apostle James, the Apostle Peter, and many other saints that had been martyred for their faith in Christ. Acts 12:1-4 says, "Now about that time Herod...killed James...he proceeded further to take Peter also...." Despite that, though, all four men had still been close to the king of kings who is Jesus.

Withhold Words of Wisdom and Honor old Boundaries (23 April)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 23:9-12

"Speak not in the ears of a fool: for he will despise the wisdom of thy words. Remove not the old landmark; and enter not into the fields of the fatherless: For their redeemer is mighty; he shall plead their cause with thee. Apply thine heart unto instruction, and thine ears to the words of knowledge."

In the first part of the above passage, Solomon said to not speak words of wisdom into the ears of a fool. The Hebrew word that he used for "fool" means a stupid person or a simpleton. Thus, such a person would be considered a "dumb fool" as opposed to an "evil fool" that intentionally does wrong. At the same time, though, he also said on other occasions that a person should get wisdom and that wisdom is the principle thing. He said that godly wisdom will keep a person in the right paths of life and also keep him or her out of trouble. So which is it? Should a person speak words of godly wisdom to others or should the person not speak such words?

The answer is yes in both cases. As the godly person tries to minister to the ungodly person, he or she should let the Holy Spirit guide the conversation. Then if the Spirit wills, by all means encourage the ungodly person to come to the Lord by faith. It will mean salvation for a lost soul. But if the Spirit does not give that liberty, then simply pray silently for the ungodly person and move on. Solomon next said to not remove an old landmark and to not enter into the fields of the fatherless. The practice, according to him, would have been to expand one's own property boundaries by gradually tilling into a neighbor's land. But godly people should honor their neighbor's property lines and not try to steal land from them.

Finally he said that a person should apply himself or herself to instruction and to words of knowledge. Of course, he was talking about godly instruction and godly knowledge because worldly instruction and worldly knowledge do not offer any eternal benefit. Whatever a person learns in this world will be left behind on the other side of the grave unless the person came to the Lord by faith while in this life. The only kind of wisdom, instruction, understanding, and knowledge that has any value is the kind that takes a person at death to be with the Lord forever and ever. Therefore, every person should come to the Lord while he or she can.

The Thought of Foolishness is Sin (24 April)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 24:8-9

"He that deviseth to do evil shall be called a mischievous person. The thought of foolishness is sin: and the scorner is an abomination to men."

In the above passage, Solomon had said that the person that plans to do something that is evil shall be called a mischievous or wicked person. He had also said that the very thought of foolishness or of folly is sin. Thus, the theme of living right versus living wrong is taught throughout the Scriptures. Solomon had often compared and contrasted the good person with the evil person. However, one must be very careful when considering good and evil as they are described in the Scriptures. Romans 3:10-11 says, "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God." Romans 3:23-26 says, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God...." From a human perspective, people are often credited either with being good or with doing good things in instances where Solomon would not have agreed. When a celebrity, for example, donates his or her time to some charitable cause, it is usually viewed as something good. Similarly when any person shows kindness to another person, it is also often viewed as something good. But from a biblical perspective, which is the only perspective that really matters, no human beings are good or do any good things unless or until they are in Christ.

That is not to say that donating one's time or being kind to others are not good things to do in so far as they go. But it is to say that they have no biblical basis for being called good deeds unless or until the doer is in Christ. Why is that? The reason is somewhat simple. The above two passages from the book of Romans say that everyone without exception is a sinner. The person that donates his or her time to a good cause is a sinner. The person that shows kindness to others is a sinner. All people are sinners. So if the good deed does not remove or change that fact, then it also does not change the person's eternal destination. Romans 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin is death...." The death referred to in that verse is the second death. All people die physically which is the first death. But those people that have not come to the Lord by faith, committed themselves to Him, trusted in Him and entered into a personal relationship with Him will die a second death, which will be eternal separation from Him.

Be Slow to Fight and Quick to Get Along (25 April)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 25:8-10

"Go not forth hastily to strive, lest thou know not what to do in the end thereof, when thy neighbour hath put thee to shame. Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself; and discover not a secret to another: Lest he that heareth it put thee to shame, and thine infamy turn not away."

Solomon wrote that a person should not be quick to make a complaint or to quarrel with his or her neighbor. For one thing, the neighbor may put him or her to shame. For another, people that have come to the Lord by faith and are committed to Him should not be quarrelers or complainers anyway. Matthew 5:37-41 says, "But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil. Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain." Thus, people that claim Christ as Savior should live like little Christs. Rather than being concerned about coming out on top when disagreements with others arise, they should be more willing to suffer loss for the cause of Christ.

Concerning Solomon's second point about debating or quarreling with one's neighbor, nothing gets a person into big trouble more than or faster than a big mouth. James 3:5-6 says, "Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell." James the half-brother of Jesus wrote in the above verses that the tongue is like a fire that can defile the whole body. Thus, if uncontrolled it can make enemies. It can hurt the vulnerable. It can even cause dissension among malcontents. Therefore, to help control that potentially destructive member of the body, Solomon said to be honest in all things and to not tell falsehoods about other people that might be soon discovered. Romans 12:17-18 says, "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."

Do Not Honor Fools or Give them Parables (26 April)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 26:8-9

"As he that bindeth a stone in a sling, so is he that giveth honour to a fool. As a thorn goeth up into the hand of a drunkard, so is a parable in the mouth of fools."

Twice Solomon spoke about a parable in the mouth of a fool. In addition to the above passage, Proverbs 26:7 says, "The legs of the lame are not equal: so is a parable in the mouth of fools." One may recall from earlier discussions that the Hebrew language has two separate words to distinguish between an "evil fool" and a "dumb fool." So in both passages about a parable in the mouth of a fool, Solomon had been talking about a "dumb fool." But the "dumb fool" can remedy his or her dumbness condition by seeking the Lord by faith, by committing to Him, by trusting in Him, and then by entering into a personal relationship with Him. At that point, the indwelling Holy Spirit will take charge of the new person in Christ and will begin to move him or her away from their dumb foolishness.

So no person that Solomon would characterize as a "dumb fool" has to remain a "dumb fool." But to those people that will not come to the Lord by faith, commit to Him, and forsake their "dumb fool" status, he had made some very negative comparisons. First, a parable in the mouth of that kind of person is the same as someone that has lame legs that do not support his or her body. As the legs are essentially useless to that individual, so the parable is useless in the mind of the "dumb fool." Second, a parable in the mouth of the person that will not come to the Lord by faith is like a drunk that has a thorn in his or her hand. The thorn renders the hand of the drunk useless. So the parable in the mouth of the "dumb fool" makes him or her like one that is useless, too.

Another thought expressed by Solomon in the above passage compared binding a stone in a sling to giving honor to a "dumb fool." Binding a stone in a sling does not make sense because then the stone cannot be used for its intended purpose. In the same context, giving honor to a "dumb fool" does not make sense either because then the giving of that honor will have been wasted. Thus, if honor can only be given to a limited number of individuals, one would not want to waste it on a "dumb fool." Psalm 49:20 says, "Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish."

Simple Pleasures and Not Burdening Others (27 April)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 27:9-10

"Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel. Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not; neither go into thy brother's house in the day of thy calamity: for better is a neighbour that is near than a brother far off."

What are some of the simple things that can make a person happy? According to Solomon, ointment and perfume rejoice the heart. Also hearty counsel from a friend is sweet and pleasing. The ointment of which he spoke would have been a type of oil such as olive oil. It is also possible that the oil might have been very valuable. The perfume would have been a sweet smelling odor similar to that which would have been produced from a burnt offering. Leviticus 1:7-9 says, "And the sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire upon the altar, and lay the wood in order upon the fire: And the priests, Aaron's sons, shall lay the parts, the head, and the fat, in order upon the wood that is on the fire which is upon the altar: But his inwards and his legs shall he wash in water: and the priest shall burn all on the altar, to be a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD." The Hebrew word used for "hearty" in the above passage means an activity of the mind which would have probably meant good conversation. So those simple things that make the heart happy are useful gifts like the ointment, pleasant odors like the perfume, and good conversation with family and friends.

Solomon's first thought in the above passage had focused on some simple things that make a person happy. His second thought had focused on one simple thing that a person can do to not burden others. James 2:15-17 says, "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." So while it is quite biblical to help those people that are in need, it is not biblical to bother others with one's own problems. In fact, the opposite is true. Godly people should help others. But when problems come to them, they should look to the Lord for their help. Many times, He will have already spoken to other people to meet the needs of the godly person that needs it. He always has the best solution for everything without anyone burdening others.

Hear the Law and Do Not Cause Others to Stray (28 April)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 28:9-10

"He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination. Whoso causeth the righteous to go astray in an evil way, he shall fall himself into his own pit: but the upright shall have good things in possession."

When a person hears the law, then he or she is hearing the schoolmaster that is intended to bring him or her to Christ. Galatians 3:23-24 says, "But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." So Solomon said that when a person will not hear that schoolmaster, then his or her prayers to the Lord will be a disgusting thing. Psalm 66:18-19 says, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me...." That may sound cruel. But it really is not. If a person does not want any part in the Lord, then the Lord will not force Himself upon that person. But not having a part in the Lord also means not having a part in the good things that He does for His people or to the prayers that He answers for them. It is important to realize, though, that it is always the individual that is rejecting Christ rather than Christ rejecting the individual. It is also important to realize that He will quickly forgive and receive anyone that comes to Him by faith in the right spirit and with the right attitude.

Solomon's next statement reveals an important truth about those people that are trying to live for the Lord. It is that the very people that have in the past already come to Him by faith can actually go astray. Those people are signified above by the Hebrew word for "righteous." Thus, in a moment of weakness, a righteous person can be led to do something that is wrong. The reason for that weakness is because every person born from Adam has inherited his sin nature. Then even though the person may have come to the Lord by faith and been forgiven for his or her sins, the sin nature is still there. Further evidence of that continuing nature can be seen from the later words of the Apostle Paul. Romans 7:19 says, "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do." So even he had struggled at times with the sin nature inside him. But concerning the person that might cause that righteous person to do wrong, Solomon said that his or her penalty will be whatever he or she had hoped to bring upon the righteous person.

Be Careful around Foolish and Bloodthirsty People (29 April)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 29:9-10

"If a wise man contendeth with a foolish man, whether he rage or laugh, there is no rest. The bloodthirsty hate the upright: but the just seek his soul."

Solomon often used two different Hebrew words when he spoke about a fool. The first one referred to the "dumb fool." That person would have usually been dumb, a simpleton, or just plain stupid. The second one referred to the "evil fool" which would have been someone that despises wisdom or that is quarrelsome. In the above passage, Solomon was talking about the "evil fool." So he said that a wise man will not find any rest or quietness if he enters into a controversy with an "evil fool." The controversy about which he spoke would have probably but not necessarily been within the judicial system. One can conclude that because the Hebrew word that he had used for "man" is gender specific. Therefore, he would have excluded women from his statement because in that culture they probably could not take someone to court. However, his words also imply that a wise man should stay from such controversies with the "evil fool," too, because no lasting good will come from it, only unrest and no peace.

In talking about "dumb fools" and "evil fools," though, it must be pointed out that no one has to be a fool or remain a fool of any kind. The path away from being a fool leads through the cross at Calvary and the sacrificial death of Jesus. He paid the sin debt for all people that come to Him by faith. So to not be a fool, all one must do is come to Him by faith, commit to Him, trust in Him, and enter into a personal relationship with Him. No person that has done those things will ever be a fool again. However, at the same time, any person that does not do those things will always be a fool. Psalm 111:10 says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever." Solomon concluded the above passage by saying that the bloodthirsty hate the upright. The word "bloodthirsty" comes from two Hebrew words that mean blood and mortal man. The Hebrew word used for "upright" means complete, perfect, or mature. So the likely meaning is that "bloodthirsty" is talking about those people that kill where the people being killed are the upright or those that are complete and mature in the Lord. Despite that, Solomon said that the upright still desire to see the salvation of the bloodthirsty.

Biblical Inerrancy and Being neither Rich nor Poor (30 April)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 30:6-9

"Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar. Two things have I required of thee; deny me them not before I die: Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain."

Immediately after saying in Proverbs 30:5 that every word of the Lord is pure, Solomon said to not add anything to those words. Otherwise, the person doing so would be corrected and found a liar. The Apostle John would later issue a similar warning at the end of the last book of the Bible. Revelation 22:18-19 says, "...If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."

So obviously coming from both Solomon and John, one must conclude that the word of God is complete. It is also error free. Bible scholars usually describe biblical inerrancy in two ways. Verbal inspiration means that every word in the original manuscripts was inspired by the Holy Spirit. Plenary inspiration means that every word of those manuscripts was equally inspired by the Holy Spirit. Thus, no one part of the Bible is anymore inspired than any other part.

Following that declaration, Solomon had asked for two things while still living in this life. First he had wanted to be removed far from vanity and lies. One may recall that he had repeatedly written in the book of Ecclesiastes that everything in this life is vanity and vexation of spirit. Ecclesiastes 1:14 says, "I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit." Therefore, he had wanted to be removed far from those things. The Hebrew word used for "vanity" means empty and false. The second thing for which he had asked was to be neither rich nor poor. With riches, he knew that he would eat the food of the wealthy and then indulge in luxurious living. But with poverty, he knew that he would be a thief and take the Lord's name in vain. Thus, unlike most people he understood the blessings of a simple life.

The Greedy of Gain Wait for their own Blood (01 May)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 1:17-19

"Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird. And they lay wait for their own blood; they lurk privily for their own lives. So are the ways of every one that is greedy of gain; which taketh away the life of the owners thereof."

It is important to note that Solomon had told the son in his illustration to not be tempted by the ways of the sinners. But he had gone even further by telling him that he would not be tempted to join them if he would just follow the simple ways of the wise. If he would live by Solomon's principles, then he would be like the bird that watches the net being spread to catch him. He would clearly see the ways and the devices of the sinners and not be tricked into going along with them. Solomon said that people greedy for gain lay wait for their own blood and lurk secretly for their own lives. What he had meant by that was that they do not fool anyone. In fact, in the verses preceding the above passage, he had already told the young man to not be tempted to join with people like that. By his having called them sinners, he had used the Hebrew word that means that they were not saved. So since the son in his illustration was saved, there was no reason for them to do evil works together anyway.

The Apostle Paul would later write that godly people and ungodly people have nothing in common. Therefore, godly people should separate themselves from the ways of the ungodly. II Corinthians 6:14-16 says, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." But Paul did not teach for the godly to separate themselves from the ungodly. In fact, they should actually seek out the ungodly and encourage them to come to the Lord by faith. The reason is simple. People without Christ die lost. People with Him die saved. So every saved person should desire to see every lost person come to the Lord to be saved. II Peter 3:9 says, "The Lord ...is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

Godly Wisdom is the only Way to the Good Life (02 May)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 2:9

"Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path."

Proverbs 2:1-5 says, "My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God." Solomon said that if a person seeks wisdom like one might seek silver or hidden treasure, then he or she will understand righteousness, judgment, equity, and every good path. However, one should understand that he was speaking about only one of two kinds of wisdom. The first kind of wisdom is worldly wisdom. It encourages a person to be all that he or she can be in this world. It tells a person to get a good education to get a good job to have a good career to make a lot of money to have a lot of things in this world and to then retire to comfort. While there is nothing wrong with any of those things, the person that only follows that course in life and leaves out godly wisdom will come up empty on the other side of the grave.

Thus, the second wisdom is godly wisdom. It tells people to be all that they can be for the Lord. Based upon the differences between the two kinds of wisdom, though, Solomon always encouraged people to seek godly wisdom above all else. That should be obvious in the above passage because nothing about the wisdom of this world teaches about righteousness, judgment, equity, and every good path. Understanding righteousness means to recognize one's position with the Lord in such a way that he or she can gain right standing with Him. Knowing judgment and equity is to realize that His judgments are always right and that He is always fair. So Solomon implied that nothing in this life is more important than seeking godly wisdom because it will also show a person how to rightly live this life. No matter what one might gain in this life, it will not mean anything on the other side of the grave without the Lord. But if a person seeks Him first, then all of the good things in this life will become even better. Plus the person will go to be with Him when his or her life is over. Therefore, coming to Him is very much a no-brainer.

Godly Wisdom and Understanding Make One Happy (03 May)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 3:13-18

"Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her."

Solomon said that the person that finds godly wisdom and godly understanding is happy. There are at least three reasons for that happiness. Because Solomon was talking about godly wisdom and about godly understanding rather than about worldly wisdom and worldly understanding, the first reason for the individual's happiness is the joy of the Lord that one has when in a personal relationship with Him. That relationship with the God of Creation gives one peace and satisfaction. It also takes away a person's doubt about whether the whole spiritual realm is real or not. Many people are not sure if God exists or not. They are also not sure about Jesus. They even question the reality of heaven and *hades*. But being in a personal relationship with the Lord removes all of those doubts and questions. It is not difficult to believe in a God to whom one can talk. It is also not difficult to believe in heaven and *hades* when He has said that they are real.

The second reason that the person finding godly wisdom and godly understanding is happy is because he or she will be able to find the right paths and the best paths in life. Most people have to sometimes question which way to go in their lives. But the indwelling Holy Spirit is always faithful to show godly people what to do. He will guide them according to His will and then ensure that they are used for His glory once they get there. The third reason that the individual finding godly wisdom and godly understanding is happy is because they promise length of days and prosperity. However, one must be careful how he or she understands that promise. It is not that they are automatically given longer lives or more money. It is that they are given the wisdom to know how to best take care of themselves and their resources. Godly wisdom will lead a person to take care of every aspect of his or her life. Then the reward of that is longer life and greater prosperity.

Wisdom Leads One in Right Paths (04 May)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 4:10-11

"Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings; and the years of thy life shall be many. I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in right paths."

After Solomon passed on what he had learned from his father in verses four through nine about getting godly wisdom and godly understanding, he seems to have been again speaking for himself. So as his father had encouraged him to receive and to obey his laws, he had also encouraged the same for his children. In both cases, the children would be rewarded with long lives if they received and obeyed their father's sayings. Interestingly, David had told those words to Solomon, and Solomon had repeated them to his children. Also of interest is that the fifth commandment of the Ten Commandments had made a similar promise of long life to those young people that obeyed. Exodus 20:12 says, "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee."

But it is very important to understand that the book of Proverbs often speaks in terms of general principles rather than in spiritual absolutes. The same is also true of the fifth commandment. So what that basically means is that the principle is always true. However, because of the uncertainties of life no human being can guarantee another human being even one more moment of life. Therefore, David could not extend Solomon's life, and Solomon could not extend his children's lives. Nevertheless, the principles that they taught were still valid. David's life had fared much better when he had held close to the biblical ideals for a person's life. The same was also true of Solomon. Neither father nor son had seriously faltered until each had strayed far from the godly principles that they had known were right. David had become wrongfully involved with Bathsheba and her husband Uriah. He had even been implicated in Uriah's death. Solomon had taken seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines and he had turned to idols towards the end of his life.

So Solomon concluded by saying that he had taught his children the way of wisdom and that he had led them in the right path. Obviously one should see that it is the right lifestyle that leads to a longer life rather than a satisfied parent.

Avoid Wrong Relationships and Marry a Godly Person (05 May)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 5:8-13

"Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house: Lest thou give thine honour unto others, and thy years unto the cruel: Lest strangers be filled with thy wealth; and thy labours be in the house of a stranger; And thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed, And say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof; And have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me!"

Solomon spoke above to his son about staying away from the wrong kind of women. However, because the Hebrew word that he used for "son" was not gender specific, one could actually apply his words to anyone about associating with the wrong kind of people in sexual relationships. His advice was especially relevant in today's culture because all people and particularly young people are susceptible to sexual immorality.

He seemed to be mostly concerned about young people involving themselves with and having premarital sex with strange persons. Within that context, a strange person might have been a foreigner since the Jewish people were only permitted by the Mosaic Law to marry within their own tribe. A strange person could also have been a prostitute since they have always been around. But in either case, he went on to say that one's honor and one's freedom are at stake. An example of that is Samson. Samson became involved with strange Philistine women. The results were that it cost him his freedom, his honor, and his life. In the end, as Solomon predicted above, he also mourned his poor decisions and bad judgment.

In addition to Samson, though, many other people have also been tempted by improper sex while young and then lived to regret it. So, one might wonder what kind of person is right for young people in sexual relationships. First, sex should always be confined to marriage. Anything else is wrong. Hebrews 13:4 says, "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." Second, it should be between one man and one woman that both love the Lord and that are both committed to Him. Third, it should be between one man and one woman ideally for one lifetime. The Bible never endorses multiple spouses at the same time.

Everyone is a *Belial* 'Adam' at Birth (06 May)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 6:13-15

"He winketh with his eyes, he speaketh with his feet, he teacheth with his fingers; Frowardness is in his heart, he deviseth mischief continually; he soweth discord. Therefore shall his calamity come suddenly; suddenly shall he be broken without remedy."

Proverbs 6:12 says, "A naughty person, a wicked man, walketh with a froward mouth." In that verse two Hebrew words shed light on why everyone is born naughty and wicked. For sure those are not the kind of personal traits to be desired. But they come naturally to every human being at birth. The first Hebrew word which is *belial* was used in the verse for "naughty." That word was used twenty-six times in the Old Testament, and fifteen of those times it was actually translated as "belial." For example, I Samuel 2:12 says, "Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the LORD." Once in the New Testament, the Greek word for *belial* was used. II Corinthians 6:15 says, "And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?"

So the word from those two verses means worthless, unprofitable, or good for nothing. In biblical terms, people described as *belial* do not know the Lord as their personal Savior. They have never come to Him by faith which means that all of the expressions in the above passage are true of them. People of *belial* wink with their eye just before doing something dastardly. They speak with their feet and teach with their fingers, which mean that they do more than just talk about evil things. They actually walk the walk. They have wicked hearts. They are always coming up with more evil things to do. They sow discord among others, which means that they create disharmony by what they say. Therefore, Solomon said that their end will come without warning and without a viable solution.

The second Hebrew word which is *'adam* was used for "person." By looking at the word itself, one can see that it was derived from the person Adam, which means that is a subtle reference to his sin against God in the Garden of Eden. It also means that every person descended from him is born as a person of *belial*. He or she is born a sinner and in need of a Savior. But when a person of *belial* comes to the Lord by faith, then he or she becomes a person of or a child of God.

The Harlot Tempts those Void of Understanding (07 May)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 7:11-14

"(She is loud and stubborn; her feet abide not in her house: Now is she without, now in the streets, and lieth in wait at every corner.) So she caught him, and kissed him, and with an impudent face said unto him, I have peace offerings with me; this day have I payed my vows."

In the above passage, Solomon told a story about a woman that came to meet a young man. The timeframe was in the nighttime. He described the woman as being dressed like a harlot. He said that the young man was among the simple ones and that he lacked understanding. So from those descriptions, it seems obvious that the woman was wiser in the things of the world than the young man. It also seems likely that Solomon saw her as being the wrong kind of woman for the young man. She was loud and stubborn. Her feet were not abiding in her own house. She was actually waiting for some young man to come along that she could victimize. So while Solomon was only telling a make-believe story about a young man and a woman, the scenario was simple enough. The likely encounter between the two people would probably lead to sexual immorality. Then according to Solomon, the young man would be brought down to death because that kind of woman has brought many foolish young men down to that end.

So he was telling that story to warn all young people about being involved with the wrong kind of people. Thus, while he was speaking specifically about a young man that was simple and void of understanding, those descriptions could just as easily be applied to a young woman. Also while he was speaking specifically about the wrong kind of involvement with a woman, that wrong involvement could just as easily be with the wrong kind of man. So, one should not think that he was just warning the young man about the wrong kind of woman. His words apply both ways. A young man can be hurt by mixing with the wrong kind of woman. But a young woman can be hurt by mixing with the wrong kind of man. The real key to the above scenario is that the young person was simple and void of understanding. Psalm 111:10 says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments...." Thus, the solution is to come to the Lord by faith. Then the indwelling Holy Spirit will guide the young person into the right paths of life.

Godly Wisdom Has More Value than Rubies and Things (08 May)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 8:11-12

"For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it. I wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions."

Solomon said in the above passage that wisdom is better than rubies and all the other things to be compared to it. But many people may not understand why he said that. It was not because wisdom will show a person how to be successful or how to make a lot of money in this life. It was not because it makes a person feel good about themselves and about their ability to understand things. But when he said that wisdom is so great and so valuable, he was talking about godly wisdom rather than about worldly wisdom. Many people are wise in the things of this world. They are successful. They have obtained a measure of financial success. They live in nice homes and possess many nice things in life. But that is not the wisdom about which he was talking. Matthew 16:26 says, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" According to Solomon and Jesus, being wise in the things of this world has absolutely no value on the other side of the grave because no one can take any of their remnants of success in this life into eternity.

Therefore, one should be very sure that Solomon was talking about the godly wisdom that brings one closer to the Lord. Psalm 90:12 says, "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." If people lived forever in this existence, then acquiring worldly wisdom might be easier to justify. But since they do not, then it should be clear to everyone that people only have a relatively short time on earth when compared to the never ending reaches of eternity. For that reason, it is vastly wiser to prepare oneself for the other side. Many people do not like to think about or talk about their own death. But trying to push it out of one's mind is not a viable solution. Death comes to all. So the truly wise people of this world will prepare themselves for it. Psalm 111:10 says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever." Jesus died on the cross at Calvary to make a way for every person to come to Him by faith. So to live one's whole life and to not have come to Him is what Solomon called foolish.

Reproving a Scornor and Rebuking a Wise Person (09 May)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 9:8

"Reprove not a scornor, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee."

Solomon said above to not reprove or correct a scornor. The Hebrew word used for "scornor" means to be boastful, to mock or deride others, or to be arrogant. So there are three reasons why he might have suggested not correcting someone like that. The first is that the person doing the correcting might be made to look like the bigger fool for having said something. Proverbs 9:7 says, "He that reproveth a scornor getteth to himself shame...." The shame that the person doing the correcting gets is the humiliation and embarrassment of being made to look like a fool. The second reason for not correcting a scornor is because the scornor may not be open to criticism. If he or she is not, then the response could be violent. The Hebrew word that was used for "hate" in the above verse means to make someone an enemy or to become someone's enemy. Depending upon the temperament of the person being corrected, becoming his or her enemy might make the whole matter much worse. The third reason for not correcting a scornor is because Jesus later taught in His Sermon on the Mount that a person should be focused more on the beam in their own eye than on the mote in their brother's eye.

In the second part of the above verse, Solomon said that the wise person will react to being corrected totally differently than the scornor. The Hebrew word that he used for "wise" means to be prudent, to be shrewd, and to be ethically and religiously wise. It is important to understand, though, that such a person would already be committed to the Lord, already trusting in Him, and already on their way to an eternity with Him upon death. One can know that for sure because Solomon would never call wise someone that would not be going to be with the Lord upon death. There is nothing wise about dying lost. Therefore, there are at least two reasons why he suggested correcting someone like that. The first is obvious. Godly people already know that they are sinners and that they have only been redeemed by the grace of God. The humble nature that goes along with seeing oneself in that way makes the person much more open to correction. The second reason is that godly correction will only make the person more like the Lord, and for a godly person, that is a good thing.

God's Love Covers the Sin of Those that Come to Him (10 May)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 10:12-13

"Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins. In the lips of him that hath understanding wisdom is found: but a rod is for the back of him that is void of understanding."

Solomon said above that hatred stirs up strife but that love covers all sins. The first part of that statement means that a person that hates God and hates human beings will be a troublemaker. While that statement might be unpleasant to hear, most people will probably acknowledge that it is true. In the second part of his statement, though, he contrasted that by saying that love covers all sins. On a human level, his teaching was that people out of love for the Lord and out of love for one another will many times overlook the shortcomings of others. That is a wonderful thing. But there is an even greater love than that. In fact, there is a much greater love than that.

Because of the sin of Adam against God in the Garden of Eden, all people born from Adam are born separated from the Lord. First, they are physically separated from Him because He is in heaven and because they are on earth. But second, they are also spiritually separated from Him because He is pure and holy and because they are desperately wicked. So while many people might like to think that they are pretty good, the Scriptures definitely do not support that thinking. Isaiah 64:6 says, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." Jeremiah 17:9 says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

However, God solved the sin and separation problem for human beings when He gave His only begotten Son to die on the cross at Calvary. By the sacrificial death of Jesus, any person can come to Him by faith in the right spirit and with the right attitude and be saved. Therefore, people can be reconciled to the Lord because of His demonstrated love for humanity. Furthermore, because of the love of Christ, a person's sin can also be forever covered. So to those that come to Him, godly wisdom and godly understanding are given. But to those that will not come, a rod and eternal condemnation await.

A Person of Understanding Speaks from a Good Heart (11 May)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 11:12-13

"He that is void of wisdom despiseth his neighbour: but a man of understanding holdeth his peace. A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter."

In the above passage, Solomon said to be void of wisdom or to be lacking in wisdom will cause someone to hold his or her neighbor, friend, or companion in contempt or to treat him or her as a person that is insignificant. One should note, however, that he did not use the Hebrew word for "wisdom" that means to be prudent, to be shrewd, or to be ethically and religiously wise. Instead the Hebrew word that he used means one's heart or one's inner being. Interestingly he used the same Hebrew word in Proverbs 10:13. That verse says, "In the lips of him that hath understanding wisdom is found: but a rod is for the back of him that is void of understanding." The thing that makes his usage of that same Hebrew word in that verse so interesting is that the Bible translators had translated it as the second instance of the word "understanding" instead of as "wisdom." But the Hebrew word that was used for the first instance of "understanding" was the normal word that does mean to perceive or to discern. Plus the Hebrew word that was translated as "wisdom" was the normal word that does mean to be prudent, to be shrewd, or to be ethically and religiously wise.

So the Bible translators had mixed and matched how they had rendered the same Hebrew words in both of those two verses. The key to understanding the above passage, though, is to realize that those verses as well as Proverbs 10:13 are all referring to what someone is or is not saying. For example, to hold one's peace means to hold within some possibly negative thoughts or hurtful words. It is the old adage of not saying anything at all if one cannot say something that is nice. The second part of the above passage is also talking about the inappropriate use of the tongue. A talebearer is someone that discloses secret counsel. But a faithful person understands when to be vocal and when to be silent. So while the above passage may not directly associate the use of one's speech with being a godly person, Proverbs 10:13 does. Restating that verse using the meanings of the original Hebrew words says that godly wisdom is found in a person that has godly understanding. But a rod is for those people that do not speak from a good heart.

The Root of the Righteous Yields Fruit (12 May)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 12:11-12

"He that tilleth his land shall be satisfied with bread: but he that followeth vain persons is void of understanding. The wicked desireth the net of evil men: but the root of the righteous yieldeth fruit."

In Proverbs 12:11-12, Solomon compared the person that works his or her ground to the individual that chases after vain people. The Hebrew word that he used for "vain" means to be empty, idle, or worthless. In the book of Ecclesiastes, he said that most of the things in this life including wealth, poverty, success, failure, power, lack of power, and the like are all sought in vain because they do not last forever whether they are good or bad. Such pursuits are empty and worthless. However, he then concluded that book by identifying the one thing in this life that according to him is not pursued in vain. Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 says, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." So if one agrees with him, then the most important thing in this life is to come to the Lord by faith and to commit oneself to Him. But for those individuals that chase after vain people, that path to the Lord is not the one taken. Therefore, Solomon said that they are void of understanding.

Of course, being void of understanding is the same as saying that they are among the ungodly that lack wisdom and knowledge. He next said that they desire the net of evil men. That means that they want to copy their lives so that they can be more like them. One should note, though, that both groups of people are really the same group based upon Solomon's definitions. They both love to be deceptive and ungodly in all of their dealings with other people. Neither group cares to follow Solomon's above admonition about fearing the Lord or about keeping His commandments. So sad to say, their primary desire in life is to be even more ungodly. How pathetic is that group. By contrast, Solomon said that the root of the righteous person produces fruit. His reference to the root of righteous people suggests that they will not fall because they are firmly rooted in the ground. The reference to their fruit means that they produce pleasant nourishment that tends to life rather than wickedness and evil that tend to destruction and death.

Avoid Wrongful Pride and How to Have Lasting Wealth (13 May)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 13:10-11

"Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom. Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour shall increase."

Solomon said that pride causes contention or strife but the well-advised possess and give sound wisdom. In considering those words, one should understand that he was actually talking about only one kind of the two kinds of pride. He was not talking about the kind of pride that causes a person to do a good job. It is not bad for a person to be able to take pride in the work that he or she does. But the kind of pride that causes contention is that which leads a person to be arrogant and wrongfully lifted up in his or her own eyes. That attitude of self-importance is always disgusting to the Lord. Next Solomon said that with the well-advised is wisdom. Because the Hebrew word used for "wisdom" means to be ethically and religiously wise, he was talking about the good advice that comes from godly people and goes to godly people. No one has all of the answers in this life. So it is very good when an individual has a godly sounding board for making his or her more important decisions.

After making his remarks about negative pride and about being well-advised, Solomon next spoke about the easy or wrongful gain of financial wealth. The comment is sometimes made that the end justifies the means. But that belief was definitely not supported by the above passage. When it comes to making money, the means by which a person does so is all-important if the person wants it to last. The expression easy come easy go clearly applies. When a person gets money by an inheritance, by a lottery, or by some other non-productive means, it usually will not last very long. When a person gets his or her money by dishonest means, then it usually will not last very long either. A thief will usually have to rob again because the original stash is never enough. So according to Solomon, the only way to acquire lasting wealth is by good, honest hard work. The reason for that is actually pretty simple. When someone has gained something through his or her own legitimate efforts, then he or she will be much more careful about how it is expended. But when wealth is gotten by vanity, then the person mistakenly thinks that he or she can always do it all over again.

The Backslider Will Be Filled with his own Ways (14 May)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 14:12-14

"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death. Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth is heaviness. The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man shall be satisfied from himself."

Solomon said that there is a way that seems right to a person but the end of it is death. What that means is that anyone can be wrong about some thing or some action that might seem right at the moment. For example, if one person says something bad about another person, then the offended person might think that it is alright to take some form of revenge. However, the old adage that two wrongs do not make a right clearly applies. Another example is in the matter of finding eternal peace with the Lord. A great many people might believe that simply being a good person or doing the best that one can is enough to satisfy an angry God. However, that is not correct either and it too if pursued will result in eternal death for the individual. The first thing that one needs to understand is that the Lord is not angry or even vicious. In fact, the opposite is true. His love for every human being is so great that He offered His only begotten Son on the cross at Calvary so that lost separated sinners can come to Him by faith and receive life.

The second thing to understand is that He will receive anyone that comes to Him by faith in the right spirit and with the right attitude. Solomon next said that a person may sometimes hide their sadness with an outer smile. However, that smile cannot replace the individual's heavy heart. An example might possibly be illustrated by what was just stated. If someone is deeply disturbed by his or her sin and separation from the Lord, then they might try to pretend that everything is alright when it really is not. In that case, though, the only real solution is to stop trying to earn one's way into God's good graces and simply seek Him humbly with all of one's heart. As was just stated, He never turns anyone away that comes to Him by faith. Finally, Solomon said that the backslider in heart is filled with his or her own ways. Such a person is someone that has turned from the Lord and has begun to live in an ungodly manner. While still being saved, he or she will suffer disappointment, sin, and ultimately death. Unfortunately, their end will also be much less pleasant than it might have been. So do not go that way.

The Scorner Does Not Love the One that Reproves (15 May)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 15:12-13

"A scorner loveth not one that reproveth him: neither will he go unto the wise. A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken."

A scornful person is someone that complains, is critical, and makes fun of others. Because those are not the traits of someone that has come to the Lord by faith, the natural conclusion is that such a person has not come to Him. Further evidence is that he or she does not like being corrected and that he or she will not seek advice from a wise, godly person. So while being a scorner is not good, failing to come to the Lord by faith is far, far worse. In fact, nothing in this existence is any worse than not coming to Him. Isaiah 55:6-7 says, "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

The Bible teaches that every person born from Adam is a sinner. That by the way is why Jesus was born of a virgin. He did not possess the same sin nature as every other person born since Adam. So human beings inherited from Adam a sin nature that causes them to by choice do wrong. Romans 3:23-26 says, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God...." As a result, all people from Adam are also born separated from the Lord. But even if a person were to never commit any sins, he or she would still be separated from God by their sin nature. So the Lord took the initiative to do for every human being what none of them could do for themselves. He sent His Son to die on a Roman cross to pay for their sin. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Solomon next said that a merry heart shows a happy countenance and that the spirit is broken by a sorrowful heart. However, the only way to have a merry heart and to satisfy a sorrowful heart is to recognize from above that every person comes into this life separated from God. That separation can then be taken away by seeking God with all of one's heart, by committing to Him, by trusting in Him, and by entering into a personal relationship with Him. But that is the only way.

Righteous Kings Please and the Lord Pacifies Anger (16 May)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 16:13-15

"Righteous lips are the delight of kings; and they love him that speaketh right. The wrath of a king is as messengers of death: but a wise man will pacify it. In the light of the king's countenance is life; and his favour is as a cloud of the latter rain."

Solomon said in the first part of the above passage that righteous lips are the delight of kings and that they love the person that speaks right. By those words, though, he was not saying that the king is pleased with the person that speaks righteously. Instead he was saying that the people love the king that speaks righteously. One can know that because Solomon said in the preceding verse that the throne of a king is established by righteousness. Of course, not all leaders are righteous. But the Lord who is righteous puts up one person and puts down another. Therefore, even an unrighteous and an unjust king is in power because the Lord has allowed it. So Solomon's point was that it goes well for the people when their king loves the Lord, is committed to Him, and speaks righteously.

He next said that the wrath or the anger of a king sends death but that one who is wise will be able to soothe him. In an eternal sense, an individual could say that God will someday send eternal death to those people that leave this existence still lost in their sins. However, that eternal death can be averted by coming to the Lord Jesus by faith in the right spirit and with the right attitude. While God is angry with sinners every day, Jesus who is the only begotten Son of God freely offered Himself on the cross at Calvary to pay the wage of sin and to make a way for lost sinners to be reconciled to God the Father. Therefore, eternal death will come from an angry God that is both righteous and hates sin. But eternal life can be obtained by choosing to come to His Son who pacified that anger by His death.

Solomon concluded the above passage by saying that favor in the king's presence or by his countenance is like receiving that latter rain. By that, he indicated that the king is the most powerful person in the kingdom. So when one has his favor, it is like receiving the latter rain that comes just before the harvest and finishes maturing the crops. Proverbs 19:12 says, "The king's wrath is as the roaring of a lion; but his favour is as dew upon the grass." So that latter rain is a good thing.

God Covers Sin, Reproves, and Deals with Rebellion (17 May)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 17:9-11

"He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends. A reproof entereth more into a wise man than an hundred stripes into a fool. An evil man seeketh only rebellion: therefore a cruel messenger shall be sent against him."

Solomon first said above that a person that covers a transgression seeks love but that someone that repeats a matter separates friends. On a personal level, he was saying that it is good for people to be forgiving of one another and to also not repeat those activities that had caused the original conflict. However, as the below two verses show, those words also have an eternal application, too, because God is the one that will cover a person's sins. Proverbs 10:12 says, "Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins." John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

The second verse above says that God loved the people in this world so much that He offered His only begotten Son on the cross at Calvary to pay the wages of all human sin. That verse also says that the individual that commits to Jesus and that trusts in Him will not perish but have everlasting life. That life is the same as having one's sins covered which is what the first verse above says. God loves all people so much that He will forgive or will cover their sin if they will just come to Him by faith. One of the reasons that He does that according to Solomon is because He wants to be loved by the people of His Creation.

Solomon concluded the above passage by talking about fools and evil people. The Hebrew word used for "fool" applies to the kind of person that he called the "dumb fool." The "dumb fool" is so stupid that he or she will not be corrected even when chastened a hundred times. By contrast, a wise person is corrected much more easily. Next Solomon said that evil, ungodly people are rebellious against the Lord. Because of that, they will be sent a very swift and very harsh response by the evil forces of this existence. Psalm 78:41-49 says, "Yea, they turned back and tempted God...He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels among them."

Slothfulness and Wasting and a Strong Tower (18 May)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 18:9-10

"He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster. The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe."

Solomon said that a slothful person and a great waster are like close relatives. The Hebrew word that he used for "slothful" simply means to be idle. But he was rarely that kind about such a person. Being blunter, he described a slothful person as a lazy person that will not work. Proverbs 21:25 says, "The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour." He described him as someone that would not even get out of bed. Proverbs 26:14 says, "As the door turneth upon his hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed." He even said that a slothful person will not take care of his or her own personal property. Proverbs 24:30-31 says, "I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down."

At the same time, the Hebrew word that he used for "waster" means to spoil, to ruin, to destroy, or to corrupt. Three of the five times that he used that word it was translated as destroying. For example, Proverbs 6:32 says, "But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul." So how is being lazy like being a great destroyer? The answer is that the slothful person destroys by neglect and that the great destroyer destroys by intent. In Proverbs 24:30-31, the slothful person neglected a field and a vineyard. The result was that it grew over with thorns and nettles and that the stone wall was broken down. So even though the lazy person might have been too lazy to put forth enough physical effort to actually destroy something, the destruction still took place because of his or her continual neglect. That makes laziness and slothfulness close relatives.

He next described the Lord as a strong tower. That means that He cannot be negatively affected by a colliding object and that the righteous person will be safe when he or she runs to Him. Psalm 61:2-3 says, "From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy."

A False Witness, the Delight to a Fool, and Discretion (19 May)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 19:9-11

"A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall perish. Delight is not seemly for a fool; much less for a servant to have rule over princes. The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression."

Solomon first said above that a false witness will be punished and that the liar will perish. In a court of law, witnesses are usually very important because they provide evidence about something that did or did not happen. Therefore, a witness that is dishonest has the ability to cause the wrong verdict to be rendered. Matthew 26:59-61 says, "Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death; But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses, And said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days."

According to Solomon, though, those false witnesses against Jesus as well as all false witnesses will someday be punished, if not in this existence then when they stand before the Lord in judgment. Solomon next said that delight is not seemly for a fool and that it is not seemly for a servant to rule over nobility. The Hebrew word that he used for "delight" means to be in luxury or in comfort. The Hebrew word that he used for "fool" means to be a simpleton, dumb, or just plain stupid. So comfort or luxury does not go along with being a "dumb fool." In Solomon's mind, those two opposites make about as much sense being together as a servant that rules over people of nobility. However, since he would also have considered a person that is not in a personal relationship with the Lord to be a "dumb fool," there are many fools in this world that are living in delight.

Solomon then concluded his thoughts by saying that discretion causes a person to control his or her temper. It also allows him or her to look the other way when being wronged by others. To have discretion means to be prudent and to have insight. Thus, it is a godly trait that is very much the opposite of being a "dumb fool." Discrete people tend to have greater self-control of their disposition and behavior. They are also much less likely to encounter serious trouble in this life.

The Works of Creation, Laziness, and Complaining (20 May)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 20:12-14

"The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the LORD hath made even both of them. Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty; open thine eyes, and thou shalt be satisfied with bread. It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer: but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth."

Solomon began above by identifying the Lord as the maker of the ears that hear and of the eyes that see. But those things are not even the half of it. When God spoke to Moses at the burning bush and told him to return to Egypt to lead the people out of that land, He said that His name is "I AM THAT I AM." When Jesus spoke to Jewish people years later, He identified Himself as "I AM." The Hebrew word used for "I AM THAT I AM" and the Greek word used for "I AM" express the same truth that He is the "Creator of Everything." Therefore, based upon that truth, the world did not burst into being from a big bang explosion and human beings did not evolve over many millions of years by evolution.

Solomon next contrasted the difference between being lazy and working hard. He said that a lazy person will come to poverty and that the hardworking person will be satisfied with the fruits of his or her labor. The problem for the lazy person is that he or she will not get out of bed long enough to even do the basic things that are necessary for survival. In some of his other sayings, Solomon said that the slothful person will not work. He said that that person will not care for his or her own property. He said that he or she will not even cook food to eat. By contrast, the industrious person opens his or her eyes and labors to make a suitable life for himself or herself. So he or she will be easily satisfied by what they have done.

Solomon's final saying above pertained to being honest. In the marketplace, buyers will sometimes look for flaws in a product so that they can purchase it at a reduced rate. To some degree, that is not such a bad thing. But it becomes bad and even dishonest when they begin to create flaws just to get the product at a radically reduced rate. One example would be to complain about service that is not really so bad just to take advantage of the proprietor. Another would be to complain about the food served in hopes of getting a free meal. Those kinds of behavior are not appropriate for people that put the Lord first in their lives.

Helping Others and Giving Only the Right Kind of Gifts (21 May)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 21:13-14

"Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard. A gift in secret pacifieth anger: and a reward in the bosom strong wrath."

For various reasons, some people are better situated for this life than others. That means that they are better able to meet their basic life needs than a lot of other people. Therefore, Solomon said above that well-off people that refuse to hear the pleas for help from those that are less fortunate will someday not be heard when they cry out. James the half-brother of Jesus would later write the same basic truth but in a slightly different way. James 2:15-17 says, "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." In writing to people that were supposed to have come to the Lord by faith, James challenged whether or not they really had if they would not help a brother or sister in need. If they had not come to the Lord, then they were still lost. But if they had, then he implied that their faith was very weak and very shallow if they would not help others.

Can a godly person turn away the truly needy and still go to be with the Lord at death? The answer is yes. But the much better path for those that have called upon Him is to help others in need and to bring the lost to Him. Solomon next said that a gift given secretly pacifies someone that is angry and that a reward in the bosom pacifies someone that is very angry. By definition, the word used for "gift" means a gratuity to secure a favor or a bribe given to someone like a judge. Similarly the Hebrew word used for "reward" actually means to bribe someone. So Solomon had been talking about a gift that was given for a designed purpose other than simple kindness. During those days, the giving of gifts was usually accompanied by great pomp and ceremony. But since the gift spoken about by Solomon would have been less than honorable, the receiver of the gift would have wanted secrecy and anonymity. In the very next verse, however, he said that it is a joy for the just to do judgment and to do things right. Therefore, while a godly person can give the kind of gift or bribe just discussed, he or she should not do so.

Knowledge is from the Lord (22 May)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 22:12-13

"The eyes of the LORD preserve knowledge, and he overthroweth the words of the transgressor. The slothful man saith, There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets."

As has been indicated elsewhere in this text, the Lord does not have eyes, ears, hands, and so forth. He is an incorporeal Spirit. He does not even have a physical body. John 4:24 says, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Therefore, all such references to His physical features are really anthropomorphisms. That means that they should not be taken literally. So in the above passage, for example, saying that His eyes preserve knowledge is more accurately saying that His all-knowing mental and spiritual faculties are preserving knowledge. That rendering is based upon the meaning of the original Hebrew word that was used for "eyes." Similarly, when the verse speaks about His eyes preserving knowledge, the Hebrew word that was used for "preserve" more accurately means to watch over or to guard something.

Thus, one can see why Solomon had probably used the expression "the eyes of the Lord." In His omniscience, God watches over or guards knowledge while at the same time that He overthrows the words of the transgressor. Again by referring to the original Hebrew language, the phrase "overthrows the words of the transgressor" is better rendered as "twists or distorts the speech of those that act treacherously or that deal deceitfully. So the Lord gives knowledge to those that follow and trust Him. But He distorts or confuses the understanding of those people that have turned away from Him. Proverbs 1:7 says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction."

Acting treacherously and dealing deceitfully are problems enough in their own right. But to them Solomon had also added a comment about the slothful. To be slothful means to be lazy. So the lazy person will say that there is a lion in the street so that he or she can remain safely inside. The probable teaching, though, is that a lion had NOT actually been outside. Instead the lazy, slothful person will say or do anything necessary to stay inside and avoid work. One can reasonably reach that conclusion because lazy people usually always try to get out of work.

Withhold not Correction from one's Child (23 May)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 23:13-15

"Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell. My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine."

When reading the opening part of the above passage, one must be very careful to not over read what Solomon said. He was not advocating child abuse. He was simply talking about correcting one's children. Proverbs 19:18 says, "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying." Children that are never corrected will probably grow up thinking that they can do whatever they want. Even worse they may grow up thinking that whatever they do is alright. However, on the other hand, a child that is overly corrected will probably grow up with other emotional problems. So the simple answer, though not always easy to do, is to match the punishment to the offense. The parent should also try to make a determination about the child's intentions. Then after having done those things, punish evildoing and correct wrongdoing.

Thus, if the child makes a mistake without evil intent, then correct him or her accordingly. But if the child makes a mistake with evil intent, then again correct him or her accordingly. When parents correct their children with the appropriate level of correction, the child will grow up with a greater sense of family love and belonging. He or she will also grow up with greater self-confidence and with a greater concern for other people. Correction is the family way. But it is also the biblical way. Solomon spoke about correcting one's children. But the higher example comes from the Lord as He corrects those people that have come to Him by faith. Hebrews 12:5-6 says, "...My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Being corrected for one's wrongdoing is an evidence of ownership because the Lord only corrects His own.

Solomon concluded the above passage by saying that his heart would rejoice if his children received his words about godly wisdom. So nothing in life means more to godly parents than seeing their children come to the Lord and commit to Him.

If Thou Faint in the Day of Adversity (24 May)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 24:10-12

"If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small. If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?"

Adversity comes to every life at one time or another. In fact, it usually comes to all lives rather frequently and in many different forms. It can come with another person in the form of relationship challenges. It can come in the workplace with career challenges. It can come emotionally with health-related issues. It can come in the form of finances with household challenges. So adversity is all around. At times it affects every individual. Therefore, Solomon said that if a person weakens or faints in the day of adversity, then his or her strength is small. He was obviously talking about internal strength rather physical strength because for many people physical strength issues would be easier to handle. But with the adversity that brings people down, the difficulties are usually internal and they almost always attack the emotions.

The greater issue, however, is how one can find the strength to overcome the adversity in their lives. A psychologist might say that believing in a higher power will encourage the individual to look beyond themselves for help. In fact, many people think that those individuals that believe in God are doing just that. They are really just looking for a crutch to help them through life. But the belief that He is only a make-believe crutch for emotionally weak people is to really miss everything. Godly people must endure just as much adversity as ungodly people. Their lives can be just as tough and even tougher. But the primary benefits for them over the ungodly are being at peace with the Creator of the world and also having an eternity with Him when this life ends. I Corinthians 15:19 says, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable."

Solomon next said that godly people should defend the innocent that are about to be unjustly punished or even executed. The main thinking in that regard is that people that have come to the Lord by faith should stand up for truth and right.

Kind Words Can Be Very Powerful (25 May)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 25:11-12

"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver. As an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprovew upon an obedient ear."

People can create a lot of hurt by the things that they say. But they can also create a lot of goodwill and comfort by the things that they say, too. Solomon said in the two previous verses that people should not gossip to others about someone else because they might be caught in their words and made ashamed. That was good advice. Proverbs 25:9-10 says, "Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself; and discover not a secret to another: Lest he that heareth it put thee to shame, and thine infamy turn not away." Then in the above passage, he continued speaking about the use of one's tongue but in a much more positive light.

Gold and silver are very valuable precious metals. A few ounces of each are worth a lot of money. Solomon compared kind words spoken at just the right time to a gold piece that is the size of an apple. Such a piece would probably weigh several pounds. So at the price per ounce of gold, a golden apple would be very valuable. Most people would probably like to possess an object like that, and Solomon said that any person can create something that valuable for other people just by speaking kind words to them. Thus, two old adages clearly apply. First, honesty is the best policy. Second, if one cannot say something nice, then do not say anything at all. Putting those two wise sayings together matches what was said in the first part of the above passage. Always be honest when speaking to other people. But because everyone has some good qualities, always focus on those qualities first when talking to them. Avoid negative communications.

So Solomon spoke above about being careful with one's words because they can be very powerful. James the half-brother of Jesus also warned people about how they communicate with others. James 3:5 says, "Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" But there are still times when one person must verbally correct another person. So, one cannot always say things that are pleasant to another person's ears. A good example is in the matter of parenting. In that case, though, Solomon advised a person to have an obedient ear by being willing to hear godly criticism.

Hiring Godly People is A Good Business Practice (26 May)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 26:10-11

"The great God that formed all things both rewardeth the fool, and rewardeth transgressors. As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly."

The King James Version translator's rendering of the first verse above does not seem to accurately reflect the original Hebrew manuscript. The Hebrew word that was used for "rewardeth" more accurately means to hire or to hire oneself out. The Hebrew word that was used for "transgressors" more accurately means one that passes by, over, or through. In addition, the original manuscripts do not seem to be talking about anything that has to do with forming or creating all things. Plus all of the modern Bible translations disagree about which of two Hebrew words might have appeared in the original manuscripts. One group indicates that the original word means great and had referred to the great God. The other group indicates that the original word means archer and had referred to someone that shoots arrows. Therefore, understanding the first verse above is very difficult.

Nevertheless, when relying strictly on the original Hebrew language, the first verse above seems to be talking about someone hiring a "dumb fool" and hiring an individual that is just passing by, over, or through. Thus, if the "someone" in that scenario is God, then it suggests that He gives all people a chance by hiring them, even the "dumb fools" and those that are passing by. But if the "someone" in the scenario is an archer, then that would suggest that the person doing the hiring is being compared to an archer that carelessly shoots everyone. Given the context of the overall passage as seen in the verses preceding and following the above first verse, the second rendering seems to best fit. That means that the first verse above is saying that the person that hires the "dumb fool" or the individual that is just passing by is like the archer that carefully shoots everyone because he or she is not paying attention to what they are doing.

If that second rendering is correct, then those words might have been Solomon's way of saying that hiring godly individuals is a good business practice. The second verse above says that the "dumb fool" returns to his or her folly just like a dog returns to its vomit. So based upon that image, the second rendering and the hiring of godly people might have been exactly what Solomon was saying.

Be Wise, Be Prudent, Be Not Simple (27 May)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 27:11-12

"My son, be wise, and make my heart glad, that I may answer him that reproacheth me. A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished."

In some verses, Solomon had made it clear that his proverb applied only to the male gender. For example, Proverbs 27:8 says, "As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place." That verse had only applied to men because they are more prone to stray than women. In the above passage, though, the Hebrew word used for "son" is not gender specific. In fact one of its meanings is children. So Solomon speaking as a father had been telling mainly young children to be wise or to become wise so that they could make his heart glad. So how does a person actually become wise? One clue is that wisdom is not linearly related to intelligence. In other words, a person can be wise whether or not he or she has a high level of intelligence or even no level of intelligence.

The Scriptures show that intelligence and wisdom are not related. Psalm 111:10 says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever." Thus, wisdom is directly related to a person's fear or reverence for the Lord. But that attitude towards Him does not come naturally. The Scriptures also say that no person ever comes into this world seeking the Lord. Romans 3:10-11 says, "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God." So the conclusion is that no person can be wise because no person naturally seeks God or reveres Him.

However, there is a simple solution to the above dilemma. The Apostle Paul would later write that God reveals Himself to all people through His Creation. Therefore, a person can supernaturally seek Him as the "Creator of Everything," commit to Him, trust in Him, and then enter into a personal relationship with Him. Once those things have been done, he or she will not only be biblically wise but they will also be eternally saved. Then, under the leadership of the indwelling Holy Spirit, the person will cross over from being simple to being wise and prudent. At that point, the second part of the above verses will also be true.

The Poor Outdo the Rich and Joy in the Righteous (28 May)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 28:11-12

"The rich man is wise in his own conceit; but the poor that hath understanding searcheth him out. When righteous men do rejoice, there is great glory: but when the wicked rise, a man is hidden."

In the above passage, Solomon did not say that the rich person is any wiser than anyone else. What he said is that the rich person often sees himself or herself as being wiser than everyone else. In other words, rich people are sometimes turned into conceited people because of their wealth. However, Solomon also said that a poor person that has understanding will see through the rich man's conceit. So Solomon once again focused on the greater value of wisdom, knowledge, and understanding over that of financial riches. Those former three things come from the Lord. The latter thing of riches usually but not always comes from hard work. In and of themselves none of those things is wrong. There is nothing wrong with being rich. However, there is nothing particularly good or godly about being poor. In both cases, the only thing that really matters is each person's individual relationship with the Lord. A poor person that has never come to the Lord by faith is no better off than the rich person that has never come to Him by faith. Similarly, the rich person that has come to the Lord by faith is no worse off than the poor person that has come to Him by faith.

Solomon's next thought about righteous men rejoicing is very similar to an earlier statement that he had made. Proverbs 28:2 says, "For the transgression of a land many are the princes thereof: but by a man of understanding and knowledge the state thereof shall be prolonged." In that verse, he had said that ungodly rulers are bad for the people and that they are frequently overthrown. By contrast, godly rulers are good for the country and for the people. So they usually have longer stays in power. Concerning the above passage and the righteous men rejoicing, the Hebrew word for "rejoice" also means to triumph. Therefore, when the godly or the righteous person triumphs and rises to power, there is great joy among the people. But when ungodly are in power, the people go into hiding. As was just stated above, godly people receive wisdom, knowledge, and understanding from the Lord as they mature in Him. So those qualities translate into good leadership skills among any people.

Do Not Tell Everything but Be Honest (29 May)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 29:11-12

"A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards. If a ruler hearken to lies, all his servants are wicked."

Proverbs 29:9 says, "If a wise man contendeth with a foolish man, whether he rage or laugh, there is no rest." In that verse Solomon had been talking about the "evil fool." That is the person that despises godly wisdom and is quarrelsome. So his advice had been to not contend with such a person. But in the above passage, he was talking about the "dumb fool." That is the person that is dumb, simple, or just plain stupid. He said that the "dumb fool" in effect has a big mouth. He speaks everything that is on his mind. But according to Solomon, that is usually not very smart. In a debate, for example, a person would not want to present all of his or her arguments at one time without hearing the position of the opponent. Thus, when given that same situation, a wise person does not spurt out everything at once. Instead Solomon said that he keeps it in until the time is right.

Concerning that wise person, though, he is not wise just because he speaks his words at right time. He is wise because he has already come to the Lord by faith and has already committed himself to Him. The "dumb fool" can do that also if he will. Then both individuals would speak wisely because the Holy Spirit would give them the right words to say as well as the right time to say them. When in human form, Jesus had told the following words to His disciples. In Matthew 10:18-20, He said, "And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you." So the Holy Spirit is a reliable God and guide in good times and bad.

Solomon also said that if a ruler listens to lies, then all of his servants are wicked. Most kings and rulers surround themselves with people that can give them good information simply because no leader can have all the facts. So if his advisers are telling him lies, then they are wicked individuals. In that case, they need to come to the Lord by faith so that they can have a changed heart and be more reliable.

Do Not Accuse a Servant and Honor Thy Parents (30 May)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 30:10-11

"Accuse not a servant unto his master, lest he curse thee, and thou be found guilty. There is a generation that curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother."

In the above passage, Solomon taught the importance of being honest and of not bearing false witness against someone else's servant. He said to not falsely accuse a servant but even more so if the servant serves another person. Thus, he seems to have been stressing both honesty and minding one's own business. Proverbs 26:17 says, "He that passeth by, and meddleth with strife belonging not to him, is like one that taketh a dog by the ears." But in addition to minding one's own business, it is also important to hold the truth in high regard, too. Psalm 86:11 says, "Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name." Psalm 119:29-30 says, "Remove from me the way of lying: and grant me thy law graciously. I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me." Thus, the only probable reason that one would even falsely accuse someone else's servant is to cause trouble. So Solomon concluded by saying that one of the negative consequences of telling a lie about another person's servant is the chance of being caught in the lie and then of making an enemy.

Exodus 20:12 says, "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee." Those words are the fifth commandment of the Ten Commandments. The Lord commands people to honor their mother and father. The promise of a long life on earth that He gives, though, is a general principle rather than a spiritual absolute. Some people honor their parents but do not live so long. Other people do not honor their parents and still have a long life. But one should not obey the fifth commandment just to have a long life. That would be self-serving. Instead he or she should do so because it is the right thing to do regardless of the length of one's life. Solomon had observed that in every period or in every generation that there are young people that do not regard their parents as they should. There are also parents that do not raise their children as they should. But the fact that those things are true does not make it right to disregard the commandment. People should always do right because it is always right to do right and never right to do wrong.

Open thy Mouth and Judge Righteously (31 May)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 31:8-9

"Open thy mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction. Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy."

The next piece of advice by Bathsheba to her son was to plead the case of those individuals that are unable to defend themselves. The dumb in the above passage may have been a reference to the person's intelligence. It may have been referring to those people that cannot speak for themselves such as an orphan or a stranger. It may have also been referring to those people that cannot speak at all much less for themselves. But regardless of which reference is most correct, the advice applied to any incapable individual that has been appointed to destruction. To be appointed to something based upon the Hebrew word that was used means to bring one person or object into a direct relationship with another person or object. Thus, the dumb person in the above passage is brought into a direct relationship with his or her own destruction. The two are brought together by an implied sentence of doom and destruction. So even though it was not explicitly stated, the most likely indication is that the person was found guilty primarily because he or she did not have proper representation.

However, a righteous and faithful king should not allow justice to be so easily circumvented. Proverbs 29:14 says, "The king that faithfully judgeth the poor, his throne shall be established for ever." So the advice about helping those that cannot help themselves continued into the second part of the above passage. Based upon that admonition, the primary role of a godly leader is to make life better for his or her subjects. That was true then. It is still true today for any leader regardless of the level of leadership. Being in charge is about more than being the boss. It is mostly a calling that allows the individual to create a fair and non-hostile environment for the whole group. Thus, by opening his or her mouth for those people than cannot do so on their own, the person in charge brings confidence and assurance to the group. Judging righteously among them brings honor and glory to the Lord. It also promotes a sense of fairness and justice for everyone in the group. Proverbs 29:2 says, "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn."

Wisdom Calls to the Simple, the Scorners, and the Fool (01 June)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 1:20-22

"Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets: She crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words, saying, How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?"

The Hebrew word used for "wisdom" in Proverbs 1:2 is different than the Hebrew word used for "wisdom" in the above passage. The difference between the two is that the former spoke about wisdom as something to be attained whereas in the latter instance she is treated like a person. In the former instance, one reads the book of Proverbs to know wisdom and instruction. In the latter instance, one listens to hear what she has to say.

That being the case, wisdom speaks in the open streets and wherever people are gathered rather than hiding in the dark alleys of life. Her uttering is always the same. She wonders why so many people resist her and turn away. How long will the simple ones love their simplicity? That question asks how long the naïve and the foolish person will be satisfied to be that way. How long will those that scorn remain with their scorning? A scorner is someone that talks arrogantly, has an inflated ego, makes foolish boasts, and shows himself or herself to be a mocker. How long will the fool resist knowledge? In the Hebrew language, two words are frequently used to express being a fool. One is the "evil fool." The other is the "dumb fool." The word used in the above passage was talking about the "dumb fool." By definition that person is dumb, a simpleton, or just plain stupid.

The sad reality about those types of people that turn from godly wisdom is that they are also turning from God. No sensible person would ever want to die lost. But that is exactly what happens to the simple ones, the scorers, and the "dumb fools" when they do not listen to the silent voice of wisdom. The nice reality for those people, however, is that they do not have to remain in their sad estate. Each one can by faith come to the Lord and be forever separated from their negative attitudes and conditions. This life and the life to come in eternity are both much better when one is walking with the Lord. But without Him, neither life has much to offer unless one actually likes being a simpleton, a scorner, or a "dumb fool."

When Wisdom Enters and Knowledge is Pleasant (02 June)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 2:10-17

"When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee: To deliver thee from the way of the evil man, from the man that speaketh froward things; Who leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness; Who rejoice to do evil, and delight in the frowardness of the wicked; Whose ways are crooked, and they froward in their paths: To deliver thee from the strange woman, even from the stranger which flattereth with her words; Which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God."

In the above passage, Solomon identified two of the more important benefits of godly wisdom. Of course, one should first realize that godly wisdom is intended for godly people. Those individuals that have not come to the Lord by faith will probably reject much of what Solomon said about living a wise and righteous life because it may not seem like much fun or because it may seem to be too radical. Most people want to go to heaven when they die. But when it comes to living by a set of biblical standards, many of them often seem to want to be as close to the boundary line of ungodliness as possible without crossing over. However, that should never be the mindset of those people that truly love the Lord with all of their heart. Instead of wanting to get away with as much as possible while in this life and still go to heaven, a truly godly person should want to get as close to the Lord as possible and not stumble into sin.

So that is why godly wisdom is so important for people that truly want to live for the Lord. People that love Him can still make terrible mistakes in this life just like anyone else. Basically anything that an ungodly person is capable of doing, a godly person is also capable of doing. So the wisdom that the Lord places into the hearts of those individuals that come to Him by faith will steer them down the right paths in life and away from the bad paths. It will keep them out of trouble and also keep them for the most part where they need to be. In the above passage, Solomon said that godly wisdom will influence a young godly person to stay away from troublemakers and also away from immoral people. Those two benefits are especially important because young people are often prone to stumble in those areas even though they may be trying very hard to live for the Lord.

Creation by Wisdom, Understanding, and Knowledge (03 June)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 3:19-20

"The LORD by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens. By his knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew."

Scientists have long pondered how the earth and how the first humans came into being. In that pursuit, they have developed the Big Bang theory and the Theory of Evolution. The Big Bang theory maintains that the whole universe was created by the explosion of an infinitely tiny mass that has for billions of years continued to expand outwardly based upon that initial explosion. But in arriving at that conclusion, the theorists have never explained how the infinitely tiny mass was created. Similarly, the Theory of Evolution maintains that lifeless chemicals once bonded together in a special pond to create the first forms of life. Then over millions of years that first life form continued to mutate and to add other physical qualities so that it could better adapt to its environment. But in arriving at that conclusion, the theorists have never explained how the special pond or any of the things that came together to form life were created. As a result, neither theory has ever been able to move beyond the point of just being another manmade theory. More than that, though, because of their shortcomings neither of them ever will.

Thus, if pressed for an answer the big bang theorists and the evolutionists would both be forced to admit that something or someone created the tiny mass that they say exploded and continues to expand outwardly and that something or someone created the special pond and the lifeless chemicals that they say once bonded together to form life. Some godly people would even accommodate those theorists by saying that God created the essential things and that He then put the two theories into motion. However, the Scriptures never try to make any such accommodations. Solomon said above that the Lord created the heavens and the earth by His understanding and by His wisdom, respectively. In the first chapter of the Bible, the Prophet Moses wrote that He did it in six days. Then the Apostle Paul wrote that God is the Creator and that He reveals Himself to people through His Creation. Finally, the Bible maintains that the Lord is eternal. He always has been. He always will be. So it may sound ridiculous to many. But those men got all of the pieces in place so that there is nothing about Creation left to explain.

Take fast hold of Instruction instead of Things (04 June)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 4:12-13

"When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened; and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble. Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life."

It is amazing that so many people put so much confidence in the things of this world. It is also amazing that so many people are so attracted to so many of the things in this world. Children at Christmastime often create long lists of the things that they would like to have. Their hope of course is to then find those things under the tree on Christmas morning. But adults also have their long list of things, too, that have captured their confidence and desires in this life. Because of their list, they consume much of their time trying to get them. Most people use honest means to get the things that they want. They get a job. They earn money. They save money. Then when they have enough money, they buy what they want. Of course, there are some people in this world that will simply steal or take those things that they want if the opportunity presents itself.

In the above passage, though, Solomon said to take fast hold of instruction because it will help one have a stable, balanced life. It will keep a person on the right paths in life. It will keep a person from stumbling on the things of this world. But in expressing those thoughts, it is important to understand that he was not against people having the things in life that they want. He would have said, though, that it is important to obtain them honestly. No one should ever take something from someone else just because the other person is vulnerable. Honesty is still the best policy. However, he did imply that instruction is more important than all of the tangible things in this world that people tend to want.

By instruction, he meant godly discipline and chastening. The less obvious truth in that is that being chastened for something done wrong shows ownership by the one doing the chastening. That is important. When the Lord chastens someone that has come to Him by faith, it shows that He owns that person and that He is taking responsibility for them. Nothing in this world is greater than being owned by the Lord. The more obvious truth about His instruction or chastening was just mentioned above. It keeps a person on the right paths in life and out of trouble.

How the Godly Can Deal with Evil, Ungodly Thoughts (05 June)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 5:14

"I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly."

Solomon concluded his advice in the above verse to his son about staying away from strange women. However, because the Hebrew word that he used for "son" was not gender specific, his message applies equally well to young men and to young women. Any person can fall into temptation and make a bad decision that will follow him or her for years. That is true for anyone. But it is especially true for young people. They often are only thinking about the moment rather than about any long-term consequences. Of course, while Solomon was mainly talking about sexual sins, the same possibility of long-term negative consequences can also occur in many other ways, too. A young person might get involved with the wrong crowd and commit a serious crime that will essentially ruin his or her life. A young person can consume alcohol to excess because everyone else is doing it and then become an alcoholic. A young person can drive recklessly because the crowd is egging him or her on and then become responsible for a fatal automobile accident. There are many, many things that a young person can do in a moment of temptation that will mess up his or her whole life.

So, Solomon was determined to teach all young people to avoid certain kinds of wrong people and certain kinds of wrong behaviors. The above verse shows the mindset of the young person that is about to go wrong. While he or she might be backed into a particular temptation in a single moment, the seeds for caving into that temptation and for doing wrong in that moment are usually there long before. The congregation refers to a body of worshippers. The assembly refers to an official gathering. So a young person can even be in a congregation or in an assembly among other worshippers and still be filled with ungodly, evil thoughts. He or she in effect is like trouble waiting to happen. Then when the temptation comes, the person will probably stumble because the bad thoughts are already there. The only way for one to resist the later temptation that comes is to resist the ungodly thoughts when they arise. But the only way to do that is to constantly be seeking the Lord with all of one's heart, to constantly be committing oneself to Him, and to constantly be trusting in Him. While ungodliness always tries to bring down godliness, the Lord is faithful to help those that come to Him in truth.

Seven Ungodly Traits that the Lord Hates in His People (06 June)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 6:16-21

"These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren. My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother: Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck."

Solomon spoke above about seven things that the Lord hates. He used the expression six things then seven things because that enhanced his poetic style. However, one should understand that his real message was that people should hate to see those traits within themselves more so than hating to see them in others. Therefore, the passage was meant to present an opportunity for self-improvement rather than an opportunity for criticizing others. Because the Lord hates those behaviors, each individual that loves Him and that is committed to Him should hate them, too, and even more so if they are so inflicted.

Godly people should hate to see within themselves the wrong kind of pride. That is the pride that causes them to be boastful and to try to lift themselves up in the eyes of others. They should hate to see within themselves the tendency to tell lies and to be dishonest because they above all other people should be very honest. They should hate to see within themselves the capacity to do evil and to hurt others because those are the works of the ungodly. Similarly they should hate to see within themselves the capacity to devise wickedness and to be mischievous because they are also the works of the ungodly. As was just stated above, they should hate to themselves as untruthful because godly people should always be very honest. The final characteristic that godly people should hate to see within themselves is that of causing trouble among others and especially among brethren.

Godly people should be kind to one another and peace-loving. But when they are not, then they should turn from their evil ways and turn to the Lord. Solomon implied that by saying to keep the father's commandments and the mother's law. What are those actions but living for the Lord? For ungodly people, though, the teaching is to come to Him by faith in the right spirit and with the right attitude.

Seek Godly Wisdom and Understanding over Worldly (07 June)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 7:15-16

"Therefore came I forth to meet thee, diligently to seek thy face, and I have found thee. I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry, with carved works, with fine linen of Egypt."

Solomon always taught the young man to embrace wisdom and understanding because they will show him how to live his life and how to avoid the wrong kind of women. Earlier, he said in Proverbs 7:4-5, "Say unto wisdom, Thou art my sister; and call understanding thy kinswoman: That they may keep thee from the strange woman, from the stranger which flattereth with her words." So the first thing to understand about his above words is that they are not gender specific. A young woman can be hurt by the wrong kind of men just as easily as a young man can be hurt by the wrong kind of women. The second thing to realize is that Solomon always taught that a person should pursue godly wisdom rather than worldly wisdom and godly understanding rather than worldly understanding.

The differences between the two are noteworthy. Worldly wisdom and worldly understanding encourage people to be all that they can be in this world. Worldly wisdom and understanding say to get a good education to get a good job to make a lot of money to be able to buy a lot of things to live a good life to have a good retirement. But while all of those things are important, they do a person no good on the other side of the grave. In fact, they will not even keep the young person from being involved with the wrong kind of people while in this life. By contrast, godly wisdom and godly understanding will show a person how to seek out the right kinds of friends and companions. They will show a person how to live one's life biblically correct and in tune with the Lord's wishes for his or her life. Then when this life is over, they will take the godly person to forever be with the Lord.

Interestingly, godly wisdom does not speak negatively about or eliminate the relative importance of worldly wisdom. But worldly wisdom does not give any thought or consideration to godly wisdom. The young woman in the above passage that went to such great lengths to entice the young man did not care about his eternal fate. She was only interested in the pleasures of the moment. But such ways are always the ways of worldly wisdom and of worldly understanding.

Hating Some Things and Seeking Godly Wisdom (08 June)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 8:13-16

"The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate. Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom: I am understanding; I have strength. By me kings reign, and princes decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth."

One can draw an interesting conclusion based upon the above passage and Psalm 111:10. Psalm 111:10 says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever." In that verse, the psalmist equated the fear of the Lord with the beginning of wisdom. In the above passage, Solomon similarly equated the fear of the Lord with hating evil, pride, arrogance, the evil way, and the perverse or wicked tongue. By putting those two sayings together, one can conclude that godly wisdom will cause a person to hate evil, pride, arrogance, the evil way, and the perverse or wicked tongue. In fact, the Hebrew word that Solomon used for "hate" actually means to recognize those things as one's enemy. Therefore, for the person that wants to live for the Lord, evil is an enemy. A prideful, boastful heart is an enemy. Arrogance and the evil way are enemies. An improper use of one's tongue is an enemy. That means that all of those things should be put away.

In the second part of the above passage, Solomon spoke about godly wisdom and godly counsel. Just as godly people through godly wisdom will keep themselves from ungodly behaviors like the ones just mentioned, they will through the same godly wisdom also be benefactors of good godly counsel. That shows the dual aspects of godly wisdom. It will guide the person zealously trying to live for the Lord away from the above bad personal traits while also enriching him or her with the godly traits that help him or her live right. Godly wisdom is a source of godly counsel. Therefore, a simple but unspoken conclusion based upon that is that people should always seek godly counsel over worldly counsel. Godly wisdom and counsel have understanding and strength. Worldly wisdom and counsel do not. At best they can only offer recommendations for earthbound situations. But they have nothing to offer to that part of human beings that will live forever and ever. By godly wisdom and counsel kings reign, princes and nobles rule, and judges dispense godly judgments. Therefore, seek the wisdom that is from above.

God Receives Scorners and the Wicked on His Terms (09 June)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 9:9

"Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just man, and he will increase in learning."

Solomon advised discretion in recognizing the kinds of people that will and that will not be open to correction. Some people are obviously more open to it than others. Proverbs 9:7-8 says, "He that reproveth a scorner getteth to himself shame: and he that rebuketh a wicked man getteth himself a blot. Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee...." In that passage, he twice said to not reprove or correct a scorner. The person that scorns is boastful. He or she mocks and derides others. He or she is usually very arrogant. So the first time that he said to not reprove that kind of person, he indicated that the person doing the reprovng would bring shame to himself or to herself. The shame is the possible humiliation and embarrassment of being made to look like the bigger fool. The second time that he said to not reprove a scorner, he indicated that the person doing the correcting might make an enemy, which of course could then possibly create a very negative situation. He next said to not correct a wicked person because that also would likely backfire on the person trying to correct.

Concluding the above verse is that the wise and the just are usually much more open to correction than scorners and wicked people. The main reason for that difference is because of their position in the Lord. The wise and just have most likely already sought the Lord by faith, already committed themselves to Him, are already trusting in Him, and have already entered into a personal relationship with Him. By contrast, the scorners and the wicked most likely have not. One might ask if a personal relationship with the Lord can really make that much difference in a person's life. The answer is a very definite yes. Those people that have come to the Lord by faith are saved. They will be with Him forever and ever when they leave this life. They already know that they are sinners and that they have been redeemed by the grace of God. They are indwelled by the Holy Spirit who comforts them and leads them into the right paths of life. So their perspective and whole attitude about life are much different than that of the scorners and the wicked. The greater truth, however, is that the Lord will receive the scorners and the wicked if they come to Him by faith in the right spirit and right attitude.

Wise People Use Knowledge Well and are Rich in God (10 June)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 10:14-15

"Wise men lay up knowledge: but the mouth of the foolish is near destruction. The rich man's wealth is his strong city: the destruction of the poor is their poverty."

Solomon said above that wise people lay up knowledge but that the mouth of fools is near destruction. From his statement, at least two questions can be asked. First, what kind of knowledge do wise people retain? According to Solomon, a wise person is someone that has come to the Lord by faith in the right spirit and with the right attitude. One can know that for sure because he would never call someone wise that is spiritually separated from God and on the path that leads to eternal condemnation. Therefore, the kind of knowledge that a godly, wise person retains is godly knowledge. The Hebrew word used for "knowledge" means to have discretion, perception, and understanding. So that means that wise people lay up godly knowledge that is very useful for properly living their lives.

But there is more than just that to what Solomon said. The second question from the above passage concerns why the mouth of the foolish is near destruction. The Hebrew word used for "foolish" means to despise wisdom and to be quarrelsome. The Hebrew word used for "destruction" means to be the object of terror. So, wise people do more than just retain knowledge. By referring to the terror caused by the spoken words of an ungodly, quarrelsome person, the inference is that a wise person retains godly knowledge and also uses it in such a way as to maintain harmony and not cause terror. Thus, the mouth of a wise person brings peace while the mouth of an ungodly, quarrelsome person brings trouble and anxiety.

In the second part of the above passage, Solomon said that a rich man's wealth is his strong city but that the destruction of the poor is their poverty. By those words, he indicated that wealthy people often put their hope and their confidence in their riches. They also tend to think that their material wealth is the real key to happiness in this life. But they are mistaken to their own detriment to believe such things. By contrast, poor people often live defeated lives because of their poverty. But they are also mistaken to think that economic wealth is so important. Nothing in life is more important than coming to the Lord and being in a personal relationship with Him. So God will receive anyone that comes to Him by faith.

The Value of Wise Counsel and of Being a Surety (11 June)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 11:14-15

"Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety. He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it: and he that hateth suretiship is sure."

Solomon spoke about two very important matters in the above passage. First he spoke about the value of counsel and of having a multitude of counselors. The Hebrew word used for "counsel" was only used six times in the Old Testament, and five of them were used by him. In addition to the above passage, Proverbs 1:5-6 says, "A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels...." Proverbs 12:5 says, "The thoughts of the righteous are right: but the counsels of the wicked are deceit." Proverbs 20:18 says, "Every purpose is established by counsel: and with good advice make war." Proverbs 24:6 says, "For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war: and in multitude of counsellors there is safety." So he spoke about wise counsels, deceitful counsels, and good advice. Thus, in the above passage, the logical conclusion is that he meant that the people will fall when there is not wise counsel or good counsel. While he did not specifically state the kind of counsel, it is difficult to imagine that he would have encouraged deceitful counsel as a way to keep the people from falling. Thus, if one takes his words even further, then he would have said that good or wise counsel only comes from godly counselors.

The second matter that he addressed in the above passage was that of being a surety for someone. To be a surety for another person means to promise to pay his or her debt if he or she does not pay. The arrangement in those days was usually confirmed by a handshake or by stricken hands. So Solomon warned about being caught in that kind of agreement. Proverbs 6:1-2 says, "My son, if thou be surety for thy friend, if thou hast stricken thy hand with a stranger, Thou art snared with the words of thy mouth, thou art taken with the words of thy mouth." He said that a person and especially a young person will be snared by his or her willingness to be a surety for a friend. But according to the above passage, the whole arrangement will be even worse if it is with a stranger. So he said that a person who pledges to pay someone else's debts will smart for it or will cry out in distress because of it. In time, he or she will learn to hate being a surety.

The Wicked are Snared and the Just are Delivered (12 June)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 12:13-14

"The wicked is snared by the transgression of his lips: but the just shall come out of trouble. A man shall be satisfied with good by the fruit of his mouth: and the recompence of a man's hands shall be rendered unto him."

People that speak hastily without thinking usually regret it. For example, Solomon said that when one person agrees to be a surety for another person that he or she will sometimes later be sorry. Proverbs 11:15 says, "He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it: and he that hateth suretyship is sure." That financial agreement begins with a verbal promise and ends with a handshake. Then if the benefitting person does not pay his or her debt, the surety must make good on the loan. While getting stuck with someone else's debt is aggravating, it is even more so if it occurs with someone outside of one's own family. So, hastily spoken words without carefully considering them beforehand can sometimes create real problems for the speaking individual.

In that same regard, Solomon indicated that a wicked person can be caught in his or her words, too. Whenever Solomon identified someone as wicked, he always meant an individual that has not come to the Lord by faith. Thus, in the above passage, that person is snared by the betrayal of his or her lips. Because righteous thoughts are not in their mind, they do not speak righteous things. Then the words that they do speak will usually put their ungodliness on display. However, the just person is less likely to fall into that same kind of trap. Because he or she has come to the Lord by faith, their conversation is godlier and less likely to cause trouble for the individual. For that reason the just person will be delivered from the same kinds of trouble that the wicked person will many times have to endure. Proverbs 12:6 says, "The words of the wicked are to lie in wait for blood: but the mouth of the upright shall deliver them."

Thus, when a person has the peace of the Lord upon his or her life, then even their words will be pleasant to others. He or she will also be satisfied by the fruit of their own mouth. Matthew 12:34 says, "O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." So Jesus would later say that a person truly is as the person speaks.

A Walk with the Lord is by Hope but Not only by Hope (13 June)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 13:12-13

"Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life. Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed: but he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded."

Hebrews 11:1 says, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Hebrews 7:19 says, "For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God." The writer of the book of Hebrews wrote that faith is the substance of things hoped for even when there is not tangible evidence to support that faith. He or she also wrote that the better hope of Jesus dying on the cross draws people closer to God. But Solomon said that the heart becomes sick when a person's hope is delayed. If one thinks carefully about someone coming to the Lord by faith, though, it should be clear that that person really only has mostly hope but not empty hope.

He or she is responding to what is believed to be true and to what is hoped to be true. But the simple fact is that no one can prove beyond doubt that God either exists or does not exist. No one can prove beyond doubt that heaven is real or not real. Most people cannot understand all of the theology about how Jesus dying on a Roman cross can save anyone from eternal condemnation. Thus, godly people must really walk the walk of faith and accept many things without evidence. It is important to realize, though, that they are not completely left in the dark. The Lord has revealed Himself through His works of Creation. He has given His Holy Spirit-inspired Word so that they can learn more about Him. Then to those people that come to Him by faith, He gives the indwelling Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit witnesses to godly people and tells them that their hope in Christ is real and not foolish. So while the hope promised has not yet been fully realized, a belief in that hope continues to sustain those people that come to the Lord by faith. It is also much greater than the no hope of those individuals that have not or will not come to Him. As was stated above, the Lord gave His Holy Spirit-inspired Word so that people can learn more about Him. However, it is a great, great tragedy that they many times let their Bible set on a tabletop never or only rarely to be opened. By so doing, they are wasting a major source of hope.

The Simple, Fool, and Wicked or the Prudent and Wise (14 June)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 14:15-17

"The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going. A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil: but the fool rageth, and is confident. He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly: and a man of wicked devices is hated."

Whenever Solomon spoke about the simple, the foolish, or the wicked, he was always talking about people that have not come to the Lord by faith. Whenever he spoke about the prudent or the wise, he was always talking about people that have come to the Lord by faith. In the above passage, he spoke about all five types of people. The simple person is one that is naïve or simple-minded. Since the beginning of wisdom and of knowledge is to fear the Lord, a simple-minded person lacking both has not shown that reverence for Him. The same argument also applies to the person that Solomon called a fool. He or she is a fool for not having come to the Lord by faith. Concerning the wicked, those people have consciously chosen the ungodly paths in life. So it is clear that Solomon believed those three types of individuals to be spiritually lost and not in a right relationship with the Lord. By contrast, he considered the prudent and the wise to be in a personal relationship with Him because those are personal traits of godly people.

That being the case, he said that a simple person believes every word even when those words go against common reasoning. If the words are good, then that is good. But if they are to commit some kind of ungodly act, then the simple person simply goes along without ever considering that they go against the "Creator of Everything." Solomon said that the fool is dumb or just plain stupid. So that person is probably too stupid to even understand when he or she is going against the Lord. In stark contrast to those two types of ungodly people, the wicked, ungodly person knows exactly what evil he or she is doing. But such people actually desire to oppose the Lord. Thus, they do not care about the depths of ungodliness to which they might sink. However, despite those three types of ungodly people, the prudent person loves the Lord and faithfully serves Him. He or she will be in constant vigilance against the ungodly devices of this world. The wise individual will also be vigilant because he or she is ethically and religiously wise. Therefore, one would do well to follow the examples of the prudent and the wise and to shun the examples of the simple, the foolish, and the wicked.

Understanding seeks Knowledge but Fools are Foolish (15 June)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 15:14-15

"The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge: but the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness. All the days of the afflicted are evil: but he that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast."

Solomon said that the heart of the person that has understanding seeks knowledge. But about what kind of heart was he speaking? About what kind of understanding and knowledge was he speaking? Was he saying that when a person understands how difficult it is to survive in this world that he or she will seek the kind of knowledge that will make their journey easier? The answer to that question is yes but not in the way that most people would understand. He was not suggesting that people should pursue more education so that they can get better jobs and make more money. He also was not suggesting that they learn more about how to run a business enterprise so that they can rise to the top of their organization. Many people might think that those are the only significant ends in this life worthy of pursuit. But Solomon definitely did not hold to that view in any way shape or form. The Hebrew word that he used for "understanding" means discernment, insight, or perception.

His father David had used that same word in Psalm 32:9-10 which says, "Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee. Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about." So the kind of heart and understanding that Solomon spoke of was the kind that is consistent with the person that is trusting in the Lord. That being the case the kind of knowledge that he advocated was the kind that means to have discernment, perception, and wisdom. Thus, the right kind of understanding and knowledge will keep people on the strait paths in life. They will show them how to be the right kind of people. They will steer them to the Lord. They will cause them to commit to Him and to trust in Him. So in eternal terms, they are the only kinds of understanding and knowledge that have any real lasting value.

For people that come to the Lord, life is pleasant when compared to those that do not. The godly enjoy a continual feast. But the ungodly must endure affliction.

How to Live Right and How to Prepare for Death (16 June)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 16:16-17

"How much better is it to get wisdom than gold! and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver! The highway of the upright is to depart from evil: he that keepeth his way preserveth his soul."

Many people in this life put a very high premium on economic success and on prosperity. After all, it is with money that they can buy all of the things that they may need or really want. However, Solomon would say that such people might be guilty of being short-term sighted. That simply means that they are not seeing the long-term consequences of only living for the things of this world. The simple fact, whether people like to hear it or not, is that everyone will someday die and forever leave this life. For that reason, those individuals that are truly wise will consider what awaits them on the other side of the grave rather than just ignoring it and hoping that it will go away. The truth is that death does not just go away. It is out there. So, wise people will deal with it today before it is too late.

In the above passage, Solomon said that wisdom is better than gold and that understanding is better than silver. Gold and silver are two valuable precious metals. But he was saying that wisdom and understanding are even more valuable than they. One should note, however, that he was talking about godly wisdom and about godly understanding rather than just wisdom alone and understanding alone. For what good would wisdom alone and understanding alone be if they did not prepare a person for the other side of the grave? The answer is none. Worldly wisdom might tell people how to care for their life in this life. But it does not offer help to anyone once they have crossed over into eternity. For that kind of help, people need the godly wisdom and godly understanding that are from above.

Solomon next said that the upright depart from evil and that people who keep their way preserve their soul. But while those words are true, he skipped a critical step. No one ever solves the eternal destiny question by departing from evil or by keeping his or her way because a person's righteousness can never satisfy God's holiness. So the correct biblical solution to death and to living right is to come to the Lord by faith and receive His forgiveness for sin. Then he or she will be able to depart from evil, keep their way, and prepare for the other side of the grave.

Meeting an angry Animal, Evil for Good, and Strife (17 June)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 17:12-14

"Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man, rather than a fool in his folly. Whoso rewardeth evil for good, evil shall not depart from his house. The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water: therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with."

Few things in this life are more terrifying than facing a wild animal that has been involuntarily separated from its young. For that reason, Solomon affirmed that meeting an angry mother bear that has been separated from her cubs is bad. But he then said that encountering a fool in his or her folly is even worse. In speaking about such a fool, though, he had actually been talking about the ungodly person that is either a simpleton, dumb, or just plain stupid. Thus, such a fool is a "dumb fool" rather than an "evil fool." The difference between the two is pretty simple. The "evil fool" rejects the Lord because he or she has an evil heart and does not care about trying to live for the Lord. By contrast, the "dumb fool" rejects the Lord because of his or her basic stupidity.

Therefore, even though the folly of both types of fools is pretty bad, Solomon said that it would be far better to run into an angry wild animal robbed of its young than to encounter the folly of a "dumb fool." After that, he next said that a person's whole household would be consumed by or cursed by evil if the person regularly rewarded evil for good. In that regard, David said that he was often rewarded evil for good even though he had been good to the very people that had treated him so poorly. Psalm 35:11-14 says, "False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge things that I knew not. They rewarded me evil for good to the spoiling of my soul. But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting...I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother." Thus, he did not treat them as they had treated him.

To conclude the above passage, Solomon compared the creating of trouble to a container of water with a hole in it. Once the leaking has begun, it will not end until the container is empty. In the same way, once strife has begun, it will not end until the trouble is done. Therefore, one should never let the strife begin.

Biblical Salvation is Not Based upon One's Wealth (18 June)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 18:11-12

"The rich man's wealth is his strong city, and as an high wall in his own conceit. Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honour is humility."

The above opening passage compares very closely to another of Solomon's statements. Proverbs 10:15 says, "The rich man's wealth is his strong city...." In the opening passage and also in that just quoted verse, the idea of the rich person's wealth being his or her strong city suggests that rich people tend to put their confidence in their wealth rather than in the Lord. But that conclusion contrasts the previous verse which says, "The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." In that verse along with the above verses, the implied conclusion is that poor people tend to be more righteous and that they are also more inclined to rely upon the Lord. But those conclusions are not what were intended. In his making the above blanket statements, one should realize that Solomon often spoke in general principles rather than in spiritual absolutes.

That means that rich people in general tend to rely more on their wealth than on the Lord. But it would clearly be wrong to assume that all wealthy people do that. Similarly poor people in general tend to rely more on the Lord. But it would be equally wrong to conclude that all poor people do that. In making a statement about wealthy people, Jesus would later say that most rich people die lost. But once again, His comment was also only a general principle. Matthew 19:23-24 says, "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." Thus, it is a biblical fact that riches are sometimes a hindrance that keeps a person from seeking the Lord with all of his or her heart.

But one should be very clear about what the Scriptures really say. Salvation is not based upon a person's economic status. It is based entirely upon one's response to the Lord. People that humbly come to Him by faith in the right spirit and with the right attitude, that commit to Him, that trust in Him, and that enter into a personal relationship with Him are saved. People that do not those things are not saved. There are simply no exceptions to that simple formula, and wealth is not involved.

Angry Kings, Foolish Sons, and Prudent Wives (19 June)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 19:12-14

"The king's wrath is as the roaring of a lion; but his favour is as dew upon the grass. A foolish son is the calamity of his father: and the contentions of a wife are a continual dropping. House and riches are the inheritance of fathers: and a prudent wife is from the LORD."

Biblical history reveals that there have often been some very evil rulers. For example, Nebuchadnezzar had been a very vicious king. He had once had three Hebrew boys thrown into a hot fiery furnace because they would not bow to him. During the times of Moses, the Pharaoh of Egypt had enslaved the children of Israel and had also killed many Jewish boy babies because the Jewish population had greatly increased. When Jesus was incarnated, a very wicked King Herod had killed Jewish boy babies, too, simply because he had wanted to kill the baby Jesus. So Solomon indicated above that an angry king is as vicious as a roaring lion. But when the king is pleased, he said that it is like fresh dew on the grass.

One should note, however, that Jesus as king will also someday be as that roaring lion to those people that have, while in this life, rejected His goodness and His grace. The Apostle Paul wrote that today is the day of salvation. The psalmist said that wise people will come to the Lord while they can. Psalm 111:10 says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever." So, one should not put off his or her decision to come to the Lord because that opportunity will not always be available. Those people that choose to not come to Him by faith are the same as the foolish child in the above passage that is a calamity and a basis for sadness and disappointment to his or her parents. Thus, coming to the Lord is an important individual decision that every person needs to make.

Solomon also spoke above about good and bad spouses. A bad spouse is one that makes the home into a place of continual strife and unhappiness. He or she gripes and complains almost constantly. Because such a person can never seemingly be satisfied, life with him or her is like a rain that never lets up. By contrast, a good spouse is prudent. That means that he or she is also godly. Such spouses create a pleasant living environment for the whole family. So they are a gift from God.

True Lasting Value, Collateral, and Ill-Gotten Gains (20 June)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 20:15-17

"There is gold, and a multitude of rubies: but the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel. Take his garment that is surety for a stranger: and take a pledge of him for a strange woman. Bread of deceit is sweet to a man; but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel."

Solomon often spoke about the value of godly wisdom, godly understanding, and godly knowledge. In fact, he many times said that they were more valuable than gold, silver, and rubies. Proverbs 3:13-14 says, "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold." Proverbs 8:10 says, "Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold." Proverbs 16:16 says, "How much better is it to get wisdom than gold! and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver!" In the above passage, he said that wisdom and knowledge surpass gold and rubies in value. It was not that he did not recognize the value of those things. But it was that he did recognize the value of godly wisdom, godly understanding, and godly knowledge. The above metals and stones do have value. However, it is only temporary to the person, and the day will come when all earthly wealth will be gone or left behind.

By contrast, godly wisdom, godly understanding, and godly knowledge keep a person in the right paths of life and also lead to an eternity with the Lord. So they have both earthly value and eternal value on the other side of the grave. Next Solomon spoke about being a surety for someone. In fact, he often advised young people to be very careful about entering into that kind of financial agreement. To be a surety for someone means to obligate oneself to pay the debt of that person if he or she defaults. So, one should always be very careful. In the above passage, however, he urged extra caution about being a surety for a stranger. In referring to a strange woman, he sometimes used those words to describe a prostitute. So if a young person were going to be financially entangled with such people, then he or she should get plenty of collateral upfront before making the terms official. Then in his final statement above, Solomon also warned about ill-gotten gains. Whenever one makes money unethically or dishonestly, the sweetness of the gain will soon feel like gravel in the mouth. The joy does not last. But the guilt does.

The Just Enjoy Doing Right and God Receives Sinners (21 June)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 21:15-16

"It is joy to the just to do judgment: but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity. The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead."

After talking about the offering of bribes in the preceding verses, Solomon next said that just people enjoy doing things right and that the workers of iniquity shall be destroyed. But who are the just people and what makes them just? One can start to answer those questions by knowing that Solomon often used the same Hebrew word to express righteous people and just people. So in his mind, they had been one and the same. Proverbs 11:10 says, "When it goeth well with the righteous, the city rejoiceth: and when the wicked perish, there is shouting." So the just people are those individuals that have been justified or vindicated by the Lord. That means that they have sought Him with all of their heart, that they have committed themselves to Him, that they have put their trust in Him, and that they have entered into a personal relationship with Him. Such is the way of biblical salvation and such are the people that find true joy in doing the right things. By contrast, the workers of iniquity are the ungodly people. They have not come to the Lord, and they will be eternally condemned and forever separated from Him.

Solomon next said that the person that wanders out of the way of understanding will remain in the congregation of the dead. From that rendering, it seems that he was talking about someone that had once been in the way of understanding but had somehow wandered out of the way. But that is probably not the best way to understand that expression. Because the verb "to wander" was expressed as an active participle, the better reading is that the person is already wandering out of the way of understanding. Thus, he or she never was in the way of understanding. So Solomon said that the penalty to that person is to remain in the congregation of the dead. Remaining in the congregation of the dead is further indication that he was talking about people that had always been out of the way of understanding. They will remain in that group rather than being put into that group. That also means that they will die lost if they do not repent. However, they can be put into the congregation of the living if they will seek the Lord by faith in the right spirit and with the right attitude. He never turns anyone away that truly seeks Him.

The Strange Woman and the Rod of Correction (22 June)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 22:14-15

"The mouth of strange women is a deep pit: he that is abhorred of the LORD shall fall therein. Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him."

Solomon wrote that the mouth of a strange woman or of a prostitute is like a deep pit or a deep ditch. In other words, one should not be deceived by her nice words because behind those words lie danger. He further wrote that God lets the person of whom He is angry be deceived by her words. So three points must be made concerning those two people.

First, Solomon's words had specifically applied to a female prostitute and to a male person being drawn to her. Thus, he had been saying that the male gender is much more vulnerable to sexual sins than the female gender. Of course, the female in the above scenario is not without guilt either. Second, even in this not real example God still loves the prostitute just as He also still loves the man that is being deceived by her words. In fact, if the scenario were real, He would be angry with both of the participants. He would let both suffer the consequences of their ungodly behavior. But He would also love both and receive either or both if they would come to Him by faith in the right spirit and with the right attitude. Third, both people had been engaged in their respective activities by choice. The Lord had not made the prostitute be a prostitute nor had He made the young man go in to her.

Next Solomon wrote that foolishness is bound in the heart of a child. With those words, though, he had again been speaking primarily about the male gender because the Hebrew word used for "child" had specifically referred to a young male child. In that regard he had also spoken about fools and their foolishness in some of his other sayings. For example, Proverbs 14:24 says, "The crown of the wise is their riches: but the foolishness of fools is folly." Proverbs 15:14 says, "The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge: but the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness." Thus, it is important to understand that he had not been speaking about a young man's foolishness as a good thing. In fact, he had even said that it can be driven from him by the rod of correction.

Let Not thy Heart envy Sinners because There is an End (23 June)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 23:16-19

"Yea, my reins shall rejoice, when thy lips speak right things. Let not thine heart envy sinners: but be thou in the fear of the LORD all the day long. For surely there is an end; and thine expectation shall not be cut off. Hear thou, my son, and be wise, and guide thine heart in the way."

Solomon said above that he would rejoice if his children spoke right things. But while his words specifically imply that he was talking only to his son, the Hebrew word that he used for "son" in the preceding verse actually means that he could have been speaking to all of his children rather than exclusively to only some. Because of that, all parents can rejoice when any of their children speak right things. Of course, the significance of their speaking right things is that those right things have come from a righteous or a pure heart. Matthew 12:34-35 says, "O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things." Therefore, the speaking of right things strongly suggests that the children are being obedient to the above instruction to be in the fear of the Lord all the day long.

Solomon's next statement was among the most important presented in all of the Scriptures. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he said that there is surely an end to this life. Therefore, it is a biblical fact that the here and now of this life is not where people will be for all eternity. Solomon further indicated that the hopes of children that speak right things and that are living in the fear of the Lord will not be cut off. That means that those who have come to the Lord by faith, who have committed themselves to Him, who are trusting in Him, and who are in a personal relationship with Him will go to be with Him once they have left this life. By contrast, those that have not come to Him while in this life will not go to be with Him after death. That truth is very important for people to understand. If they are in the Lord, then they have reason to rejoice and look forward to eternity. But if they are not in Him, then they need to come to Him by faith in the right spirit and with the right attitude while that is still possible. The day will come in the life of the ungodly when the invitation to eternal life will no longer be given.

Godly Wisdom Will Be Eternally Sweet to the Soul (24 June)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 24:13-16

"My son, eat thou honey, because it is good; and the honeycomb, which is sweet to thy taste: So shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul: when thou hast found it, then there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off. Lay not wait, O wicked man, against the dwelling of the righteous; spoil not his resting place: For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief."

Solomon had just finished telling his children that their strength would be weak if they faint in the day of adversity. So in the above passage, he told them that they can find their internal strength in the Lord. God freely and liberally gives wisdom and strength to all of those people that seek Him by faith with all of their heart. James 1:5-6 says, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering...."

Godly wisdom is as pleasant to the soul as eating honey from a honeycomb. It will show a person how to live for Him while in this life. It will keep him or her on the right paths in life and also out of trouble. Then when this life is over, the person that has had that personal relationship with Him will go to be with Him for all eternity. While the whole thing might sound like the wishful thinking of weak minds, the Scriptures clearly support the entire premise. I Corinthians 1:25 says, "Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men." Solomon then said that the expectation or the remembrance of the godly will endure forever implying that the ungodly will soon be forgotten.

He next pointed out two important truths about being in a personal relationship with the Lord. By saying that the just man falls seven times, he confirmed that godly people stumble, too. Being in Christ does not take away a person's free will to do wrong. But it should take away the person's desire to do wrong. All people whether godly or not still mess up. However, godly people should never feel good about failing the Lord. The second important truth is that one's relationship with the Lord is not dependent upon the person's goodness. If it were, then he or she would be getting saved, becoming lost, and getting saved over and over again.

Be a Faithful Messenger But Not a Proud Boaster (25 June)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 25:13-14

"As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him: for he refresheth the soul of his masters. Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift is like clouds and wind without rain."

In modern cultures, snow might sometimes be considered a nuisance. It can involve a lot of shoveling. It can cause downed power lines and the loss of electrical power. It can also make travel difficult and dangerous. But in Solomon's days, snow was considered to be a good thing. It made it easier to preserve certain foods that need refrigeration or a freezer type of environment. The snow could be stored in cisterns and used as drinking water for several months. It could also be used for watering crops during the growing season. Thus, those various uses were very important because in that part of the world it mostly rains between November and April, which is why one so often reads about famines in the Bible. Not all parts of the world are blessed with steady rain throughout the year, and the Middle East is one of those places not so blessed.

So the point is that Solomon said that faithful messengers to them that send them just like the cold of snow in harvest time are good things. They are refreshing to their masters. On another occasion, though, he said that one would not want to send an important message by a fool because the message likely would not be delivered to the right place and on time. Proverbs 26:6 says, "He that sendeth a message by the hand of a fool cutteth off the feet, and drinketh damage."

He concluded the above passage by speaking negatively about the person that is always boasting about a false gift. The first point is that a person should not be a bragger. If the trait is truly that great, then the person should let other people boast on his or her behalf. If someone says that they are a nice person, then the complement carries a little weight. But if someone else says that they are nice, then it carries much more weight. Proverbs 27:2 says, "Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips." The second point is that the person in the above passage was boasting about a false gift. So his or her comment was not even true. That made it like clouds with no rain where rain is a good thing.

Be Not Too Wise in One's Own Eyes and Be Not Lazy (26 June)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 26:12-13

"Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him. The slothful man saith, There is a lion in the way; a lion is in the streets."

There is always a negative aspect to individuals putting themselves on a pedestal when others are not. In that regard, Solomon said that people that incorrectly see themselves as being wise are usually bigger fools than those that do not. In fact, he said that one that actually is a fool has greater hope than the self-proclaimed wise person. So the first thing that one should realize about Solomon's concept of wisdom is that it always applies and only applies to one's relationship with the Lord. He never referred to people that have not sought the Lord with all of their heart and that have not committed themselves to Him as being wise. How wise could a person possibly be if he or she lives their allotted time on this earth and then dies lost? The answer is not very.

Solomon also understood the difference between worldly wisdom and godly wisdom. Therefore, he always encouraged people to be wise in the things of the Lord. But he never encouraged them to be worldly wise at the expense of being godly wise. So the second thing that one should understand about the above passage is why he said that there is more hope in a fool than in people that incorrectly think that they are wise. It is because if the true fools ever realize that they are not right with the Lord, then they have the opportunity to seek Him and to do something about it. But if the worldly wise people already think that they are at one with the world and with their environment, then they are much less likely to do anything to change. That makes them greater fools than those people that may someday understand their foolishness, seek the Lord, and become wise.

Finally, Solomon always held truly wise people in high regard because he said that their wisdom comes from seeking the Lord and from entering into a personal relationship with Him. By contrast, he always spoke very negatively about lazy people because they are basically not good for anything. In the second part of the above passage, he even indicated the lengths to which they will go just to avoid having to do anything. They will say that there is a lion in the way or in the street when there is not just so that they can defend their own laziness.

Receiving Collateral and Loudly Blessing a Friend (27 June)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 27:13-14

"Take his garment that is surety for a stranger, and take a pledge of him for a strange woman. He that blesseth his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, it shall be counted a curse to him."

Solomon spoke the first part of the above passage on another occasion, too. Proverbs 20:16 says, "Take his garment that is surety for a stranger: and take a pledge of him for a strange woman." By repeating his earlier advice, he showed his concern for the young person that might be drawn into a surety agreement with someone that he or she hardly knew or with a woman that might have been a prostitute. He also cautioned care at various other times, too, about being a surety. But he seemed to recognize a young person's extra vulnerability in the above two situations.

To be a surety for someone means to agree to pay his or her debt if the person defaults. So, one would always want to be very careful about agreeing to something like that but even more so for someone that was not well known. That is especially true for young men because of their raging drive for the opposite sex. They could probably be more easily drawn into such a predicament by a pretty face than a young woman might be by someone that she hardly knew. However, the risks still existed for young men and for young women. So he repeated his earlier words to increase the chance that they would get the message. He told them to get ample collateral from the stranger before just agreeing to anything.

In the second part of the above passage, he spoke about how one friend might bless another friend. To bless someone means to praise or to salute them. But to do so with a loud voice in public suggests that the person giving the blessing is trying to draw attention to himself or to herself rather than to the person being blessed. If that is the case, then the giving of the blessing is more about gaining attention for oneself than about trying to exalt a friend. That would make the whole event very hypocritical. Solomon's advice in such matters was twofold. First, do not be the kind of person that praises others for his or her own benefit rather than for the person being blessed. Second, a person should watch out if he or she is the one being blessed loudly in public because betrayal is probably near.

Confessing and Forsaking One's Sins (28 June)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 28:13-14

"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy. Happy is the man that feareth alway: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief."

Solomon's words in the above passage show that people are not normally comfortable with their sins. In the Garden of Eden, for example, after Adam and Eve had eaten fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they had realized to their own displeasure that they were both naked. So instead of enjoying the results of their sin, they had tried to cloth themselves with fig leaves to cover up what they had done. But as the words in the above passage indicate they did not prosper. When the Lord next came through the garden to see them, He already knew exactly what they had done. Therefore, they had not gotten away with anything plus they had had to suffer the consequences of what they had done.

Not only could Solomon relate to the sin of Adam and Eve, but he could also relate even better to the sin of his own father and mother. Before Solomon had been born, his father David had seen his mother Bathsheba bathing herself. At that time she was married to another man. But David had wanted her. So he had sent for her. The two of them had an affair, and she became pregnant. Then David had placed Bathsheba's husband in a place in a battle that would almost certainly lead to his death. So he had tried to cover his sins by getting her husband out of the way so that he would never know what had happened between the king and his wife. But once again as the above words indicate, David did not prosper either. He was found out and was chastened by the Prophet Nathan. Later, though, Solomon was born to David and Bathsheba.

Thus, trying to cover one's sins never works. The Lord always knows what each person has done. But the good thing is that He will always forgive those people that humbly confess and forsake their sins. Solomon wrote that the happiest people in this life are those that always fear the Lord. If Adam, Eve, David, and Bathsheba had feared the Lord at the moments of their respective indiscretions, then their falls into sin would have never happened.

A Meeting of the Poor and the Deceitful (29 June)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 29:13-14

"The poor and the deceitful man meet together: the LORD lighteneth both their eyes. The king that faithfully judgeth the poor, his throne shall be established for ever."

In the above passage the Hebrew word used for "deceitful" means oppressor. It only occurs in this one place in the Old Testament. So Solomon said that the poor person and the oppressor meet together before the Lord. God as the Creator of the world had created both of them. Proverbs 22:2 says, "The rich and poor meet together: the LORD is the maker of them all." He had also created the light that He shines brightly before them. The Hebrew word for "lighteneth" in the above passage is the same word that Moses had used for "to give light" when he had shared the events of the world's origins. Genesis 1:15-18 says, "And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good."

Thus, Solomon said that the Lord gives both the poor person and the oppressor physical light for their physical eyes and spiritual light for their spiritual eyes. In the second part of the above passage, he again showed that the economically poor person is important to the Lord. God had already given him the two forms of light just mentioned. In addition, He also rewards the king that faithfully judges the poor by establishing his throne forever. So those words show that God is not a respecter of persons. The rich and the powerful in this world are often put ahead of the poor. Even the oppressors are sometimes put ahead of the poor. But the Lord does not treat individuals that way just because they do not have much money. Most people that do are usually trying to improve their own lot in life. Therefore, they do not pay much heed to the poor person because the poor person cannot help them obtain their earthly goals. But the Lord does not care about getting ahead because He already is all-powerful, all-knowing, and always present everywhere all the time. So He does not need to do anything to improve His position in the world. He already is God and the Creator.

The Unclean Generation that Sees itself as Pure (30 June)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 30:12-13

"There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness. There is a generation, O how lofty are their eyes! and their eyelids are lifted up."

In the above passage, Solomon made two very negative comments about a generation. But while he implied that there is only a single generation of certain views about itself, his words actually apply to all generations and to all people. In other words, every generation has individuals that see themselves as pure when they are not. Every generation has those that see themselves as high and lifted up when they are not. Most people tend to think that they are not so bad. However, the Scriptures say something very different about the goodness of human beings. Most people tend to think that they do some pretty good things. But once again the Scriptures say something very different about the things that they do.

It is often said by others that a certain person is pretty good. Then the individuals expressing that view will say that the person being discussed does this or does that and that the things that he or she does are worthy causes. No doubt the person being discussed has done all of the things that have brought such high praise from others. But he or she will not likely gain that same praise from the Scriptures. The reason is because most individuals look at the world and at each other with eyes that only see temporal things. They do not see eternal things in the same way as the Lord. From God's perspective, no human beings have any goodness naturally born into them. No human beings start out in life seeking Him. Every person starts out in life as a sinner. Romans 3:10-26 says, "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God... For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God...."

So despite how people might view themselves and others, everyone starts out in life in trouble with the God that created them. Worse than that, no one can do anything on their own to fix their shortcomings with the Lord. According to the Scriptures, the only solution is to seek Him with all one's heart, to commit oneself to Him, to trust in Him, and to enter into a personal relationship with Him. But that is the only way, and it is possible because of the death of Jesus on the cross.

Turn when Reproved and Receive a Godly Spirit (01 July)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 1:23

"Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you."

To turn when reprovved means to change for something better. But it means more than just changing one's mind about a questionable activity. It actually means to change the activity. In the preceding verses, Solomon told his young child to seek godly wisdom because it will produce in a person godly knowledge and godly understanding. His father David had also said that. Psalm 111:10 says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments...." Then when one has acquired those things, he or she will be wisely guided all through life. It is important to understand, though, that the one doing the above reprovving was not Solomon. As wise as he might have been, he never credited himself with the ability to guide the lives of others. In fact, when one carefully examines his life under a probing microscope, it becomes quite clear that he was dealing with some issues of his own.

Therefore, the one doing the above reprovving is the godly wisdom that had been originally encouraged. The reason that godly wisdom is so important is because it will keep a person on the right paths in life and out of trouble. It will also prepare him or her for their existence on the other side of the grave. However, one should note that godly wisdom is not the same as worldly wisdom. Worldly wisdom says to get a good education to get a good job to have a good career to make a lot of money and to have all of the really good things in life. Many people follow that call every day even though it does not provide any benefits on the other side of the grave. So it is okay as far as it goes. But from an eternal perspective, it does not go very far. Therefore, it should never supersede godly wisdom. Godly wisdom says to seek the Lord with all of one's heart, to enter into a personal relationship with Him, and then to let the indwelling Holy Spirit guide in life.

In conclusion, it is also important to understand that godly wisdom when put first in a life still makes room for worldly wisdom. Living for the Lord does not mean that one cannot also pursue worldly success. However, godly wisdom will help the person see worldly success for what it really is and to give it the right priority.

Wisdom and Knowledge Deliver from Eternal Death (02 July)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 2:10-17

"When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee: To deliver thee from the way of the evil man, from the man that speaketh froward things; Who leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness; Who rejoice to do evil, and delight in the frowardness of the wicked; Whose ways are crooked, and they froward in their paths: To deliver thee from the strange woman, even from the stranger which flattereth with her words; Which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God."

Some biblical doctrines are very difficult to understand. A clear example is in how to be saved. Many people if asked would probably say that a person can be saved by doing a lot of good things. Another person would say that it is a matter of having more good in one's life than bad. Still another person would say that repeating a template prayer asking the Lord for forgiveness from sin is the way to be saved. Some people would read what Solomon said in the above passage and say that salvation is staying from evil and immoral people. However, while all of those things might be good for one's lifestyle, none is consistent with what the Scriptures say about salvation. A person can do many, many good things in life and still die lost. He or she can do more good than bad and still die lost. He or she can repeat a template prayer of salvation and still die lost. Finally a person can stay away from all evil and immoral people forever and ever and still die lost.

So after having stated some of the many ways that someone can die lost, it is very important to share what the Bible says about how to not die lost. The Apostle Paul wrote that God has revealed Himself to people through His Creation. The Prophet Jeremiah wrote that a person can find the Lord by seeking Him with all of his or her heart. The Apostle John wrote that a person can receive everlasting life by believing in the name of Jesus where that means to commit to Him and to trust in Him. John also wrote about the personal relationship that one can have with the Lord by seeking, committing, and trusting. Paul wrote about the Holy Spirit indwelling people that have come to the Lord by faith. So those are the principle biblical teachings about how to be saved. Salvation always results in a new heart. It always leads to godly wisdom, godly understanding, and eternal deliverance.

Salvation Leads to Godly Wisdom and Understanding (03 July)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 3:21-24

"My son, let not them depart from thine eyes: keep sound wisdom and discretion: So shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck. Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble. When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid: yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet."

What Solomon said in the previous two verses plus in the above passage is truly incredible. Proverbs 3:19-20 says, "The LORD by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens. By his knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew." He said that God created the earth by wisdom, that He created the heavens by understanding, and that He made everything work by knowledge. Thus, those two verses explain Creation as much as anyone ever needs to know. But the truly incredible part from the above passage is that humans can actually possess some of that same wisdom, understanding, and knowledge. Solomon told his children to not let them depart from their eyes because they will be life to their souls. Godly wisdom, godly understanding, and godly knowledge will lead a person into safe passages so that he or she will not stumble in life. That is very important. They will encourage a person in moments when one might ordinarily be afraid. They will also be a source of pleasant rest.

So the big question is how one can actually get God's wisdom, understanding, and knowledge. The simple answer is by looking around. The Apostle Paul wrote that God reveals Himself through His Creation. That means that a person can look at the trees and the stars and the sun and the moon and all of the other elements of Creation and conclude that there is a Creator. Next the Prophet Jeremiah wrote that a person can find or can connect with that Creator by simply seeking Him, which is nothing more than really wanting to connect with Him. The Apostle John then wrote that a person can receive eternal life by believing in the Creator as the Creator. One should note, though, that the Greek word used for "believeth" means to commit to and to trust in the object of one's belief. So, being saved and being put onto the path to godly wisdom begins when a person commits to the "Creator of Everything," trusts in Him, and starts living for Him. That means being saved is free and there are no hoops through which one must jump.

Choose the Lord rather than the Way of Evil People (04 July)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 4:14-17

"Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away. For they sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall. For they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence."

People often like to joke about their mischievous exploits because it makes them feel like they are trendsetters or that they are part of the crowd in which they want to be a part. But nothing could be further from the truth. There is nothing so great about living one's life being indifferent to the Lord or to His principles for living. For those people that have come to the Lord by faith, trying to be part of a crowd that does not love the Lord will usually lead to some kind of trouble. Godly people should try to bring ungodly people to God so that they can be saved. But they should never try to be like the ungodly or try to copy their ways. II Corinthians 6:16-18 says, "And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord...."

Because of all the ways in which godly people can go wrong in this life, Solomon said to take fast hold of godly instruction or chastening because it will show them how to have stable, balanced lives. He also said to not go along with the wicked, evil crowd. One should note, though, that the Hebrew word used for "wicked" means to be guilty of sin against God. So he was not just talking about staying from those individuals that most people would already consider really bad. All people know that murder is wrong, that stealing is wrong, and that many other criminal offenses are wrong. But in Solomon's mind, not coming to the Lord is both wicked and stupid. Whenever he spoke about the ungodly, he always used words like unrighteous, wicked, evil, fool, simple, and slothful. However, the real problem of those people is that they have not come to the Lord so that they can be saved. That being the case, the only solution for them is to seek Him with all of their heart, to commit to Him, to trust in Him, and to then enter into a personal relationship with Him. While nothing more is required, nothing less will not do. Salvation is a free gift. But each person must choose on his or her own to come.

Avoid Immorality by Drinking from One's own Cistern (05 July)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 5:15

"Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well."

Solomon often spoke about immorality and about sexual impurity. Proverbs 6:29 says, "So he that goeth in to his neighbour's wife; whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent." Proverbs 5:3-4 says, "For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil: But her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a twoedged sword." Proverbs 5:20 says, "And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger?" Proverbs 7:4-5 says, "Say unto wisdom, Thou art my sister; and call understanding thy kinswoman: That they may keep thee from the strange woman, from the stranger which flattereth with her words." Proverbs 23:27-28 says, "For a whore is a deep ditch; and a strange woman is a narrow pit. She also lieth in wait as for a prey, and increaseth the transgressors among men." Obviously, sex of all kinds according to Solomon creates a lot of problems for all people. Young men and women often engage in inappropriate sexual activity outside of marriage. People of both sexes at times seek sex through illegal prostitution. Spouses cheat on each other. So it goes on and on.

One would think that the biblical formula of one man for one woman for one lifetime would be enough to keep people happy. But many times, that does not seem to be the case. Therefore, one might question why inappropriate sex is such a problem for so many people. The simple answer is sin. All people are born into sin because of Adam. When he disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden, he brought death to all human beings born from him. He also passed on a sin nature that everyone born from him inherits at birth. Because of that sin nature, all people struggle with sin for all of their lives. Even those people that have come to the Lord by faith still struggle daily with their sin nature. But in the above verse, Solomon told one way to avoid sexual immorality. When he said to drink water from one's own cistern or well, he was saying to only engage in sexual activity with one's own spouse. In fact, he spoke a few times about the blessings of a good spouse. For example, Proverbs 18:22 says, "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing...." Proverbs 19:14 says, "...a prudent wife is from the LORD."

Commandments Lead and Reproofs Instruct (06 July)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 6:22-24

"When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life: To keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman."

Solomon encouraged his young children to keep his father's commandments and to obey the laws of his mother. Proverbs 6:20-21 says, "My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother: Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck." In saying those things, though, his words applied to all children rather than just young men. That means that the commandments and the laws of the parents should be important to all children. The reason for his having said that, however, is quite obvious. They will keep the young person on the right paths in life. They will be a light always shining in front of him or her so that he or she will never be lost in this existence. Life can sometimes be quite difficult. It can also present some very tough challenges. So many times, young people especially might have trouble knowing which way to turn. But the godly laws and the godly commandments of one's godly parents will always show him or her the proper way.

However, even with the best godly parentage, young people will still occasionally make mistakes. That is true whether the child is in the Lord or is not in Him. In those situations, the young person needs to be corrected. But that correction does two things for the individual. It first shows ownership by the one that is doing the correcting. Parents for example correct their children to show that they are taking responsibility for their actions. Similarly the writer of the book of Hebrews wrote that God chastens His own and treats them as His children because He also takes responsibility. Therefore, even though divine correction might seem very difficult at the time, it should give the person being corrected confidence from knowing that he or she is in the Lord. The second thing that divine correction or divine reproof does is change a young person's path from a wayward walk to a godly walk. One of the ways in which that might be manifested was indicated above when Solomon said that reproof will keep the young person from the wrong kind of people. Every parent knows all too well that that is very, very important.

Naïve Men need Godly Wisdom and Understanding (07 July)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 7:17-18

"I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning: let us solace ourselves with loves."

In the above passage, Solomon continued his earlier discussion about the woman dressed as a harlot trying to draw the naïve young man into her web. However, the case that he described may have been much worse than just prostitution. That would have been bad enough. But when one looks at the entire passage, it seems likely that the woman dressed as a harlot was either already married or already living with another man. Proverbs 7:10-20 says, "And, behold, there met him a woman with the attire of an harlot, and subtil of heart...So she caught him, and kissed him, and with an impudent face said unto him...Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning: let us solace ourselves with loves. For the goodman is not at home, he is gone a long journey: He hath taken a bag of money with him, and will come home at the day appointed."

Thus, the Hebrew word that Solomon used for "goodman" in that passage literally means the man of the house or the woman's husband. So based upon his choice of words, she was either married to the man on travel or she was already living with him. Either way, her lifestyle was wicked and immoral. She was trying to entice the naïve young man to come in to her, and by so doing, she might well have been subjecting him to grave personal danger as well as grave eternal danger. The man with whom she was already involved could have easily returned home and killed the young man. But even if that did not happen, he would still someday have to answer to the Lord for his behavior. Therefore, Solomon warned him to resist the temptations presented by lustful situations that can only satisfy in the short term.

Solomon began the seventh chapter of the book of Proverbs by encouraging the young man to embrace wisdom and understanding because they would equip him with the right tools for living a good life. But he was not talking about the kind of wisdom that tells a young person to be all that he or she can be in this life. While that kind of wisdom might seem good to most people for most of the time, it will not keep a person out of trouble or prepare him or her for eternity. For that, one needs to come to the Lord by faith and receive godly wisdom and understanding.

Wisdom and Understanding are Better than Gold (08 July)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 8:17-22

"I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me. Riches and honour are with me; yea, durable riches and righteousness. My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold; and my revenue than choice silver. I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment: That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures. The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old."

In the above passage, Solomon continued to speak very highly about godly wisdom and understanding. Just a few moments earlier he said in Proverbs 8:1, "Doth not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice?" The sad truth about what he said, however, is that while godly wisdom and godly understanding are absolutely free, they have very few takers. A great many people in this world have expressed little interest in being close to the Lord even though He has done so much to be close to them. Everything about the Lord is free. Solomon said that godly wisdom is found at no economic cost by those that seek her early. In the exact same sense, the Prophet Jeremiah would later say the same thing about the Lord. Jeremiah 29:12-13 says, "Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me...And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." Thus, a personal relationship with the Lord is also free.

Solomon next said that the Lord possessed wisdom and understanding from the beginning before Creation. Proverbs 3:19 says, "The LORD by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens." So those things should be preferred over anything and everything else that this life has to offer. Godly wisdom and understanding hold the key to riches and righteousness. Durable riches means that they do not cease like the financial wealth that one might acquire in this life. Sometimes people will make a lot of money only to see it later lost or left behind. But the durable riches about which Solomon spoke are eternal. The righteousness about which he spoke is right standing with the Lord and also eternal. Those things are much better than fine gold and choice silver. They will show a person how to get right with the Lord and then how to live right for Him. Therefore, a wise person will shun the temporary gains of this life that cannot be kept to choose the eternal gains with the Lord that can never be lost.

All Good Things in Life Begin with Fearing the Lord (09 July)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 9:10

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding."

Everything in life has a starting point. The alcoholic had that time in his or her life when that first drink was consumed. The glutton had that time when his or her overeating actually began in earnest. The drug addict also had a time when the bad drug habit had first begun. So everything in life has a starting point. But not all starting points automatically lead to bad lifestyles or to bad habits. In fact, Solomon said above that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. That means that in every wise person's life there was a time when that individual would have been considered unwise by Solomon. So when was or when is that time?

To answer that question, one must understand how he defined wise and unwise. The Hebrew word used for "wisdom" in the above passage means shrewd, prudent, ethically wise, or religiously wise. So, using that definition with some common sense strongly suggests that he identified wise people based upon their position in the Lord. The reason for saying that is that he would have never considered someone wise if that person were in a bad or a wrong position with Him. Thus, according to Solomon and also by inference, a wise person would have been someone who had sought the Lord with all of his or her heart, who had committed to Him, who was trusting in Him, and who also was in a personal relationship with Him. Those are the steps that give one eternal life. Those are also the steps that change a person from being unwise to being wise. That means that fearing the Lord or that revering Him is much the same as seeking Him, committing to Him, trusting in Him, and entering into a personal relationship with Him. By contrast, Solomon would have said that the person that has not done those things is unwise.

He next added to that thought by saying that the knowledge of the holy is the same as understanding. Solomon always spoke very highly about the importance of godly understanding because it will always keep the godly person out of trouble and in the right paths of life. Of utmost importance, though, all of those very good things in life start with fearing the Lord.

Labor of the Righteous and Ownership by Chastening (10 July)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 10:16-17

"The labour of the righteous tendeth to life: the fruit of the wicked to sin. He is in the way of life that keepeth instruction: but he that refuseth reproof erreth."

In the first part of the above passage, Solomon spoke about the products of one's labor. He began by saying that the labor of the righteous tends to life. The Hebrew word used for "righteous" means to be justified or to be vindicated by the Lord. So what kind of labor do justified or vindicated people do that lead to life? In a temporal sense, they work hard to do a good job to take care of the physical needs of their family. But in an eternal sense, they also work hard to do a good job to take care of the spiritual needs of their family. People sometimes get caught up in all kinds of endeavors in this life. But what good are any of those endeavors if the person or the person's family dies lost?

Thus, nothing in life is more important when leaving this life than being in a personal relationship with the "Creator of Everything." To die lost is to have literally missed the boat on the truly most important things in life. Mark 8:36 says, "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Therefore, Solomon was saying that godly, righteous people will be aware of the needs on both sides of the grave and order their lives accordingly. They will seek the Lord by faith and commit to Him. They will also try to live a godly life before their family and others as a way to encourage them to do the same. By contrast, ungodly, wicked people do not have much concern for things on the other side of the grave. Therefore, they will probably ignore such things and live their lives with a bent towards sin.

Solomon next said that people in the path to eternal life will receive and keep instruction but that people make a mistake when they will not accept reproof. The Hebrew word used for "instruction" means chastisement, correction, or discipline. So the simple meaning is that God chastens those people that have come to Him by faith. Therefore, evidence that one truly belongs to Him is that He chastens them and that they are willing to accept that chastening. Hebrews 12:7-8 says, "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons...But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons."

Forming Good Marriages and Being Kind to Others (11 July)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 11:16-17

"A gracious woman retaineth honour: and strong men retain riches. The merciful man doeth good to his own soul: but he that is cruel troubleth his own flesh."

Solomon said above that a gracious woman retains honor and that a strong man retains riches. The Hebrew word that he used for "gracious" means to be elegant or charming. The Hebrew word that he used for "honour" means to possess glory, honor, abundance, or riches. The Hebrew word that he used for "strong" means to be awesome or mighty. Those two phrases in the first part of the above passage might seem to be talking separately about a particular type of woman and about a particular type of man. But they should actually be taken together and understood in the context of one man and one woman in one marriage.

In that culture, women were generally held in very low regard. As such, they rarely had their own identity. Instead, they were normally defined by their husband and by their children. So Solomon was saying that an elegant wife or a charming wife would be like great riches to her husband. She would actually be considered part of the reason that he would be seen by others as being awesome or mighty. Therefore, his words were intended to urge special caution to a young man in choosing the woman that he would marry. Again in that culture, a young man would not want to marry the wrong kind of woman because she would have made him look bad. However, while Solomon's words were expressed to men in his culture, they still very much apply today, only slightly differently. A young man would not want to marry the wrong kind of woman because she would make him look bad. But a young woman also would not want to marry the wrong kind of man because he would make her look bad. So in ideal marriages, both husband and wife love the Lord and both are zealous about serving Him.

Solomon next said that a merciful or a kind person does goodness to his own soul but that a cruel person only brings himself or herself much trouble. When he spoke about a merciful person, he was actually using the same Hebrew word that expresses the mercy that the Lord shows to all of those that come to Him by faith. Therefore, the clear understanding is that godly people benefit themselves when they show a godly love for others. But there is no such benefit for the ungodly.

The Ways of a Fool and the Ways of a Wise Person (12 July)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 12:15-16

"The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise. A fool's wrath is presently known: but a prudent man covereth shame."

Proverbs 1:7 says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction." In that verse, Solomon said that the fool is the opposite of the one that fears the Lord and that loves godly knowledge. Godly knowledge causes a person to be perceptive, to have discernment, and to possess godly wisdom and understanding. Therefore, the kind of person that Solomon called a fool is the individual that does not have any part in the Lord and that also does not want any part in Him. Unfortunately, many people fall into that group.

Sometimes a person with much secular education will consider the ways of the Lord to be for those of lesser intelligence. Sometimes a person of measureable wealth will believe that the ways of the Lord are for those of lesser wealth. There are many reasons why one might frown upon coming to the Lord by faith or might look down upon the idea of living for Him. But the wisest person of his times said that such people are fools. According to him, they believe in their own eyes that they are wise and that what they are doing is right. But they are wrong. The path that leads to separation from the Lord and leads to eternal condemnation is definitely not the path of the wise. By contrast, Solomon said that those people that are wise will listen to good godly counsel and respond accordingly. When the counsel is to come to the Lord by faith, they do so. When it is to order one's life according to biblical principles, they do that too. When it is to stay away from the wrong paths in life, they follow that counsel as well rather than simply following their passions for the moment.

Therefore, the fool's wrath or anger is usually quickly on display. Solomon said that they do not control their temper very well or what they say. Their words often fly recklessly off their lips without any forethought. By contrast, prudent or wise people are usually much more under control when it comes to dealing with life's difficulties. They are much less likely to show their anger or to verbally fly off the handle. Thus, Solomon's observation was that the wise are much more at peace with themselves and with their emotions than are those not in the Lord.

The Law of the Wise Leads to Life and from Death (13 July)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 13:14-15

"The law of the wise is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death. Good understanding giveth favour: but the way of transgressors is hard."

Whenever Solomon talked about the wise, he was always talking about people that have come to the Lord by faith, that have committed themselves to Him, that are trusting in Him, and that have entered into a personal relationship with Him. One can know that for sure in two different ways. First, the Hebrew word that he used for "wise" means to be shrewd, prudent, ethically wise, or religiously wise. Second, he would never call someone wise if that person was bound for an eternity separated from the Lord. There is nothing wise about dying lost. So in the above passage, Solomon said that the law of the wise person is a fountain of life where the law of the wise refers to the individual's lifestyle.

Thus, one can understand his words in both an earthly temporal context and also in a heavenly eternal context. The temporal rendering is based upon the fact that people who are committed to the Lord will avoid many of the lifestyle behaviors that can shorten one's life. For example, those that are living for the Lord will probably not be abusive consumers of alcoholic beverages. They will probably not dabble in illegal drugs. They will probably have a good dietary regimen. They will probably handle themselves responsibly in most or all situations. So the results are that their lifestyle will lead to longer life because they will not be slowly killing themselves by how they live. The eternal rendering is based upon the fact that an eternity with the Lord is eternal life. So smart godly living leads from an early death in this existence as well as from eternal death in the next.

Solomon concluded the above passage by saying that good understanding leads to good favor but that the way of transgressors is hard. Good understanding only comes from the Lord and anything that comes from Him must be good. James 1:17 says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights...." By contrast, those people that have not come to the Lord by faith are still in their sin. So they are the transgressors mentioned above. Their way is difficult mainly because they make it hard on themselves by rejecting the law of the wise. Thus, their solution is to come to the Lord by faith.

The Simple, Prudent, Evil, Wicked, Poor, and Rich (14 July)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 14:18-20

"The simple inherit folly: but the prudent are crowned with knowledge. The evil bow before the good; and the wicked at the gates of the righteous. The poor is hated even of his own neighbour: but the rich hath many friends."

In the above passage, Solomon continued his discussion of the ungodly and of the godly by comparing the simpleton to the prudent, the evil to the good, and the wicked to the righteous, respectively. He previously said in Proverbs 14:15-16, "The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going. A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil: but the fool rageth, and is confident." One may recall from that earlier discussion that he considered being simple, being foolish, or being wicked to be character traits of the ungodly but being prudent and being wise to be character traits of the godly. To that one can add being evil to the traits of the ungodly and being good or being righteous to the traits of the godly. Therefore, his metaphors for those two general types of people clearly express how he viewed both groups.

He said that the simpleton inherits folly or foolishness. He said that the prudent are surrounded by knowledge. Those statements should not be surprising since the beginning of knowledge is to fear or to reverence the Lord. When one comes to the Lord by faith, the first seeds of wisdom and knowledge are planted. But when one does not come to Him, those seeds are not planted. Solomon next said that the evil will bow before the good and that the wicked will be at the gates of the righteous. Those two statements are not difficult to understand either. In this life, the evil and the wicked often have a respect for the godly even when they do not understand why. In eternity, the evil and the wicked will be forever separated from the good and the righteous. Therefore, while the latter two will go to be forever with the Lord, the former two will be forever doomed and condemned.

In the final part of the above passage, Solomon spoke about the poor and the rich. He said that the poor are hated and that the rich have many friends. However, while the poor may be hated because they are poor, the rich do not have so many friends as one might think. Their fair weather friends will soon be gone when the money is gone. The prodigal son had learned that firsthand from his experience.

Things Better Compared to Things not Better (15 July)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 15:16-18

"Better is little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith. Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith. A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife."

In the above passage, Solomon said that it is better to not have very much and be saved than it is to have a lot and not be saved. Most people with average or below average wealth probably wish sometimes that they could have a lot more money because then they could have a lot more things. The perception usually is that money can solve a lot of one's problems and also make the person's life much better. But the reality is that with much success and with much prosperity often comes much trouble. Many times, money actually creates problems for people instead of helping them. That is especially true in today's culture. One often hears about highly paid athletes or famous celebrities that have become addicted to illegal drugs, to legally prescribed painkillers, or to alcohol. One many times hears about high class crime within the government or within the workplace simply because already wealthy people love money and are addicted to becoming even wealthier. Solomon also said that it is better to not have any meat to eat than it is to have plenty of meat in a hateful environment.

Thus, eating meat which is another evidence of one having done well in this life is usually very desirable to most people. But many times, those people that have acquired that wealth and that success are also very miserable. Their interpersonal relationships are often in turmoil and they may not even be able to maintain any good relationships with others. In fact, Solomon said that their whole life may actually be full of strife and trouble. Therefore, in stark contrast to having those remnants of wealth and of prosperity, he said that it is better to be addicted to the things of the Lord than to anything else. A person that fears or reveres the Lord will come to Him by faith. He or she will commit to Him, will trust in Him, and will enter into a personal relationship with Him. Then he or she will also learn that there is nothing in this world any better than that. To personally know the Lord means that the individual's life will be under constant divine care. It also means that he or she will go to forever be with Him on the other side of the grave.

Having the Right Kind of Pride and Seeking the Lord (16 July)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 16:18-19

"Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall. Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud."

Solomon said above that pride goes before destruction and that a haughty spirit precedes a fall. However, one should understand that there are two different kinds of pride and that one of them does not lead to destruction. People can and should take pride in the quality of their work. If they are paid to perform a service, then they should always do their best to satisfy the requirements of that service. People should take a certain amount of pride in their appearance. By that, they should try to dress appropriately according to the occasion and they should also practice good hygiene. People should take pride in the care of their property so that it does not deteriorate and become an eyesore. All of those are positive forms of pride. But the kind of negative pride that Solomon warned against is the boastful pride that makes one believe that he or she is better than everyone else. From a biblical perspective, no one is better than anyone else. Every person is a sinner. Every person is born spiritually separated from God. In addition, every person will someday die eternally lost unless he or she humbles self and comes to the Lord by faith in the right spirit and with the right attitude.

The second part of Solomon's above statement provides the key to understanding the wrong kind of pride. He said that a haughty spirit goes before a fall. The Hebrew word that he used for "haughty" means to be exalted or to see self as better than others. So the negative pride about which he spoke also goes right along with a haughty spirit. They go together, and he said that they will fall together. In the second part of the above passage, he next said that a humble spirit is better than having much and being a part of the negative, boastful crowd. Most people like to feel like they belong. Many of them like to feel that they are accepted and popular. But one should be careful about his or her associations. The Lord receives the humble but resists the proud. Psalm 40:4 says, "Blessed is that man that maketh the LORD his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies." Proverbs 29:23 says, "A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit." So seek the Lord. Have the right kind of pride. Forsake the wrong kind of pride. Then above all else, be humble.

Justifying the Evil, Condemning the Just, and Friends (17 July)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 17:15-17

"He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the LORD. Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it? A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity."

Solomon indicated above that justifying wicked people and that condemning just people are disgusting attitudes and behaviors to the Lord. They will not prevail when people stand before Him in eternal judgment. So they should not prevail in this existence among human beings. However, they unfortunately happen all of the time. Those people with money and with influence are often declared just of even the vilest acts. At the same time, though, those people that are economically poor and have no influence are often quickly condemned in the eyes of the world. One might question why such injustices occur, and the answer is probably not too difficult to understand. Those people that have not come to the Lord by faith and that are not in a personal relationship with Him are blinded to the evils of sin. Also because their perspective of this life tends to be only for the here and now, they usually are not too concerned about the judgment that will occur on the other side of the grave. However, they need to understand that there will be an eternal judgment after death whether they choose to acknowledge it or not.

Solomon next said that foolish people have no desire to acquire godly wisdom. Like above, the reason for that is also not too difficult to see. Psalm 111:10 says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever." The Hebrew word that was used for "fool" in the above passage means to be a simpleton, to be dumb, or to be stupid. So such a person will not come to the Lord for salvation and for godly wisdom because doing so seems dumb to the dumb person and stupid to the simpleton or to the stupid person. But those people are wrong. Coming to the Lord by faith will turn any life into what the Lord wants it to be. It will give birth in the person's life to the wisdom and the understanding that are from above. It will guide him or her into the right paths of life. It will also give him or her a body of friends and acquaintances that will stand by the person through thick and thin. So there are no downsides to coming to the Lord by faith.

Hearing the Whole Matter and the Weak Spirit of Man (18 July)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 18:13-14

"He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him. The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?"

The Apostle Peter wrote that a follower of Christ should always be ready to give an answer to another individual concerning his or her hope in the Lord. I Peter 3:15-16 says, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ." Thus, what Peter wrote in the above verses is a true saying. People that have come to the Lord by faith, that are committed to Him, that are trusting in Him, and that are in a personal relationship with Him should be able to express their hope and their beliefs in Him. They should also have a desire to do so because their testimony might have a very positive effect on someone else. However, what Peter wrote is different than what Solomon said above. Solomon was referring to the person that responds to a particular matter before he or she has even heard the matter.

He said that to do such a thing makes the person look very foolish and that that kind of behavior brings shame to the hasty speaker. After that, he next said that the person's spirit will sustain his or her sickness but that a wounded spirit cannot easily be lifted up. Those words mean that every person has a measure of internal strength with which to withstand the trials and the difficulties of life. But when his or her strength has been weakened by sin, then the person will not be able to pull himself or herself back up. During such times, the person's only recourse is to turn to the Lord in humility and in faith. James 4:10 says, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." A very low point in Peter's life was immediately after he denied Jesus three times. But after he turned back to the Lord, his spirit was once again lifted up and he became a giant of the Faith. From that moment of deep despair, he preached a very powerful sermon during the Feast of Pentecost in which many people were saved. He also became the leader of the Jerusalem church, and he was ultimately martyred for his faith in Christ.

Danger in Slothfulness, Keeping one's Soul, and Sharing (19 July)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 19:15-17

"Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep; and an idle soul shall suffer hunger. He that keepeth the commandment keepeth his own soul; but he that despiseth his ways shall die. He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again."

Solomon often spoke very negatively about slothful or lazy people. He said on one occasion that they are so lazy that they struggle just to roll over in bed. He said on another occasion that they will not even prepare their own food to eat. He said on still another occasion that they will not work. Lastly he said that they will not even take care of their property because it requires so much work. Thus, he always viewed laziness as a very bad human trait. In the above passage, he added one more extreme negative to that of being lazy. He compared slothfulness to being in a deep sleep. That first of all implies missed opportunities in life. Lazy people suffer from hunger because they are asleep to their need for nourishment.

But second, it also implies missed spiritual opportunity. A slothful person that is asleep and figuratively dead to the world will likely not come to the Lord by faith and be saved. While coming to Him does not take that much energy or effort, it does require a person to be somewhat awake to his or her need for forgiveness and salvation. Solomon added to the evils of laziness by next saying that the person that keeps the commandments keeps his or her soul. That obviously means that those that do not keep the commandments also do not keep their soul. Thus, like the lazy person that will not expend the energy or the effort to come to the Lord by faith, the ungodly will die lost, too, and be forever separated from God. Matthew 22:36-38 says, "Master, which is the great commandment...Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment." So while many people might not realize it, they need the Lord. However, He never turns anyone away that comes to Him by faith in the right spirit and right attitude.

Solomon concluded the above passage by encouraging those people that truly love the Lord to be generous to those people that are less fortunate financially. That simply means to be thankful for one's life and to show it by being charitable.

Seek Godly Advice Only and Stay from Flatterers (20 July)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 20:18-19

"Every purpose is established by counsel: and with good advice make war. He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips."

Solomon spoke a few times about the value of good counsel. But one should note that by good counsel he always meant godly counsel. Even though an ungodly counselor might mean well, he or she at best can only offer advice based upon his or her own short timeframe of reference. To a counselor that does not have eternity and godly living in view, good counsel might suggest that a young man sow all his wild oats before settling down. To such a counselor, good counsel might be for the young couple to pursue their immoral relationship just to make sure about each other before making a lifetime commitment. To a counselor that does not truly love the Lord, good counsel might say to attack when it is not prudent and to not attack when the enemy is vulnerable. Over time plenty of people have gotten themselves into plenty of trouble by taking those kinds of advice. Plus they have gotten themselves on the wrong track with the Lord.

In reading the above statements, however, one might question whether or not godly counsel can do all that much better. The answer is that it can. Proverbs 7:4-5 says, "Say unto wisdom, Thou art my sister; and call understanding thy kinswoman: That they may keep thee from the strange woman, from the stranger which flattereth with her words." I Thessalonians 4:3-6 says, "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour...." I Kings 22:5 says, "And Jehoshaphat said unto the king of Israel, Enquire, I pray thee, at the word of the LORD to day." Thus, King Jehoshaphat of Judah would not even go into battle against his enemies until after he had first heard from a prophet of God. Thus, no one has ever gotten into trouble with the Lord by consistently doing things His way.

Speaking of godly advice, Solomon advised people to be careful around those individuals that cannot or will not keep a secret. They flatter with their lips to engage in private conversations. Then they spread everywhere all that they hear.

Pleasure Leads to Poverty and the Wicked End Badly (21 July)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 21:17-18

"He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man: he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich. The wicked shall be a ransom for the righteous, and the transgressor for the upright."

In the above passage, one should note that Solomon was not saying that a person cannot enjoy pleasurable things and events in life. That would be ridiculous. Instead what he was saying is that enjoying pleasurable things and events at the expense of everything else will cause people to go broke trying to entertain themselves. One can know for sure that his words did not mean the elimination of all pleasure by what he said in another of his works. Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven...A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance...." So unless he meant that a person should laugh and dance without having a good time, one must conclude that he was actually talking about seeking pleasure to an extreme. But that is true of many things in life. Proverbs 23:21 says, "For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags." So extreme eating will cause one to go broke, too. Next he said that loving wine and loving oil will also keep a person from being rich.

But once again, he was only talking about loving those things to an extreme at the expense of everything else. Next he said that the wicked will be a ransom for the righteous and that the sinner will be a ransom for the upright. The Hebrew word used for "ransom" means the price of a life. Thus, sometimes the Lord brings upon the wicked those evils that they had intended for the righteous. For example, when Esther had been queen, a man named Haman had wanted to destroy all of the Jewish people. But in the end, he was hanged on his own gallows and the Jewish people were spared. When Daniel had been in Babylonian captivity with the Jewish people, some jealous Medes and Persian leaders had wanted to get rid of him. So they had come up with a scheme to have him thrown into a lion's den. But in the end, they were the ones thrown into that den and eaten alive while he went free. Such occurrences are not by coincidence. They are divinely ordered by the Lord as He cares for His people. Proverbs 11:8 says, "The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in his stead."

Oppressing the Poor and Listening to the Wise (22 July)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 22:16-17

"He that oppresseth the poor to increase his riches, and he that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want. Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply thine heart unto my knowledge."

Solomon wrote above that the person that cheats or oppresses poor people to give to the rich will someday themselves come to want. The reason that someone would do something like that is to impress a rich person for his or her own selfish purposes. But it is wrong to cheat others for personal gain. It is also wrong to try to impress or to buy off a rich person just to enhance one's reputation. That kind of behavior is not right, and Solomon said that it would not go unpunished. One should note, however, that he often spoke in general principles rather than in spiritual absolutes. That means that poor people will often be cheated in this life. They also will not have any recourse but to accept it. It also means that favors are still purchased at high levels in society and again there does not seem to be any recourse for people at the lower levels of society that are victimized. However, what many might seem to get away with in this life will not be overlooked on the other side of the grave.

When each person stands before the Lord in judgment, the proper sentences will be handed down, and no one will be buying off anyone. Hebrews 9:27-28 says, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment...." Solomon concluded the above passage by advising his listeners to hear the words of the wise and to apply their hearts to his knowledge. By hearing the words of the wise, the young person will acquire the godly wisdom that comes from seeking the Lord with all of his or her heart. One can know that for sure because Solomon would never call anyone wise that will someday die lost. So the conclusion is that the words of a wise person will by default have to point others to the Lord. Psalm 111:10 says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever." Proverbs 1:7 says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction." So once someone has godly wisdom, godly understanding, and godly knowledge at work in his or her life, he or she will always walk in the right paths and bring glory to the Lord.

Be Not among Winebibbers or Riotous Eaters of Flesh (23 July)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 23:20-21

"Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags."

According to Solomon in the above passage, a person should maintain self-control in the areas of alcoholic consumption and overeating. Concerning the first case, some people would understand his advice to mean that one should totally refrain from drinking all alcoholic beverages. But while that may not be a bad idea in general, the two Hebrew words that he used for "winebibber" do not support that view. The first Hebrew word refers to intoxicating wine or to banquet wine. The second Hebrew word means to make oneself into a drunkard. So his advice was definitely to not drink so much wine that one would become drunk. However, it may not have been to refrain altogether. Wine was a common beverage when one attended a banquet. Many people during such occasions often became drunk and behaved very wildly. Therefore, Solomon's advice seems to have been to not over indulge in that environment of wild behavior and make oneself part of that crowd. At the same time, though, to not drink any wine during such occasions might have been considered improper social behavior and bad manners.

His second area of concern in the above passage pertained to being a riotous eater of flesh. That advice once again might have pertained to how one behaves in social events. A person would not want to make a scene at a banquet by eating too much or even by being boisterous while eating. However, after making that statement, Solomon extended his advice by saying that a person should never be a drunkard or a glutton. That means that a person should not be a drunkard or a glutton either socially or privately. Both behaviors indicate that the individual is not in control of his or her appetites. Solomon added that the person that drinks too much will come to poverty because he or she will spend too much money on intoxicating drink. But the person that eats too much will also come to poverty for the same reason. Being a drunkard or being a glutton is a one-way street that takes one's money away and leaves him or her either literally or figuratively in rags. So since no one wants to come to that point in life, the best advice that one can give is to never start. No person has ever been made into a worse servant for the Lord by staying away from alcoholic beverages or by not overeating.

Do Not Rejoice When thy Enemy Falls (24 July)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 24:17-20

"Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth: Lest the LORD see it, and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him. Fret not thyself because of evil men, neither be thou envious at the wicked; For there shall be no reward to the evil man; the candle of the wicked shall be put out."

Most people enjoy seeing the bad guys lose and the good guys come out on top. That is probably because most people see themselves as being good but as often victims to the not-so-good. However, Solomon cautioned about being too pleased when one's enemy falls. He may have offered that thought, though, for at least two reasons. The first is that the Scriptures teach that no one is good. Romans 3:10-11 says, "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God." That being the case, the person that might rejoice over his or her enemy falling is no better in the Lord's eyes than his or her enemy.

The second reason is that people should pray for their enemies because the Lord can change the heart of even the vilest person. The ideal purpose of a person's life is to serve the Lord. The ideal way to do that is by bringing others to Him. It should never be about being enemies with anyone. God's people should be both peaceable and peace seekers. Romans 12:17-18 says, "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." So, godly people should focus more on cleaning up their own lives than on trying to clean up everyone else.

In fact, Solomon next said that godly people should not fret or ever be envious of evil, wicked people. It is easy to see an ungodly person prosper in this life and then let oneself become a little jealous. But a person that has sought the Lord and is following Him should never be so easily sidetracked. For the ungodly person, the best heaven that he or she will ever experience is in this life. But for the godly person regardless of how good or how bad this life might be, the best is still yet to come. Life eternal with the Lord will far surpass anything either good or bad that one might experience in this life.

Smoothing out Anger and the Risks of Overeating (25 July)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 25:15-16

"By long forbearing is a prince persuaded, and a soft tongue breaketh the bone. Hast thou found honey? eat so much as is sufficient for thee, lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it."

In the first part of the above passage, Solomon spoke about the best way to handle an angry person and to keep a potentially ugly situation from becoming uglier. By long forbearing, he meant that one person should be willing to suffer hurt and possibly even loss to find a peaceful solution to the conflict. Then, if that person will also combine his or her positive attitude with a positive verbal response, the whole situation can usually be diffused without further conflict. Those two very positive ways to deal with difficult problems are the exact opposite of getting into a shouting match with someone and starting to swing fists. When things escalate to that point, then no one ever wins. Sometimes people get killed. Sometimes they get injured. Sometimes hard feelings are born that never die. So the positive solution that leads to peace among all parties is always the better.

In the second part of the above passage, Solomon addressed the very common problem of gluttony. He said that when people overeat that it can cause them to become nauseated and vomit what they have eaten. But it can actually do much worse than making them sick one time. It can cause them to become overweight and unhealthy. It can lead to such diseases as diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, and many other illnesses. Then if their health does not get to them, the loss to their pocket book probably will. On another occasion, Solomon said in Proverbs 23:21, "For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags." Proverbs 30:7-9 says, "Two things have I required of thee; deny me them not before I die: Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain."

In eating, the ideal for any person is to eat food that is convenient. By convenient food, though, Solomon was not talking about that food which is close at hand. He was talking about properly regulated portions based upon a person's dietary needs.

Slothful People are Unproductive and They Die Lost (26 July)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 26:14-15

"As the door turneth upon his hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed. The slothful hideth his hand in his bosom; it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth."

In the preceding verse, Solomon indicated that a lazy person will even say that there is a lion in the way or in the streets when there is not just to avoid having to do anything. By saying that a lazy person will tell such an outrageous lie, he showed just how lowly he viewed such people. At other times, he made similar negative comments about them. Proverbs 12:24 says, "The hand of the diligent shall bear rule: but the slothful shall be under tribute." Proverbs 12:27 says, "The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting: but the substance of a diligent man is precious." Proverbs 15:19 says, "The way of the slothful man is as an hedge of thorns: but the way of the righteous is made plain." So just in those three verses alone, he said that a lazy person will always be treated like a slave, that he or she will not even prepare their own food, and that his or her way will always be full of troubles and difficulties. In the above passage, he then continued his negative tirade by using the analogy of a door to indicate that a lazy person will not even want to get out of bed.

If one turns a door on its hinges, the door flips from one side to the other. But it is still on its hinges. So according to Solomon, the same is true for slothful people. They might turn themselves upon their bed. But they are still on their bed. In the second part of the above passage, he next said that slothful people will hide their hand inside their garment and then not want to exert the energy to remove it. One should surely recognize that being that lazy is pathetic. However, even more than being pathetic it is also sinful. The reason is because every person that has ever been born or that will ever be born has an ideal life that the Lord desires for him or her. The first step of that life is for the person to seek Him with all of his or her heart, to commit to Him, to trust in Him, and to enter into a personal relationship with Him. However, if a slothful person is too lazy to even do any of those things mentioned above, then he or she will also be too lazy to come to the Lord by faith. He or she will remain lost in their sin. He or she will then die lost when their life is over, and all because they were too lazy to ever come to the Lord to be saved.

A Continual Dropping and a Contentious Woman (27 July)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 27:15-16

"A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike. Whosoever hideth her hideth the wind, and the ointment of his right hand, which bewrayeth itself."

Life can be very difficult when one must be constantly putting up with difficult people. An employer or a supervisor can potentially make life very unpleasant for his or her employees. A neighbor can potentially make life very unpleasant for the other neighbors in the area. But Solomon several times said that a difficult or a contentious woman is worse than either of those. Of course, in saying those things, he was always referring to a man's wife rather than to just any difficult woman. Proverbs 21:19 says, "It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman." Proverbs 19:13 says, "...the contentions of a wife are a continual dropping." In that last verse as well as in the above passage, he said that she is comparable to a totally washed out rainy day. That is what it means to be a continual dropping.

In the second part of the above passage, he said that it is pointless to try to hide the fact of a difficult wife. He compared trying to do so to trying to hide the wind. The wind blows wherever it will. No human being can control it much less hide it. After a severe storm, the evidences of high winds are usually everywhere around. Similarly the evidences of a difficult wife are also everywhere around. Solomon also compared trying to hide her to having perfume in one's hand. The evidence of smell quickly gives it away.

To be fair, though, he would have probably agreed that a contentious husband is just as bad as a contentious wife. But in that culture, a difficult husband would have been considered much more acceptable. Thus, the unstated but simple conclusion is that spouses should always be kind to one another and also very loving of each other. Successful marriages require husband and wife working together to build a harmonious home for the Lord. The wife should not make life difficult for her husband. The husband should not make life difficult for his wife. Together they should submit themselves to the Lord and to His leadership. Ephesians 5:17-21, "...Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God."

A Wicked Ruler and the Oppressive Prince (28 July)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 28:15-16

"As a roaring lion, and a ranging bear; so is a wicked ruler over the poor people. The prince that wanteth understanding is also a great oppressor: but he that hateth covetousness shall prolong his days."

To begin the above passage, Solomon used a word picture to describe a wicked ruler over the poor people. If one were wandering through the forest or in the jungle, he or she would not want to encounter either a roaring lion that is hungry or a charging bear that is hungry. Either situation would likely result in the person's tragic and gruesome death. However, that is exactly to what Solomon compared a wicked ruler over the poor people. One should note, though, that his use of the word "poor" does not limit itself to economic status. In fact, the Hebrew word that he used for "poor" means anyone that is weak, lowly, or destitute. Such people are the most vulnerable in any grouping or within any society. They can also be the most disliked. The Hebrew word that he used for "wicked" means to be hostile towards God. Therefore, Solomon compared being under the leadership of an ungodly, wicked ruler to being unprotected in the presence of a hungry lion or a hungry bear.

On another occasion he said in Proverbs 29:2, "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn." Those words actually closely parallel the second part of the above passage. In that, he said that the prince that "wanteth" understanding is a great oppressor but that the person that hates greed and unjust gain will prolong his or her days. So once again, he was contrasting the ways of godly, righteous rulers with the ways of ungodly, unrighteous rulers. But he was not saying that the ungodly rulers want understanding. He was actually saying that they lack godly understanding. The Hebrew word that he used for "wanteth" means to be in want of or to be lacking something rather than to actually want it. That being the case, the kinds of rulers that lack understanding will be the opposite of the godly rulers that hate covetousness. They will be much more oppressive in their efforts to gain more personal wealth. So they will be more like the wicked rulers above that cause the people to mourn. However, the godly rulers will hate covetousness and not be so oppressive. So the result is that the people will rejoice when they reign.

General Principles about Training Children (29 July)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 29:15-16

"The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame. When the wicked are multiplied, transgression increaseth: but the righteous shall see their fall."

It has already been pointed out numerous times that Solomon often spoke in general principles rather than in spiritual absolutes. What that basically means is that a person that drinks alcoholic beverages to excess, that maintains an unhealthy diet, that uses illegal drugs, or that embarks on any other risky lifestyle behaviors will in general substantially shorten his or her life. However, one could never say that that will always happen in every single case. Some people have smoked tobacco products well into their eighties and nineties. Some very obese people have lived well beyond what most nutritionists would have predicted. Many individuals have also used illegal drugs without immediately dying. So while the general principle is still very much true, it does not always translate immediately into truth. In fact, one can also see that in the above passage.

In the first instance, he said that the rod and reproof give wisdom but that children not given proper supervision in the home bring shame to their parents. His words are true in almost every case. Children do need to be guided during their youth by godly parents that try to teach them about the Lord and about how to live for Him. In fact, another of Solomon's general principles is that that kind of training will have lasting benefits. Proverbs 22:6 says, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." But while such principles are generally true, none of them are absolutely true. Sometimes a child that has been given properly training at home will still go wrong. But sometimes a child that has grown up under some of the worst circumstances imaginable will turn out well, have a successful life, and live faithfully for the Lord.

The next part of the above passage also teaches a principle that is not true in every case. He said that evil rises when the wicked are multiplied. That part probably is absolutely true. But the part that is only true in general is that the righteous will see them fall. Godly, righteous people rarely see the ungodly fall in this life. But in the final judgment, they absolutely will see that. But then it is too late.

A Unique Generation and the Cries of the Horse Leach (30 July)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 30:14-16

"There is a generation, whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men. The horseleach hath two daughters, crying, Give, give. There are three things that are never satisfied, yea, four things say not, It is enough: The grave; and the barren womb; the earth that is not filled with water; and the fire that saith not, It is enough."

Solomon wrote about the people of a generation that curse their parents, that see themselves as being pure, and that are lifted up in their own eyes. He concluded by saying that the people of that generation have teeth as swords and jaw teeth as knives. In making those different remarks, though, he was not trying to say anything nice about those people. He also was not limiting his remarks to just any single generation. Instead he was talking about all people that have ever lived or that will ever live. In every generation and in every age of mankind, there have always been people like those described above. In fact, the Scriptures even teach that all people are sinners and that they are all born separated from the Lord.

Many people may not be comfortable knowing that they are born into this life separated from God. But they are anyway because of the sin of Adam. Romans 5:19 says, "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." In that verse, the one man's disobedience refers to the sin of Adam in the Garden of Eden. By his own free will he chose to disobey the Lord's commandment. That brought spiritual separation and physical separation from God. By contrast, the obedience of one man in the above verse refers to the obedience of Jesus who willingly died on the cross for the sin of the world. By His sacrificial death on the cross, a person can come to Him by faith in the right spirit and with the right attitude and be saved.

Solomon next spoke about the two horse leaches that are never satisfied. They constantly say to give more. At the same time, three things are never satisfied and four never get enough. The grave is never satisfied means that people will always die. The barren womb is never satisfied because it desires to bring a child into the world. The earth that needs water and the consuming fire also never gets enough.

The Virtuous Woman Takes Care of her Family (31 July)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 31:10-15

"Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens."

In the above passage, the author asked who can find a virtuous woman. Then he proceeded to describe the behavior and the attitude of one. The Hebrew word used for "virtuous" means wealth, virtue, or strength. So in general her first positive trait is that her husband can trust her and have confidence in her whatever the situation. Because she is a prudent person, he knows that he does not have to worry about how she will handle herself in any given situation. Proverbs 19:14 says, "House and riches are the inheritance of fathers: and a prudent wife is from the LORD." He also does not have to question her loyalty to him. Because of that, he feels the same loyalty towards her.

Concerning some of her more specific qualities, she is someone that always does good things on her husband's behalf. Consequently in his eyes she has great value even far above that of rubies. In comparing such a woman to the culture of those days, she seeks wool and flax. She is industrious and hard working. She brings food to her family. She rises up early in the morning so that she can care of her household. She does whatever is necessary to look after her family. She has a never ending commitment and devotion to them. Thus, Proverbs 18:22 says, "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD."

But she also looks to the spiritual needs of her children. Nothing in this life is more important than living for the Lord and than being in a personal relationship with Him. So she teaches them those spiritual truths so that their lives will go well. Bathsheba had probably been that kind of godly mother to Solomon. This thirty-first chapter in the book of Proverbs probably proves that. In addition, Eunice had also been a godly mother to Timothy. Therefore, a virtuous, godly woman is a true blessing to her husband and to her children.

Those that Have Refused Godly Wisdom (01 August)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 1:24-27

"Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you."

Solomon always encouraged people to seek godly wisdom. One should note, however, that he was not talking about the worldly wisdom that says to seek money, success, and wealth above all else. He was talking about the kind of wisdom that only God gives and even then only to those that ask for it. James 1:5-7 say, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord." So the wisdom that God gives to those people that have come to Him by faith must be asked for in absolute, unwavering faith. The Greek word used for "faith" means to ground one's whole believe system in the Lord and to also put one's total hope in Him.

So to receive godly wisdom, a person cannot have one foot planted in the things of the Lord and the other foot planted in the things of the world. Godly wisdom demands a total godly commitment. For that reason, many people simply walk away. But they do so at their own peril. Jesus spoke to a man about eternal life, and that man walked away because he was not willing to do what Jesus had required of him. Matthew 19:21-22 says, "Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions." The man did not find eternal life because his money had owned him rather than him owning his money. In the above passage, godly wisdom tries to draw people to itself. But like the young man with Jesus, they often just walk away. However, that was not and is not the end of the matter. To those individuals that refuse the Lord's invitation to godly wisdom, they will ultimately be ruined and even destroyed.

Godliness Must Be Bred into Young Children (02 August)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 2:18

"For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead."

Godly wisdom will lead the young person from the two major pits in life. It will first lead him or her away from evil people. Proverbs 2:10-17 says, "When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee: To deliver thee from the way of the evil man, from the man that speaketh froward things; Who leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness; Who rejoice to do evil, and delight in the frowardness of the wicked; Whose ways are crooked, and they froward in their paths...." When one considers Solomon's above description of an evil person, it is important to recognize that such a person always chooses to do evil. Speaking perversely and walking in darkness are always personal choices.

So just like coming to the Lord by faith is a personal choice, so is walking away from the Lord and pursuing the wrong kind of life. It is for that reason that Solomon shared his advice with his probably very young children so that they would learn to make the right choices in life before they ever had the opportunity to make the wrong choices. The lesson from that is that good parenting begins while the very young child is still in the crib and that it continues until the child is grown. Even then, it probably continues well into adulthood. Thus, the point is that godly children do not usually just happen by accident. They must be trained.

Next, Solomon said that godly wisdom will lead the young person away from immoral people. Proverbs 2:10-17, "When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee...To deliver thee from the strange woman...." In both of the above passages, Solomon used gender specific terms. But the reality is that young women can get into trouble just like young men. They can hang around with the wrong kind of people just like the guys. So Solomon said that the house of the strange woman leads to death. But in the current culture, an immoral, ungodly lifestyle does not discriminate by gender. It can lead to physical death. It can also lead to spiritual death. It is for that reason, too, that children need to be taught early in life so that they will not mess up their lives and then die lost.

About Sudden Fear and the Desolation of the Wicked (03 August)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 3:25-26

"Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh. For the LORD shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken."

The above passage is especially important to those people that have come to the Lord by faith. There are many things in this life that can be truly frightening. Natural disasters like earthquakes, tornados, hurricanes, and other bad storms can be scary because they can do a lot personal and structural damage. Evil people can be frightening because they can hurt and destroy other people. Unnatural disasters like house fires and other things that can destroy one's property can be frightening. Wars can be frightening. Wild animals can be frightening. Death and even the thoughts of death can be frightening. Thus, there are many things in this life that can truly scare someone if he or she allows. But Solomon said above that a person does not have to be afraid of those frightening experiences that can suddenly come upon someone.

He also said that godly people do not have to be afraid of the desolation of the wicked when it comes. One should note, though, that the King James Version translators used the wording desolation "of" the wicked. However, those words could mean to not be afraid of the desolation "of" the wicked or they could mean to not be afraid of the desolation "by" the wicked. While the translators had chosen the word "of," the word "by" works equally well. That means that a godly person does not have to fear all of the bad things that wicked people can do to them. That is the desolation "by" the wicked. But it also means that a godly person does not have to fear that day when the wicked will be brought to ruin. That will be the desolation "of" the wicked. The Great Tribulation described in the book of Revelation is an example of the desolation "of" the wicked. However, godly people will not have to fear that because they will not be there.

So in all of life's experiences that can cause someone to be suddenly frightened including the desolation "by" and "of" the wicked, godly people do not have to be afraid. Solomon said that the Lord will be their confidence and their protector. Thus, Psalm 55:22 says, "...he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved."

Mentoring and the Paths of the Just and the Wicked (04 August)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 4:18-19

"But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble."

People sometimes in life have mentors. That is especially true in the professional world but also in many other instances, too. A mentor is someone that is usually much older than the person being mentored. He or she will usually have much more experience in the vocation where the mentoring is being done. If he had been asked, Solomon would have probably said that new converts to the Lord should be mentored. When young people come to the Lord and while they are still quite young in Him, it can be very helpful if an older saint can be his or her mentor. The Apostle Peter wrote that young Christians are not able to understand many aspects of Christian living. They may not understand the indwelling of the Holy Spirit or how He leads in a godly person's life. Therefore, they must be taught what Peter had called the sincere milk of the Word. I Peter 2:1-3 says, "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious."

Part of mentoring for young followers of Christ is to be observant. Solomon said to look at the lifestyles of other godly people. Their lives will or at least should look different than those of ungodly people. He said that the path of the just is as a shining light that becomes even shinier as the person approaches spiritual maturity. By contrast, he said that the way of the wicked is darkness. Because they walk in darkness, they often stumble because they figuratively cannot see where they are going. Therefore, young converts to Christ should look to the example of older converts in Christ. Older Christian men should teach younger Christian men. Older Christian women should teach younger Christian women. The whole purpose of that instruction should be to grow up young Christians so that they will know how to live lives that bring honor and glory to the Lord. Nothing should be more important to those people that have called upon Him than to live for Him. Thus, this life should not be about getting all that one can get for oneself. It should be about living for the Lord and about bringing others to Him.

Rejoice with One's Wife and Be a Godly Parent (05 August)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 5:16-19

"Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad, and rivers of waters in the streets. Let them be only thine own, and not strangers' with thee. Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love."

In the above passage, Solomon continued teaching young people about sexual purity. He advocated staying away from prostitution and embracing sex only in marriage. Thus, he was opposed to adultery. He used the expression to let the couple's fountains be dispersed abroad but to let them be one's own rather than those of strangers. That tricky phrase meant to have a lot of children but to only have them with one's spouse. Children born into a family of one man and of one woman both being married to each other are a blessing. But children born out of wedlock or to mates other than one's own are a disgrace and an embarrassment.

Solomon identified children as fountains. So he next said to let the children be blessed and for the two spouses to continue rejoicing in each other even after the effects of aging have taken over. He told the husband to always be ravished by his wife's beauty and to always be satisfied with her even as they grow old. The picture that he described was that of the ideal godly home. Father and mother both love the Lord and both serve Him. All of their children which are many follow their parent's example by also following the Lord. The husband and wife do not just remain together so long as both shall live. But they actually remain devoted to each other for as long as they both shall live. As a result, the children grow up in a godly, well-balanced, harmonious home. They will then rise up in their communities to live by the same standards that they learned in their home.

While many or most homes probably are not like that, Solomon showed in the above passage how any home can be. It starts with good godly parenting. It continues by parents that love each other and regularly demonstrate that love within their home. They create an atmosphere of mutual respect and always put the best of the other before their own. Life is usually what the person makes it. So Solomon showed in the above passage how to make one's home the best.

One Man for One Woman for One Lifetime is Bible (06 August)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 6:25-26

"Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids. For by means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread: and the adulteress will hunt for the precious life."

Solomon frequently advised young people and especially young men like in the above passage to guard themselves against sexual immorality. His words seemed to indicate that young men are even more prone to such behavior than young women. However, as long as babies are born out of wedlock and as long as married couples are choosing to not stay together, it would seem that all people need to be on guard against inappropriate sexual relations with other individuals.

The Bible is very clear when it teaches one man for one woman for one lifetime. In fact, the "one man for one woman" part comes from Genesis 2:24-25. Those verses say, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed." The "for one lifetime" part comes from the Sermon on the Mount when Jesus spoke against divorce except when one partner has been or is being unfaithful to the other. Matthew 5:31-32 says, "It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery."

So the Lord's plan rules out all forms of fornication and immorality. While some people might think that those kinds of rules take all of the fun out of this life, nothing could be less true. They actually keep the fun in life. Many times, lose living leads to serious consequences. It often causes diseases and sicknesses that take away from one's life rather than add to it. In addition, many people live like there will not be an afterlife. But the Bible again teaches that every person will stand before the Lord in judgment and give an account. That accounting would not happen if there were not an afterlife. So for those reasons, Solomon always encouraged people to seek godly wisdom and godly understanding. They will keep a person out of trouble in this life and prepare him or her for the afterlife.

Immoral People Lead Astray but God Leads Straight (07 August)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 7:19-21

"For the goodman is not at home, he is gone a long journey: He hath taken a bag of money with him, and will come home at the day appointed. With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him."

Solomon spoke in the preceding verses and in the above passage about the foolish young man that is drawn to the immoral woman. However, while he said that the woman had adorned herself as a harlot, the above verses actually suggest that she was either married or that she was living with another man. She told the foolish young man that the good man of the house was away on travel and that he would not be home until another day. The verse next says that she flattered him with her lips and that he yielded to her immoral desires.

Scenes like the one above play out in this world everyday. One should note, though, that it is not always the immoral woman trying to lead the foolish young man astray. Sometimes it is the immoral man trying to lead the foolish young woman astray. Sometimes, it is two immoral people trying to lead each other astray. In all three cases, however, that kind of behavior cannot find a biblical basis for support. Solomon opened the discussion by telling his son and other children to seek godly wisdom and to pursue godly understanding. Proverbs 7:4-5 says, "Say unto wisdom, Thou art my sister; and call understanding thy kinswoman: That they may keep thee from the strange woman, from the stranger which flattereth with her words." When one does that, then he or she will be led into the right paths of life.

While that may not be an absolute guarantee that all will go well in the person's life, it is a guarantee that it will help. Proverbs 22:6 says, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." It is also an almost near guarantee that the young person will eventually come back to the right path in life. So to be clear, one should understand that the right path is the godly path. It is the wise path. It is the path that is committed to the Lord, that is trusting in Him, and that is in a personal relationship with Him. Many people may not know about those things. But they can. The Lord receives every person that comes to Him by faith in the right spirit and with the right attitude.

Godly Wisdom is Eternal with no Beginning or End (08 August)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 8:23-26

"I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth: While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world."

In the above passage, Solomon personified godly wisdom by saying that she was from everlasting and that she existed even before the earth was created. Proverbs 3:19 says, "The LORD by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens." Some people might believe that the universe was formed by a scientific theory called the Big Bang theory. But under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Solomon in the above verses actually refuted that belief. When God told the Prophet Moses to lead the Jewish people out of Egypt, He told him that His name is I AM. Exodus 3:14 says, "And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." When Jesus later spoke to some of His Jewish critics, He also associated Himself with those same simple words of "I AM." John 8:57-58 says, "Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am."

The remarkable thing about those words, though, is that Abraham had lived about three thousand years before the Incarnation of Jesus. So Jesus was claiming to be much more than just a man of something less than fifty years of age. He was literally claiming to be God in the flesh and equal with God the heavenly Father. Those expressions of "I AM" in the Hebrew and the Greek languages both mean that God and Jesus describe themselves as self-existing. That means that they did not have a creator because they are the Creators. In fact, the Apostle Paul even wrote that Jesus is the Creator. So by Solomon indicating that godly wisdom is eternal, he basically took the role of creation out of the hands of the scientists. This world was not created by the chaotic spontaneous explosion of a single infinitely tiny mass to create the universe that people see when they look around. It was created in six days by God as He literally spoke everything into existence.

People Live Longer by Wisdom and Understanding (09 August)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 9:11

"For by me thy days shall be multiplied, and the years of thy life shall be increased."

If one is not careful, then he or she might misunderstand what Solomon meant in the above verse. He said earlier that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and that the knowledge of the holy is to have understanding. He then indicated above that by that wisdom and by that understanding a person's days will be multiplied and that his or her years shall be increased. Someone reading those words, though, might respond by correctly observing that many, many very good people have died quite young and that many, many very bad people have lived to be quite old. He or she might then point to the fifth commandment of the Ten Commandments because it also makes a similar promise concerning long life. Exodus 20:12 says, "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee."

So how can the writers of Scriptures under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit make such promises that seem to maybe not always be true? The answer is that those kinds of statements and their promises are expressing general principles rather than spiritual absolutes. That means that they are, in general, almost always true. But there may be one or two cases out of many cases where they may seem to be untrue. Despite those occasional cases, though, the general principles still apply.

Thus, people that order their lives by godly wisdom and by godly understanding will probably live longer because they will not kill themselves by their ungodly behavior. For example, people that are gluttonous may develop serious illnesses like diabetes or heart disease that can kill. People that consume too much in the form of alcoholic beverages may develop liver cancer and die as a result. Another possibility is that they may get behind the wheel of an automobile and then kill themselves by having an accident. People that engage in inappropriate sexual behavior may develop a sex-related disease and die. However, by contrast, those people that live by godly wisdom and by godly understanding are more likely to not be gluttonous, drunkards, or fornicators. So in just those few cases, they will most likely live longer because they do not engage in behaviors that tend to kill.

Three Misuses and Two Wise Uses of the Tongue (10 August)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 10:18-20

"He that hideth hatred with lying lips, and he that uttereth a slander, is a fool. In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise. The tongue of the just is as choice silver: the heart of the wicked is little worth."

In the above passage, Solomon spoke about two misuses of the tongue, about one wise use of the tongue, and about two observations of the heart that controls the tongue. Concerning the misuses, he first said that people that hide hatred with lying lips and that slander others are fools. In saying that, though, he used the Hebrew word for "fool" that means someone that is a simpleton, dumb, or just plain stupid. So that person is a "dumb fool." However, the reason that he called those people "dumb fools" is because they are dumb enough to actually think that the Lord does not know about their wicked tongue. But they are very much mistaken because He knows everything. The second misuse of the tongue cited above is those people that talk too much. According to Solomon, if someone talks long enough, then he or she will sooner or later speak unsavory, sinful words. By that, he implied that with much talk comes much sin. His third negative mention of the tongue was more of an observation than an actual misuse. Nevertheless, he said that heart that drives the tongue of the wicked person has very little worth.

So Solomon made three negative comments above about various misuses of the tongue. He also identified two positive, wise uses of the tongue. He first said that the person that refrains from talking too much is wise. Whenever he spoke about wise people, though, he was always talking about those individuals that are in a personal relationship with the Lord. That should be obvious because he would never call someone wise that is not positively involved with the Lord. Proverbs 15:24 says, "The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath." So according to him, wise people die saved and unwise people die lost. That is sad but still true. The second wise use of the tongue was also more of an observation than an actual use. He simply said that just people do not abuse or misuse their communication skills. Because they are just, they are in a personal relationship with the Lord. But because they are just, they also use the words and the expressions of godly people. Thus, being godly and being wise go together.

Righteousness to Life and Wickedness to Death (11 August)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 11:18-20

"The wicked worketh a deceitful work: but to him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward. As righteousness tendeth to life: so he that pursueth evil pursueth it to his own death. They that are of a froward heart are abomination to the LORD: but such as are upright in their way are his delight."

Solomon first said above that wicked people perform deceitful works and that righteous people will get a sure reward. He next said that righteousness tends to life and that evil tends to death. Finally he said that a perverse heart is an abomination or a wicked thing to the Lord but that the upright are his delight. In each of those three sayings, he was comparing godly people to ungodly people. The Hebrew word that he used for "wicked" means to be hostile towards God. That means that that person has not come to the Lord by faith. He or she has no regard for Him or for those that love and serve Him. Therefore, all that they do is a reflection of their wicked heart. In the second statement above, all that they do tends to death. That simply means that when their life in this existence is over that they will enter into eternal condemnation and suffering. Such a fate is truly tragic. But they will have done it to themselves by turning from the Lord's love for them and by choosing of their own free will to have a perverse, wicked heart.

Thus, it is important to understand that wicked people are wicked by choice. God reveals Himself to all people in various ways. He reveals Himself through His Creation. So a person can look at the trees and at the stars and at the sun and at the moon and at all of the other elements of Creation and acknowledge that He is the "Creator of Everything." He reveals Himself through the internal belief within all people that there must be some kind of Supreme Being. He reveals Himself through an internal void that causes all people to feel like something inside them is missing. So all that anyone must do is respond to Him in whatever way that He has revealed Himself. Then by committing to Him and by trusting in Him, one will enter into a personal relationship with Him. Whenever a wicked person has done those things, then he or she will be wicked no more. Then they will be listed among the righteous. They will discover that righteousness is a reward within itself. They will receive the sure reward of eternity with the Lord. Their ways will tend to life, and they will be a delight to their Creator.

No False Witnesses will be at the Final Judgment (12 August)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 12:17-18

"He that speaketh truth sheweth forth righteousness: but a false witness deceit. There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is health."

In the above passage, Solomon mentioned two contrasting aspects of the tongue. First, those people that speak the truth show forth righteousness while those that witness falsely show deceit. Second, the tongue of the evil pierces like a sword while the tongue of the wise is like having good health. In that regard, James the half-brother of Jesus described the tongue as a controlling member of one's body. He further said that it can cause a lot of damage. James 3:5-8 says, "Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." In that passage, James said that no man can tame the tongue. However, the Holy Spirit can and will for the person that comes to the Lord by faith.

As was just indicated, though, Solomon said that people that speak the truth show forth their righteousness. Because the second part of his expression referred to a false witness, the setting for his entire statement was that of a judge hearing a case in court. When the case is being heard, the judge is usually dependent upon faithful, honest witnesses that only enter correct information into evidence. Thus, without credible evidence, the judge might easily decide the case in favor of the offending party at the expense of the innocent party. Such an outcome would be a travesty of justice. But the false witness, like Solomon and James said, would show deceit because of his or her dishonest, ungodly tongue. In the second part of Solomon's statement, he indicated that a lying tongue is like a piercing sword. So in the court case, a lying, false witness effectively slashes the innocent party by the words of his or her mouth while an honest witness will be well-received by all. In the matter of eternal judgment, though, there will not be false witnesses or lying tongues. The Lord who knows all will judge each person accordingly.

Prudent and Foolish Talk, Wicked and Faithful Life (13 August)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 13:16-17

"Every prudent man dealeth with knowledge: but a fool layeth open his folly. A wicked messenger falleth into mischief: but a faithful ambassador is health."

Solomon said in the first part of the above passage that a prudent person deals well with knowledge but that fools put their foolishness on display. Knowledge means to have perception, understanding, and discernment. Those things will guide a person into the right paths in life and also away from those paths that are most likely to lead to trouble. Therefore, good godly knowledge is the thing to have, and it comes from the Lord. In fact, all good things in this life come from Him. Proverbs 2:6-7 says, "For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly."

Therefore, to deal well with knowledge as Solomon intended above means to know when to open one's mouth and when to keep it shut. While the fool just comes out with whatever and usually without thinking, a prudent person is much more inclined to use his or her words wisely. On one occasion, Solomon said that much talk usually means much sin but that godly wisdom teaches a person when to be silent. Proverbs 10:19 says, "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise." On another occasion, he said that wisdom in conversation shows forth godly wisdom and godly understanding. Thus, Proverbs 10:13 says, "In the lips of him that hath understanding wisdom is found...." In saying those things, however, one should understand that being prudent in dealing with godly knowledge does not restrict its membership. Any person can join simply by coming to the Lord in faith and by seeking His wisdom. He gives to all freely and He never turns anyone away that comes to Him in the right spirit and with the right attitude.

Solomon concluded the above passage by saying that a wicked messenger falls into mischief but with a faithful ambassador is health. A messenger is someone that delivers a message. So when the message comes from one that is wicked, then the outcome is likely to be bad. An ambassador is someone that represents others. So when one faithfully represents the Lord, the outcome is always good.

Not Despising, Not Devising, and Not Talking (14 August)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 14:21-23

"He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth: but he that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he. Do they not err that devise evil? but mercy and truth shall be to them that devise good. In all labour there is profit: but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury."

In the first part of the above passage, Solomon said that despising one's neighbor is wrong but that showing mercy to the poor leads to happiness. To despise one's neighbor means to be prejudiced against him or her for a particularly unwarranted reason. Thus, a person might despise his or her neighbor because the neighbor is either poor or rich. But Solomon said that neither of those two extremes are valid reasons to dislike someone. A person might despise his or her neighbor because the neighbor looks differently than the person doing the despising. But Solomon said that that is no reason to dislike someone either. There are not any biblically justifiable reasons for despising one's neighbor. Thus, the second part of the first phrase teaches the much better truth. Godly people should show mercy to others.

Solomon next said that people make a mistake when they devise evil but that mercy and truth embraces those that practice good. Devising evil is not a behavior from the Lord. But mercy and truth are from Him. Psalm 57:2-3 says, "I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me. He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. Selah. God shall send forth his mercy and his truth." Thus, mercy is the Lord's extended goodness to those people that have come to Him by faith. Similarly, truth is the result of His sureness, His reliability, and His faithfulness.

In the final part of the above passage, Solomon compared talking to working. Then he said that the actual process of speaking or of communicating is a labor of the lips. However, unless someone conclude that he favored just running off at the mouth with reckless abandon, Solomon said that the profit from much talk is usually very small. The Hebrew word that he used for "penury" means need, lack, or want. Thus, much talk might make much noise. But it will not usually be very beneficial noise. In fact, ungodly language will always be in need, lack, or want of godly language. Therefore, Solomon said less talking and more working.

Being Slothful or Righteous, Being Wise or Foolish (15 August)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 15:19-21

"The way of the slothful man is as an hedge of thorns: but the way of the righteous is made plain. A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish man despiseth his mother. Folly is joy to him that is destitute of wisdom: but a man of understanding walketh uprightly."

Solomon never said anything good about the ungodly, the evil, or the wicked. In his mind, those character traits were consistent with people that did not know the Lord as their personal Savior. But he also never said anything good about slothful people or about lazy people. Again in his mind, he seemed to associate them with the negative traits of unsaved people. Therefore, that leads to a simple question. Can a slothful person or a lazy person be saved? To answer that, one must look at the evidence. Solomon said above that the way of a lazy person is as a hedge of thorns but that the way of the righteous is made plain. The Hebrew word that he used for "righteous" means to be upright, correct, straight, or pleasing. So to be righteous almost certainly means to be saved. Proverbs 16:17 says, "The highway of the upright is to depart from evil: he that keepeth his way preserveth his soul."

At the same time, though, saying under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that a person's way is a hedge of thorns is very negative. In fact, in His later parable about one that sows seed, Jesus spoke about thorns that choked off the seeds and killed them. Therefore, while no one can say positively that lazy people die lost, one can say positively that laziness is not a byproduct of the Holy Spirit. The Lord never leads anyone to behave in a way that has such negative connotations. So a lazy child will probably be a big disappointment to his or her parents. But Solomon said that a foolish child will probably also be a big disappointment to them, too, because such a child usually reflects bad parenting. By contrast, a wise child makes one's parents look good and pleases them because his or her wisdom implies that he or she is in a personal relationship with the Lord.

Solomon concluded his above remarks by talking about the foolish behavior of people that lack wisdom. Thus, from the above passage, one can see that godly people are not led to be lazy. They are a joy to their parents. They also live their lives in upright fashion. But such behaviors are opposite the ways of the ungodly.

Handling the Word Wisely and Speaking Favorably (16 August)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 16:20-21

"He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good: and whoso trusteth in the LORD, happy is he. The wise in heart shall be called prudent: and the sweetness of the lips increaseth learning."

Solomon said above that a person will find good if he or she handles a matter wisely and that the person that trusts in the Lord will be happy. However, the first part of that saying might easily be misunderstood if one is not aware of Solomon's use of a particular Hebrew word. The Hebrew word that he used for "matter" means word. So, based upon the following verse, "matter" in the above passage likely referred to the Scriptures. Proverbs 13:13 says, "Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed: but he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded." The Hebrew word that he used for "word" in that verse is the same Hebrew word that he used for "matter" in the above passage. So because the commandments come from the Word of God and because despising the Word of God will likely lead indirectly to one's eternal destruction, Solomon was probably talking about the Word of God in both Proverbs 13:13 and also in the above passage. That being the case, true happiness comes from handling the Word of God wisely and from trusting in the Lord. In his mind, anything less will fail the individual in this life.

He next said that the wise in heart will be prudent and that the sweetness of the lips increases learning. The Hebrew word that he used for "wise" actually means to be prudent. It also means to be ethically wise and religiously wise. So the wise in heart are always those people that have come to the Lord by faith in the right spirit and with the right attitude. They will be called prudent not just because the Hebrew word used means prudent but also because it is smart to come to the Lord by faith. Nothing else in this life will reconcile a person to the Lord or make one fit for eternal life. By the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross at Calvary, He paid the sin debt for every person that will humbly come to Him by faith. Thus, coming to Him will clean up a person's heart, clean up his or her life, and clean up his or her tongue. James the half-brother of Jesus said that the tongue is an evil part of the human body that no person can tame. But when a person is spiritually born again from above, the indwelling Holy Spirit will put positive thoughts and words in his or her heart and positive thoughts and words out of his or her mouth.

Be Careful about Surety, Strife, and the Tongue (17 August)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 17:18-20

"A man void of understanding striketh hands, and becometh surety in the presence of his friend. He loveth transgression that loveth strife: and he that exalteth his gate seeketh destruction. He that hath a froward heart findeth no good: and he that hath a perverse tongue falleth into mischief."

Solomon first said above that a person should be careful about entering into a surety agreement with someone else. Such an agreement was normally finalized in those days by shaking or by striking hands. So the overall admonition was to be careful about doing such a thing. When one person becomes a surety for another person, then he or she agrees to pay the latter person's debts in cases of default. Therefore, Solomon especially cautioned young people about becoming a surety because they are normally more vulnerable and more susceptible to such agreements. One should note, however, that it is alright to help others that are experiencing difficulty. But it is never right to neglect one's own family or one's creditors to do so. Solomon taught both financial prudence and godly behavior.

He next said that people that love to do wrong also love strife, contention, and trouble. In other words, such people are troublemakers. One way that they might cause trouble is by exalting their gate. That could mean either by having a loose tongue or by having loose spending habits. Either condition causes problems. People that talk too much and say the wrong things can cause trouble between themselves and others. But people that are loose with their finances can also cause financial woes that at the time will seem as bad as other kinds of trouble.

Solomon's final admonition was that a twisted, perverse, or distorted heart does not find any good and that people that have a perverted tongue fall into mischief. That saying was closely related to the previous statement about the person that exalts his or her gate. Both types of people are troublemakers. Therefore, both types of people cause trouble for themselves and others. But one should note that Solomon distinguished between godly people that sometimes say the wrong thing and ungodly people that by choice seek opportunities to do and to say the wrong things. Those people that have come to the Lord by faith are usually peacemakers while those that have not usually typify the above examples of troublemakers.

God Gives Knowledge and Spiritual Gifts for His Use (18 August)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 18:15-16

"The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge; and the ear of the wise seeketh knowledge. A man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men."

Solomon said in the first part of the above passage that the heart of a prudent person gets knowledge and that the ear of a wise person seeks knowledge. Thus, the first important observation about what he said is that godly knowledge is even available to human beings. That may seem like a no-brainer. But it really is not. God is the "Creator of Everything." He made the world and everything that is in it. However, neither of those Scriptural facts about Him requires Him to have anything to do with sinful human beings. He could have easily just left humans to themselves and no one could have said anything about it. Therefore, the second important observation about what Solomon said is that the Lord did not do that.

Not only does He make Himself available to all human beings, but He also initiates the relationship with them by revealing Himself to them. He does not have to do that either. But He does so because He loves the people of His Creation. So Solomon said that the ear of the wise person seeks knowledge. However, that person's seeking efforts do not begin there. The effort actually begins when he or she becomes aware of the Lord and then begins to fear or to revere Him. Proverbs 1:7 says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction." Therefore, the obtaining of godly knowledge is the result of a dual interaction between the Lord and the individual. The individual has a desire to live for the Lord. So God gives him or her knowledge and the ability to do so. The end result is that the person becomes prudent and gains godly wisdom, godly understanding, and godly knowledge.

After having made those remarks about the getting of godly knowledge, Solomon concluded his thoughts in the above passage by talking about a person's gifts. The Apostle Paul identified many spiritual gifts that a born again person might receive from the Holy Spirit. Solomon said above that those gifts could bring one before great and powerful people. But whether or not that actually happens, the real purpose of the gifts is to honor the Lord, to serve Him, and to give Him the glory.

Chastening Children, Great Wrath, and Instruction (19 August)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 19:18-20

"Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying. A man of great wrath shall suffer punishment: for if thou deliver him, yet thou must do it again. Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end."

Solomon obviously took the role of parenting very seriously. He often advised young people to come to the Lord while young, to seek godly wisdom, to seek godly understanding, and to seek godly knowledge. He often said that doing those things will keep a young person from being involved with the wrong kind of people. He also said that they will keep him or her from marrying the wrong kind of person. One should note, however, that his advice applies to all young people whether male or female even though he often expressed his instructions to a son. That is true in the above passage, too. The Hebrew word used for "son" means a young boy, children, or even a young girl. So he advised parents to correct their children before those children have the chance to go wrong. Children are most teachable and trainable when they are very young. Once they become older, they are much harder to reach for the Lord. Thus, if they are not corrected when very young, their soul will almost certainly start out in life already on the wrong path.

Solomon next spoke about people that have extreme tempers. In saying that, though, he could have easily been drawing upon the previous verse about chastening or correcting one's children. The individual that has an extreme temper probably was not properly trained about right behavior when young. He or she might have pitched fits as a child and was never taught to not do so. Then he or she grew up thinking that it is alright to let one's emotions control one's behavior. Such people often become problems for society as a whole. If they never learn to put any restraints upon how they act, then they many times get themselves into serious trouble and end up in prison. But even if they do learn to stay within the limits of the law, Solomon warned that such uncontrolled people will often be problems for those around them. He said that if their bad behavior is overlooked and often forgiven, then people will always have to overlook and forgive their bad behavior. By contrast, he concluded his comments by saying that a corrected young child will hear instruction and become wise in the end.

Cursing one's Parents and a Squandered Inheritance (20 August)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 20:20-21

"Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness. An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning; but the end thereof shall not be blessed."

The fifth commandment of the Ten Commandments is as follows. Exodus 20:12 says, "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee." Thus, the promise brought about by honoring one's parents was a longer life upon the earth. But one must be careful to put that verse into the proper context. The shorter life caused by dishonoring one's parents was not because God killed the child. It was because the Mosaic Law called for the child cursing a parent to be executed. Exodus 21:17 says, "And he that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death." Leviticus 20:9 says, "For every one that curseth his father or his mother shall be surely put to death: he hath cursed his father or his mother; his blood shall be upon him." Consistent with those verses, Solomon said to the child that curses either father or mother that his or her lamp will be put out during the darkest part of the night. His reference to the lamp being put out was probably to the child being executed. That being the case, the longer life that was promised by the fifth commandment was because the honoring child is not executed.

The old adage is easy come easy go. It means that money that comes too easily usually goes very quickly. For example, people that win large lotteries sometimes end up going broke. People that make big easy money in other non-laborious ways often do not handle their sudden wealth very well either. Then they too quickly lose all that they had gained. That sometimes applies to ill-gotten gains. Proverbs 20:17 says, "Bread of deceit is sweet to a man; but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel." It also sometimes applies to get-rich-quick schemes. Proverbs 28:22 says, "He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him." Above Solomon applied the easy come adage to getting an inheritance. When one gets a large amount of money from a passing relative, the inheritor will not usually be as diligent or as careful with the money as if he or she had earned it by good honest, hard work. That means that in many cases, the inherited money will simply be squandered and soon lost, too.

Avoid Angry People and Be Ready for the Lord (21 August)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 21:19-20

"It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman. There is treasure to be desired and oil in the dwelling of the wise; but a foolish man spendeth it up."

Solomon often spoke about a man trying to live with an angry, brawling, or contentious woman. Proverbs 21:9 says, "It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house." Proverbs 25:24 says, "It is better to dwell in the corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman and in a wide house." Proverbs 27:15 says, "A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike." Thus, he twice said that it is better to live peaceably in a small corner of a small house than to live with a brawling woman in a big house. He then said that a contentious woman is like a day of continual rain. In the above passage, he expanded more on the idea of living peaceably in a small place by saying that living in an uninhabitable pasture is even better than living with a contentious and angry woman. So what is so bad about living with such a woman? The answer is that anger usually creates more anger, brawling usually creates more brawling, and contention usually creates more contention.

Solomon always spoke the above words in gender specific terms. But one must believe that he would have said that life is just as difficult for the woman that must live with an angry, brawling, or contentious man. That kind of environment regardless of the gender of the difficult person over time causes stress, illness, and much unhappiness. Therefore, one should try to avoid unions with such people. He next said that the wise will have treasure to be desired and oil for their lamps but that the foolish will not. The reason for the wise is their prudence, their godly wisdom, and their frugality. By contrast, foolish people will not have those things because they are such great wasters. They will use up whatever they have and then not have it when they need it. Many years later, Jesus told a parable about ten virgins. Five were wise, and five were foolish. The five wise virgins had stored enough oil to meet the bridegroom when he came. But the five foolish virgins had not. Then when he came the foolish virgins were not ready to go meet him. However, while Solomon was speaking about the importance of being wise with one's possessions, Jesus would be speaking about being ready for His return.

Wisdom and Knowledge are Pleasant Things (22 August)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 22:18-19

"For it is a pleasant thing if thou keep them within thee; they shall withal be fitted in thy lips. That thy trust may be in the LORD, I have made known to thee this day, even to thee."

In the preceding verse, Solomon told his young listeners to hear the words of the wise and to open their hearts to knowledge. Proverbs 22:17 says, "Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply thine heart unto my knowledge." Then in the above passage, he continued that thought by saying that having godly wisdom and godly knowledge are pleasant things. They will help a person stay on the straight and narrow path in life. They will keep him or her out of trouble. They will ensure that he or she always has a good relationship with the Lord. Then, best of all they will ensure the person an eternity with the Lord on the other side of the grave. Many people may not think that existence on the other side of the grave is all that important. But it is actually much more important than existence on this side of the grave. While in this world, even the ungodly have access to light, to the Lord's beauty in Creation, to other people, to different activities, and to many other things. However, on the other side of the grave for an ungodly person, it will be total pitch black darkness forever and ever.

There will not be any created beauty, friendships, or anything like that. An eternity without the Lord will be total torment and absolute suffering. So in the second part of the above passage, Solomon continued to extol the benefits of godly wisdom and godly knowledge. Through them one can learn to trust in the Lord. This life has many pitfalls and traps. But godly wisdom and knowledge will help one endure all of the negatives. So the most important thing to get right in this life is one's standing with the Lord. That can be done by seeking Him with all of one's heart. Jeremiah 29:12-13 says, "Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." Then the process continues by committing oneself to Him and by trusting in Him. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The Greek word used for "believeth" means to commit to and to trust in the object of one's belief.

Honor one's Parents, Come to the Lord, and Be Wise (23 August)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 23:22-25

"Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old. Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding. The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice: and he that begetteth a wise child shall have joy of him. Thy father and thy mother shall be glad, and she that bare thee shall rejoice."

In the first part of the above passage, Solomon said to hearken to or to listen to one's parents even when they are old. Everyone knows that teenagers can be very disrespectful to their parents. They typically do not think that their parents know anything or that their parents understand what it is like to be young. However, not only are they wrong to think those things about their parents, but many times those same teenagers will actually make mistakes while young that will follow them for the rest of their lives. That is one reason why Solomon so often offered advice to his son. Proverbs 23:19 says, "Hear thou, my son, and be wise, and guide thine heart in the way." Whenever he did that, though, the literal Hebrew language meant that his advice was being given to all young people regardless of whether they are male or female. According to him, young people will always live better at any age when they consistently listen to their parents and obey them.

From listening to and obeying godly parents a child will learn the importance of obtaining godly wisdom, godly instruction, and godly understanding. Nothing in this life is worse than leaving this life without being in a personal relationship with the Lord. Therefore, nothing in this life is more important than coming to Him by faith while young, committing to Him, trusting in Him, and entering into that personal relationship with Him. After doing those things and through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the young person will acquire the godly wisdom and the godly understanding to live his or her life well. Those things will keep him or her on the right paths in life and for the most part also out of trouble. But whenever correction is necessary, the born again person will experience divine instruction or divine correction to get himself or herself back on track. Solomon concluded by saying that godly children will cause their godly parents to rejoice. Thus, there is no greater joy for godly parents than knowing that their children are living for the Lord, too. They will be pleased with them and also with their lives.

Sudden Calamity and being a Respector of Persons (24 August)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 24:21-23

"My son, fear thou the LORD and the king: and meddle not with them that are given to change: For their calamity shall rise suddenly; and who knoweth the ruin of them both? These things also belong to the wise. It is not good to have respect of persons in judgment."

Solomon told his child in the above passage to fear the Lord and to not meddle with people that are given to sudden change. To fear the Lord means to hold Him in reverential awe. That part is pretty clear. To not meddle with people given to change means to keep away from those individuals who frequently change. In saying that, though, he could have been talking about two different things. First, he could have been encouraging his child to not get close to people that change their behavior without warning. Such people if they cannot manage their own spirit can quickly get themselves into a lot of trouble and take others with them. Proverbs 1:10 says, "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." However, he could also have been warning his child about becoming a surety for someone that is given to sudden change. To be a surety for another person means to agree to pay his or her debt if the person defaults. So that kind of agreement is very risky. It can be very destructive for a naive young person and also very costly.

Solomon also spoke about another important Bible theme. It is that a person should not be a respector of persons. That means that one should not show partiality when dealing with different classes of people. Thus, one should treat poor people with as much respect as he or she would treat rich people. One should treat people of no power and of no reputation as well as he or she would treat people of much power and of much reputation. It is easy to get caught up in the trap of putting some people above other people. But as the Lord does not show partiality, those people that have come to Him by faith should not do so either. The greatest blessing in this life is to be in a personal relationship with the Lord. But if He had accepted or had rejected people the way that some people do, then many of the people now in a personal relationship with Him would not have made it. He would have simply told them that they are not good enough. Thus, it is always correct to treat every person as an individual. But it is never correct to categorize them by race, creed, nationality, or anything else beyond their control.

Knowing to go Home and How to Treat a Neighbor (25 August)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 25:17-18

"Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbour's house; lest he be weary of thee, and so hate thee. A man that beareth false witness against his neighbour is a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow."

Solomon said two things that are not exact opposites but that certainly is a little close. First, Proverbs 18:24 says, "A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." So if someone wants to have friends, then he or she must be a friend. But second, he also said in the first part of the above passage that a person should not overstay his or her welcome at their neighbor's house. Thus, there is such a thing as being a friend to one's neighbor while at the same time also staying too long at their house. Putting those two thoughts together, Solomon would simply say to use a little discretion. Be a friend in deed. Visit the friend. But know when to go home.

He next said that a false witness against one's neighbor is like being a maul, a sword, and a sharp arrow. Being compared to any of those three objects is not very good. But being compared to all three at the same time is definitely very bad. A maul is a solid very heavy iron mallet sharpened on one end and attached to a long handle. It is used either to split logs or to drive a sharp heavy iron wedge through logs. When used correctly, it can be very damaging. A sword is a long very sharp instrument that is used to cut and to destroy. It can cut through or slice through flesh just like it is butter. A sharp arrow is a weapon that penetrates through skin and organs and inflicts very serious, life-threatening injuries. When used correctly, it can also be very damaging.

The word "witness" that Solomon used relates to someone giving testimony in a court case. That means that the outcome of the case will usually be directly dependent upon what the witness says. If he or she does not tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth, then the false testimony of the false witness can many times lead to a bad verdict. For the person that suffers from the false testimony of the false witness, the outcome will be just like being hit by a maul, being cut with a sword, and being penetrated by a sharp arrow all at the same time. Obviously, Solomon put a very high value on being honest in all matters.

Dying Lost because of Laziness and being a Meddler (26 August)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 26:16-17

"The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason. He that passeth by, and meddleth with strife belonging not to him, is like one that taketh a dog by the ears."

In the first part of the above passage, the key phrase is "in his own conceit." In slightly different terms, Solomon said that lazy people that view themselves as being wise tend in their conceitedness to also view themselves as being wiser than seven truly wise individuals. Solomon definitely was not saying that the sluggard really is wiser than the seven. But he was saying that that is how they tend to view themselves. The number seven does not have a specific meaning to what he said. But it is one of God's perfect numbers. After creating the world, God rested on the seventh day. The Great Tribulation will last for seven years. Others of His perfect numbers are twelve and forty. Israel has twelve tribes. Jesus had twelve disciples. The rain during the Great Flood lasted for forty days and forty nights.

So numbers in the Bible are sometimes very significant. The likely meaning above with the number seven, therefore, is that Solomon was comparing an ungodly lazy person with godly wise people. People that are truly wise seek the Lord by faith and commit to Him. People that are not truly wise do not seek Him and come to Him. Sometimes they do not do so because they are like the "dumb fools" that do not realize that they will someday die lost. Sometimes they do not do so because they are like the "evil fools" that will not give up their evil lifestyle. But sometimes as above they do not do so because they are lazy. While there are no good reasons to die lost, doing so because of laziness is particularly pathetic.

In his second thought in the above passage, Solomon spoke about people that get involved in situations in which they should not be involved. He said that to come between two arguing people, especially a husband and a wife, is like taking a dog by the ears. Obviously that would be asking for trouble. However, one needs to remember that Solomon's general principles are not always spiritual absolutes. Thus, one should mind his or her own business in almost every instance. But there may be times when a person must get involved for the safety of everyone. Therefore, the rule is to be very careful about getting involved in other's conflicts.

Iron Sharpens Iron and Being Faithful and Diligent (27 August)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 27:17-18

"Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend. Whoso keepeth the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof: so he that waiteth on his master shall be honoured."

The analogy of iron sharpening iron is when someone sharpens a knife on a sharpening stone. The hard stone breaks away and smoothes out the coarse edges of the knife and creates an instrument that can be used for cutting. Without the sharpening stone, though, the knife remains dull and does not cut very well. In the same sense, Solomon used that analogy of iron sharpening iron to express how the right kinds of friends can help one another. They can make each other's good points look better. They can keep each other's bad points from looking so bad while all of the time helping each other improve themselves. Good friends can do all of those things for each other. So they can sharpen each other's countenance.

But on another occasion, Solomon wrote about another kind of friend that is even better than those just described. Proverbs 18:24 says, "...there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." But that friend is not the person up the street, next door, or even around the block. Some commentators have understood Solomon to be referring to a very special human being that stays loyal to another human being through thick and thin. However, that is not the position of this text. The belief being presented here is that no one will ever stick closer to any other human being than the Lord. He was with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego when they were thrown into the fiery furnace. He was with the Prophet Elijah when Queen Jezebel would have had him killed. He was with the Prophet Daniel in the lion's den. Thus, those few examples alone show Him sticking a lot closer than any human being would ever choose to do. The point is that when one of the Lord's own is in a tight spot on His behalf, He is always right there with the person. Because of that, His people can rest in Him and always be fully confident in Him.

Solomon concluded the above passage by talking about the benefits of diligence. The diligence part is taking care of a fig tree. The benefit part is enjoying the fruit from that tree. He then compared that to the honor given to the faithful servant that cares for his or her master. Thus, being faithful and diligent has its rewards.

Jesus is the Way and the Hope for all Creation (28 August)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 28:17-18

"A man that doeth violence to the blood of any person shall flee to the pit; let no man stay him. Whoso walketh uprightly shall be saved: but he that is perverse in his ways shall fall at once."

Solomon spoke above about the horror of murder. It is bad when someone steals possessions from another person. It is equally bad when he or she steals money from another person. But nothing is worse than stealing another person's life. When Jesus was incarnated into the body of a man, He gave His life on behalf of sinners to those people that wanted to steal His life from Him. They could not have taken His life from Him if He had not laid it down. But He gave and they took. However, because of His death on the cross at Calvary, any person can come to Him by faith in the right spirit and with the right attitude and be saved.

Therefore, Solomon concluded the above passage by saying that the upright in heart shall be saved but that those people that are perverse in their ways shall fall at once. The Hebrew word that he used for "uprightly" means to be complete in truth, to be whole, or to have integrity. So while it may sound like someone can choose to be all of those things without coming to the Lord by faith, the simple biblical truth is that they cannot. Most people like to think that they are pretty good. But the Scriptures clearly say that their best goodness is wicked and filthy. Isaiah 64:6 says, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags...." Jeremiah 17:9 says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked...." Therefore, no person can ever be good enough to please an eternal holy heavenly Father. The only way to do that is to come to the Lord by faith and to receive Him as one's personal Savior.

There is no joy in the fact that Jesus died such a horrible death on behalf of such horrible sinners. But there is great joy, great peace, and great satisfaction for the person who seeks Him, who finds Him, who comes to Him by faith, who commits to Him, who trusts in Him, and who enters into a personal relationship with Him. Jeremiah 29:12-13 says, "...And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." Thus, many people may not know it. But the hope for all creation is Jesus. He died on a Roman cross for sinful human beings.

Correcting a Wayward Child and Having a Vision (29 August)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 29:17-18

"Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul. Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he."

Much of life must be based upon the probabilities of something happening or of something not happening. That is true in developing one's career. Most people believe that a good education will increase a person's chances of getting a good job and of having a good career. It is also true in the handling of one's finances. Most people believe that saving a lot of money for retirement will increase a person's chances of having a financially secure later life. Those two statements and many more like them are true. But the key word in them is "chance." There is also a chance that a person with a good education will not get a good job and that a person that has saved a lot of money will not have a financially secure later life. Thus, people must always deal with chance in almost every area of their life.

It has been said that there is an exception to every rule, and that is also true about the above passage. Parents may lovingly correct their children when they make mistakes. They may diligently instruct them in the ways of the Lord. They may even set the right example before them by consistently living according to what they have taught them. However, those children may still go wrong in life. They may still rebel against what they have been taught in the home and go in their own way. But in response to that, Solomon encouraged parents to be patient. The child that has been brought up well will usually live well. The child that has been brought up in a godly home will usually carry those godly habits into adulthood.

Next Solomon said in the above passage that the people perish when there is no vision and that obedience to godly commands brings happiness. Those words are generally true, too. Without a plan or a vision, nothing is usually accomplished. But with a plan or with a clear vision, people can accomplish many things. For example, the good career alluded to above does often begin with the young person's vision for a good education. The same is true of retirement savings. So while planning and a vision do not eliminate chance, they improve the odds. Next the part about godly living and happiness is also true because it eliminates guilt.

Mocking One's Parents and Four Things Not Known (30 August)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 30:17-19

"The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it. There be three things which are too wonderful for me, yea, four which I know not: The way of an eagle in the air; the way of a serpent upon a rock; the way of a ship in the midst of the sea; and the way of a man with a maid."

Agur or Solomon as some believe him to be in the above passage spoke about young people that dishonor their father and mother. The eye that mocks refers to young people that try to laugh or mock their parents to scorn. They make fun of them. They look down on their elderly ways and frailties. They make fun of the customs of their generation. They do not obey their instructions. In short, they want no part of their parents or of their ways. But according to the above passage, the Lord will not overlook the ways of such rebellious children. The ravens shall pluck out their eyes, and the young eagles shall eat them. That mention of such an untimely end suggests that their lives will be snatched from them rather than simply given up through aging. One should note, though, that that prediction of doom is not an absolute. Such children may or may not have a violent end. But whether they do or not, they will still stand before the Lord in eternal judgment.

Next Agur said that three things were too wonderful for him and that a fourth he did not know. The first is the majestic way in which an eagle soars through the sky with wings extended and floating from one point to another. The second is the way in which a serpent crawls upon a rock. If the serpent were not dangerous, then one could be mesmerized by its movements. The third thing that was too wonderful for Agur is the way in which a large ship makes its way through the waters. The fact that such a heavy vessel can even stay afloat is amazing enough. But the picture of it bobbing up and down in the deep ocean and ever making its path is very wonderful to watch. The fourth thing that was not understood is the way of a man with a maiden or with a young virgin. The interesting thing about the first three is that none of those motions leave a trace of where they have been or from where they were originated. One cannot know from where the eagle, the serpent, or the ship came because it is a mystery. But the fourth is blatant iniquity orchestrated by the devil, and its clear end will be eternal judgment.

The Virtuous Woman Buys a Field and Takes Care (31 August)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 31:16-20

"She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy."

The above passage shows that the virtuous woman considers and buys a field. That implies that she is able to conduct the business side of caring for her family. Such duties might normally fall to the husband. But the virtuous woman because of her virtue has been given by the Lord the ability to make those kinds of decisions, too. One should note, however, that such a high compliment does not mean that she takes any due credit from her husband. Instead the much better understanding is that the two people as husband and wife work together to care for and to raise the family that the Lord has given them.

Genesis 2:20-22 says, "And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man." Thus, marriage and the union between one man and one woman are gifts from the Lord. When both husband and wife love Him as they should then there will not be any foolish power struggles between them. They will love each other. They will cooperate with each other. They will respect each other. They will get along with each other. Thus, when two people are walking in the same direction spiritually, there is no reason for it to be any other way.

In the care of her family, the virtuous woman also girds her loins with strength. That means that she takes care of herself physically and mentally. Her candle does not go out at night which means that she is careful and always ready for any emergencies. Her merchandise is good which means that what she does she does well. Her hands to the spindle mean that she always stays active. Finally, she helps those people around her that are less fortunate.

Godly Wisdom Does Not Wait Forever (01 September)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 1:28-30

"Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD: They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof."

Many things in this life have what is called a window of opportunity. A good business venture, for example, might require a person's immediate action or the opportunity will be lost forever. That type of loss can also be experienced in spiritual matters. Jesus on one occasion spoke to a man about eternal life. But that man walked away because he was not willing to do what Jesus had required of him. Matthew 19:21-22 says, "Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions." The young man did not find eternal life at that time because his money had owned him rather than him owning his money. However, it is not known if he was ever given a second chance to try again. Most likely he was not. It is important to understand that people come to the Lord on His terms rather than on their own. The same is true for receiving godly wisdom. She makes herself available. But when one hates knowledge and refuses the fear of the Lord, she removes herself and becomes no longer available.

For that reason, a person should be attentive and be responsive to the calling of the Lord. Godly wisdom, godly understanding, and godly knowledge are free. But they are not automatic and they are not available forever. Salvation is also free. So the way to put oneself on the right spiritual path in life is to seek them early in life. The Prophet Jeremiah wrote that those people that seek the Lord with all of their heart will find Him. The Apostle John wrote that those people that believe on the name of the Lord which is the same as committing to Him and as trusting in Him will be given eternal life. The Apostle Paul wrote about the indwelling Holy Spirit that will lead a person into the right paths of life. Finally Solomon taught that making that spiritual choice with one's life is the first step leading to godly wisdom. A person simply cannot receive godly wisdom, godly understanding, and godly knowledge without first receiving God. It all begins and ends with Him. It is all absolutely free to those that come to Him.

Immorality and Ungodliness are Contagious (02 September)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 2:19

"None that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life."

Solomon said that the path that leads to the immoral woman's house also leads to death. Then he said that the young man that goes into her does not come safely out from her. In today culture, that can mean physical death by disease or spiritual death since the sins of the immoral and the ungodly are usually but not always done by the immoral and the ungodly. The simple fact is that any person that has come to the Lord by faith while young can still commit any wrongdoing as anyone else. But the probability of such inappropriate behavior is usually much smaller in those people that are committed to Him and that are trusting in Him. Therefore, that is a very good reason to train one's children to live for the Lord while they are still young and teachable. Once they have reached a certain age, they will be much harder to influence if the process was not begun when they were very young. Proverbs 22:6 says, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." One should note that Solomon did not offer the same guarantee when trying to train young, disobedient teenagers.

Another thing about what he said is that an immoral lifestyle is not limited to gender. While he always pictured the young innocent male child going into the more experienced ungodly woman, the opposite can just as easily be true. Young innocent girls can be taken in by more experienced ungodly men just as young innocent boys can be taken in by more experienced ungodly women. Sin and immorality do not discriminate by gender. Therefore, the parents of the young girl do not get a free ride with his advice on immoral sexual behavior. All young children need to be taught how to live for the Lord because they will surely learn how not to live for Him if left to themselves. One of the best ways to teach a young child is by example. A parent cannot live like the devil and expect his or her kids to live for the Lord just because they are told to do so. Unfortunately, ungodliness is usually more contagious than godliness. With many young people, the mistaken belief is that one cannot live for the Lord and still have fun in life. But that is a lie from the devil. Why should a person have to live like the devil to have fun? The answer is that he or she should not. Besides that, the pleasures in doing wrong almost never last as long as the lingering negative effects of the act.

Do Not Withhold Good When It Is Due (03 September)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 3:27-28

"Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it. Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to morrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee."

Solomon said in the above passage to not withhold good from someone to which it is owed or due when it is within the person's power to give it. He also said to not put off the giving of "it" to another day if payment can be rendered on the same day. But while he did not specify exactly what goods were owed or the "it" that is by thee, three examples can easily be applied to his admonition.

The two most obvious are in the payment of one's debts and in the giving of one's resources to charity. If a person owes something to someone then he or she should pay the debt no later than the due date. Solomon said to not withhold from someone to whom it is due. So, technically that would require payment at any time before the due date since the debt would not be officially due until then. On another occasion, he said that the borrower is slave to the lender. But that did not mean that he was against individual debt. Instead, it meant that a person should take seriously his or her financial obligations to others. The second example to which the above passage can apply is in the giving of one's resources to charitable causes and to helping others. James 2:15-17 says, "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." So giving a helping hand is most helpful when it is timely.

The third example that fits the above passage might be a surprise to many. But it is the obligation that each godly person has to share Christ with others. Every person that has come to the Lord by faith has been called into a particular ministry where the main thrust is to bring others to the Lord. The Apostle Paul wrote that the Holy Spirit gives godly people various gifts solely for that purpose. So while those gifts may not all be the same, they all serve the same purpose of bringing others to the Lord. Therefore, a godly person should never withhold payment of that debt when he or she is able to satisfy it. Paul referred to himself as a debtor.

Attend to and Depart not from Words of Wisdom (04 September)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 4:20-21

"My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings. Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart."

Solomon told his son to pay attention to what he said. Not only did that advice apply to his male children, but it also applied to his female children and to everyone else's children, too. The Hebrew word that he used for "son" was not gender specific. So that means that it applies to all children. By inclining his or her ear to Solomon's sayings, the child would have heard and internalized his message, which was always the same. Seek the Lord. Live for Him. Do not take on the ways of the ungodly. Stay away from the wrong kind of people because they can cause hurt and injury to one's person or to one's character. It is always much easier to not do wrong than it is to undo a wrongdoing. Words wrongfully spoken can never be retrieved. Ungodly behavior can never be reversed. Many times the consequences of wrong behavior are grievous and difficult. Thus, according to him, those are the real facts of this life. Because of that, people should come to the Lord while still young. Otherwise, they are already starting out in life on the road that leads to trouble and to eventual eternal condemnation.

Also if a person does not come to the Lord while still young, then he or she will almost certainly accumulate some of life's baggage along the way. Even then, though, the way to the Lord will still be open. As long as there is life, there is also hope. Romans 10:12-13 says, "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." So when one breaks down all of life into its simplest form, only two things really matter. The first is to come to the Lord by faith while still young so that the person can have eternal life. The second is to come to Him today if he or she has not already done so. It is very simple. A person's only eternal hope is Christ. But a person's only real hope in this whole life is also Christ. Many people go through much of their life trying to accumulate things. But with many things also comes much worry. They have to care for what they have accumulated. Then they have to worry about either losing them or leaving them behind. But when one is in the Lord, many of life's struggles disappear. Thus, Jesus is the way. He is the only way.

Why People Pursue Inappropriate Sex (05 September)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 5:20

"And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger?"

Solomon spoke at length in the five preceding verses about being a godly parent and about raising godly children. Proverbs 5:15-19 says, "Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well. Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad, and rivers of waters in the streets. Let them be only thine own, and not strangers' with thee. Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love." A short time before that, though, he spoke to his son about being drawn to a strange woman. Thus, Proverbs 5:3-4 says, "For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil: But her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a twoedged sword."

The obvious conclusion to those passages is that the trap of inappropriate sex is often easy in which to fall. Young people are often entangled in wrong sexual relationships before marriage. But sometimes married people are also involved in sexual relationships that are wrong. So to all of the different kinds of sexual impurity, Solomon asked above the simple question of why. Why would anyone young or old, single or married ever pursue the wrong kind of sexual relationship with a stranger, where stranger simply means not one's spouse? The simple answer is sin. All people born from Adam are born as sinners and separated from God. All people born from him have also inherited by birth a sin nature. That nature simply means that all people are tempted to do things that are wrong and tempted to not do things that are right. They should not be that way. But all people are because the struggle with one's sin nature never ends.

As long as people are in this life, the struggle continues. However, one can find forgiveness for all of his or her sins and be reconciled to the Lord. John 1:29 says, "...John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." So by the Lord's sacrificial death on the cross, any person can come to Him by faith, be forgiven, and receive eternal life.

People Cannot Do the Impossible by Resisting Sin (06 September)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 6:27-29

"Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned? So he that goeth in to his neighbour's wife; whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent."

Solomon often gave advice to young men about staying away from situations that might lead to sexual immorality. One should note, however, that young women are just as vulnerable in those situations as are young men. In fact, any person under the right circumstances might possibly be drawn into an inappropriate sexual involvement with another person. But regardless of the circumstances, Solomon always said that it is wrong to do so. In that respect, he asked two simple questions in the above passage with two obvious answers. First, can a person put burning fire on his or her breast without his or her clothes being burned? The answer is obviously no. Second, can a person walk upon hot burning coals and not burn his or her feet? Again the answer is obviously no. Therefore, Solomon said to not get into sexually compromising situations.

He next said that the person that commits adultery with another person's spouse will be like the above person that plays with fire. He or she will get burned. So, godly wisdom says to not even go there. Godly wisdom and godly understanding show a person how to live this life. They keep the person on the right paths in life and also away from those paths that lead to trouble. Therefore, in pursuit of the wisdom and the understanding that are from above, a person should come to the Lord by faith, commit himself or herself to Him, trust in Him, and then enter into a personal relationship with Him. Proverbs 3:13-15 says, "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her." Thus, Solomon said that nothing should be more valuable to a person than those qualities and traits that will help him or her live a godlier life.

So coming to the Lord has the positive benefits of giving one godly wisdom and godly understanding. But they also bring that person into a personal relationship with the Lord in this life as well as in the eternal life that is coming.

Many Young People Foolishly Choose Immorality (07 September)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 7:22-23

"He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks; Till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life."

Solomon above continued his discussion about the foolish young man that was drawn to the wrong kind of woman. Preceding the above verses, he said in Proverbs 7:6-21, "For at the window of my house I looked through my casement, And beheld among the simple ones, I discerned among the youths, a young man void of understanding, Passing through the street near her corner; and he went the way to her house...And, behold, there met him a woman with the attire of an harlot, and subtil of heart...With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him." One should note from his example, though, that the foolish young woman might just as easily be drawn to the wrong kind of man, too. The simple truth based upon his example is that perversion and sexual immorality are not gender specific. Both men and women fall in the trap.

At the same time, however, the solution for that perversion and sexual immorality is to come to the Lord by faith in the right spirit and with the right attitude. When people do that, they are born again. They enter into a personal relationship with the Lord. They are spiritually led into the right paths of life and away from the wrong paths of life. They receive the wisdom and the understanding that are from above. Then, the result is that they learn to live for the Lord. They also learn to stay away from perverse and sexually immoral situations that do not honor Him.

Of course, many people do not choose the path that leads to Christ. Instead, they choose the lifestyle that leads to earthly and eternal destruction. But according to Solomon, the person that takes that wayward path is like the ox that is led to the slaughter. The dumb animal patiently walks to its death without even realizing what is happening. The young person that follows that path to immorality is also like the fool going to the stocks, like the deer that is fatally pierced by an arrow, and like a bird that hastens to a trap. So Solomon was saying that the outcomes of sexual perversion and immorality are never good. However, the worst part of all is that the guilty have freely chosen the path that leads to their own destruction.

Wisdom Proves Scientists Wrong about Creation (08 September)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 8:27-31

"When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: When he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth: Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men."

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Solomon said that godly wisdom was present when God created the heavens and the earth. She was there when He set a compass upon the face of the deep and when He established the clouds. The Hebrew word that Solomon used for "compass" can also mean circle. In fact, Isaiah would later use that same word to speak about the circle of the earth. Isaiah 40:22-23 says, "It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers" The thing that makes that Hebrew word so interesting from the standpoint of Creation, though, is that it clearly shows that the writers of Scriptures under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit had gotten the shape of the earth correct long before the scientists. Less than one thousand years ago, scientists still believed that the earth was flat. But if they had relied on the truth of the Scriptures, they would have seen that they were wrong.

Scientists were also wrong about another thing relative to Creation that they had believed just one thousand years ago during the days of Galileo and Copernicus. At that time, they had thought that the sky only contained about one thousand to twelve hundred stars because that was all that they could count with their naked eye. But once again, they could have learned the truth by reading the Scriptures. More than three thousand and five hundred years ago, the Prophet Moses wrote what God promised Abraham. Genesis 15:3-5 says, "And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and...the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir...Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be." Thus, when looking at that passage in context no one could possibly believe that the Lord had only promised Abraham one thousand to twelve hundred descendents.

Godly Wisdom Benefits but Scorners Are Alone (09 September)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 9:12

"If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself: but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it."

After saying that godly people live longer by godly wisdom and understanding, Solomon next said that people that are wise are wise for themselves. Therefore, being wise is first of all a reward within itself. By wisdom and understanding, people live longer. By wisdom and understanding, they are led from the wrong paths in life and led into the right paths. But being wise also leads to an eternal reward for the individual because he or she has already come to the Lord by faith in the right spirit and with the right attitude. Thus, the wise are eternally saved.

That truth can be seen in the following passage. In speaking about wisdom, Proverbs 8:33-36 says, "Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth me...For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death." So Solomon said that the wise come to the Lord and find life. He also said that the unwise do not come to the Lord. So they do not find life. To the former is eternal blessedness in the presence of the "Creator of Everything" forever and ever. To the latter is eternal condemnation in the presence of all of the demons of all of the ages forever and ever. So those people that choose godly wisdom, emphasis on "choose," are indeed wise for themselves.

By contrast, Solomon also said that the scorner shall bear his or her scornfulness alone. The Hebrew word that he used for "scornest" means to talk arrogantly, to mock or to deride others, or to be boastful. So the obvious conclusion about those kinds of people is that they cannot possibly be very happy. Their only moments of any real satisfaction seem to come either by elevating themselves in their own eyes or by trying to bring others down to their own level. Such people cannot be very happy with their life. But they also cannot have very many friends. Thus, Solomon said that they bear their scornfulness alone. But the good news is that they do not have to remain in their pathetic condition. Like godly people have already done before them, they can also "choose" to come to the Lord by faith in the right spirit and right attitude. If they will do that, He will not turn them away.

Righteous Lips Feed and the Lord Makes Rich (10 September)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 10:21-23

"The lips of the righteous feed many: but fools die for want of wisdom. The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it. It is as sport to a fool to do mischief: but a man of understanding hath wisdom."

Solomon said in the first part of the above passage that the words of a righteous person feed many other people but that fools die for want of wisdom. The Hebrew word that he used for "fools" means to despise wisdom, to be licentious, or to be quarrelsome. Thus, he was talking about the "evil fool" that dies lacking godly wisdom because he or she does not want it. Unfortunately, many people in this world are like that. They might think that the ways of the godly are foolish. They might think that living for the Lord is not the way to have much fun. But if they do, then they are wrong on both counts. First, living for the Lord and doing those things that bring Him honor and glory is fun. It also brings great peace and joy in this life. But even further than that, it prepares the person that has come to Him by faith for an eternal existence with Him on the other side of the grave.

For those reasons, the words of the righteous feed many the truths of Scriptures while the words of the ungodly usually have very little good to communicate to anyone. So Solomon said that the blessing of the Lord makes one rich but that it does not leave a bad aftertaste. Many people in this existence might think that worldly pleasures are fun. To that the Scriptures would even agree. Hebrews 11:24-26 says, "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward." So as in the case of Moses, that pleasure or that fun only lasts for a season. Eventually all earthly joys pass away and are replaced either by good eternal consequences or by bad eternal consequences. Living only for oneself usually brings the bad. But living for the Lord always brings the good.

A main difference between godly and ungodly people is their view about sin. As was just said, many people prefer the fleeting earthly pleasures. But those people that truly love the Lord know better than to chase worldly things that cannot last.

Punishment for Wicked and Deliverance for Just (11 September)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 11:21-23

"Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished: but the seed of the righteous shall be delivered. As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion. The desire of the righteous is only good: but the expectation of the wicked is wrath."

During His Incarnation, Jesus told a parable about the wheat and the tares. The wheat, of course, is the desired crop while the tares are the false crop that grows among the wheat and actually looks like the wheat. According to Solomon in the above passage, the ungodly and the godly might sometimes work side by side. Outwardly they may even look very much alike. But in their respective positions before the Lord, they are exact opposites. In the parable, the wheat and the tares need to be separated when they are harvested. So the crop grower will stick a pitchfork into the gathered pile and then toss it into the air. Because the tares are much lighter in weight and substance, they will fly harmlessly into the air. Then the wheat which is heavier will fall back into the pile to eventually be completely separated from the tares. In that same sense, Solomon said that the righteous in eternal judgment will be delivered into everlasting glory but that the wicked will be separated from them and cast into eternal judgment and condemnation.

Proverbs 11:16 says, "A gracious woman retaineth honour: and strong men retain riches." In that verse, Solomon emphasized the importance of a godly man marrying a godly woman. In such unions, the two people will complement each other and actually make the other look good. In the second part of the above passage, though, he spoke about what he would consider the wrong kind of person to wed. To him, a woman that lacks godly discretion and good judgment makes about as much sense to marry as putting a piece of gold jewelry into a pig's snout. Neither of those things makes sense. One should note, however, that even though he had said fair woman that his remarks also apply in today's culture to a man, too. Young men need godly discretion and good judgment just as much as young women. He concluded the above passage by saying that the righteous only desire good and that the best for which the wicked can hope only leads to excess, wrath, and arrogance. In other words, good comes from those that truly love the Lord and that are committed to Him. But something far less comes from the wicked.

Godly Truths are Forever but Lies are Soon Gone (12 September)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 12:19-20

"The lip of truth shall be established for ever: but a lying tongue is but for a moment. Deceit is in the heart of them that imagine evil: but to the counsellors of peace is joy."

Solomon said above that the lip of truth shall be established forever but that a lying tongue is only for a moment. In the first part of that statement, he was talking about the content of what was being spoken rather than about the lips of the individual actually doing the speaking. However, in a temporal sense, his saying may not always be correct. For example, someone might say that it is raining outside. But while that statement might be true at that specific instant, it obviously will not be true forever. Therefore, in speaking about a truth that is established forever, Solomon was talking about specific eternal truths rather than about just any facts that might only be temporarily true.

So the specific truths to which he was referring are the precepts that are recorded in the Scriptures. For example, it is eternally true to say that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son to sacrificially die on the cross at Calvary for lost sinners. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Similarly, it is eternally true to say that a person can have everlasting life by committing to Him, by trusting in Him, and by entering into a personal relationship with Him. It is eternally true to say that the Lord is always with those that have come to Him by faith and that are trying to serve Him in this present world. Matthew 28:19-20 says, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

Solomon then concluded the above passage by saying that deceit is in the heart of those people that imagine or plot to do evil. Such people do not love the Lord nor do they wish to serve Him. Therefore, it is also eternally true to say that they are headed for an eternal judgment that they will not enjoy if they do not come to the Lord by faith while they can. But if they will come to Him, He will receive them.

Poverty and Shame for Refusing Correction (13 September)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 13:18-19

"Poverty and shame shall be to him that refuseth instruction: but he that regardeth reproof shall be honoured. The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul: but it is abomination to fools to depart from evil."

Few people enjoy being corrected when they have done wrong or have made a mistake. Sometimes correction is in the form of verbal instruction. Sometimes it is in the form of punitive action. While most people probably do not like being corrected, though, it is an important part of civilized life and also of the Christian life. Within society, people must live by certain rules or laws to maintain decency and order. So when someone violates the code, he or she must be corrected to avoid a repeat of the bad behavior. That is also true for people that have come to the Lord by faith in the right spirit and with the right attitude, too.

In one sense, correction shows that the corrector has accepted responsibility for its citizens. That is true of society. It is also true of the Lord. He takes seriously how His people live. In another sense, correction also shows ownership. Society corrects its citizens. Similarly, the Lord corrects those that are His own, too. In fact, the writer of the book of Hebrews says that to not be corrected when wrong shows that one does not belong to the Lord. Hebrews 12:7-8 says, "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons." Therefore, while correction may seem difficult at the time, it should also be somewhat reassuring to the godly believer.

Some people, though, do not care about the reassurance that comes from being corrected. Just like some individuals in society are habitual criminals, some people in life have continually refused to come to the Lord. Solomon said that such people will reap poverty and shame in this life because they have refused instruction. He also said that such people look on coming to the Lord and on living in accordance with biblical instruction as a disgusting thing. They do not want to come to Him. They do not want to live for Him. They do not want any part in Him while in this life. The really bad part about that, however, is that they also will not have any part in Him in eternity. They will be lost forever and ever.

Crown of the Wise, Faithful Witness, and Fear (14 September)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 14:24-26

"The crown of the wise is their riches: but the foolishness of fools is folly. A true witness delivereth souls: but a deceitful witness speaketh lies. In the fear of the LORD is strong confidence: and his children shall have a place of refuge."

Solomon first said above that the crown of the wise is their riches and that the foolishness of fools is folly. In saying those things, he was comparing the honor of the ethically and religiously wise person to the honor of the simpleton, dumb, or just plain stupid person. His use of the words "wise" and "fools" also suggests that he was comparing godly, saved people to ungodly, unsaved people. One can know that because logically someone that has not come to the Lord by faith could never be considered wise and someone that has come to Him by faith could never be considered a fool. So the honor of godly, saved people is found in their riches because they will likely use their wealth to support worthy causes. By contrast, the best honor of the ungodly, unsaved person is only folly and foolishness.

He next said that a true witness delivers souls and that a false witness tells lies. The context of his statement refers to a courtroom environment. For a case to be properly judged, reliable witnesses that can report what did and what did not happen are often required. So an honest witness will enable the judge to render the proper judgment. But when a witness is dishonest, then the results may be that innocent people will be condemned and that guilty people will go free. Such outcomes are disastrous to the judicial process. Within that same context of judgment, though, one can sure that the Lord's eternal judgment on the other side of the grave will be right on target. Today is the day of salvation. But tomorrow if one has not come to the Lord by faith will be the day of eternal condemnation and everlasting torment. Thus, the only right solution is to come to Him today.

Solomon concluded the above passage by speaking about the fear of the Lord. Fearing the Lord means to revere Him and to hold Him in high esteem. It is also the key to obtaining the godly wisdom and the godly understanding that will lead a person into the right paths of life and away from the wrong paths. Psalm 111:10 says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever."

A Multitude of Counselors and the Way of Life (15 September)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 15:22-24

"Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established. A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it! The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath."

Solomon said above that counselors and advisors are important when someone is trying to accomplish some great task or wanting to make some kind of important decision. In business, for example, the heads of corporations usually have close confidantes with which they can share the most important company secrets as they plan together about how to move the organization forward. In churches, various boards are often set up for the express purpose of making important decisions. Even within politics and within government affairs, administrators and leaders have counselors and advisors to help guide them in the work. Therefore, Solomon recognized the need for counselors and advisers within every type of organization. In fact, he even said that without them purposes or plans often fail.

He next said that a person has joy or gladness by the answer that he or she gives and that a good word spoken at just the right time can be very good. Because he was already talking about good counsel, though, one might reasonably conclude that Solomon meant that the good word spoken at just the right time would also be in the form of good counsel. Therefore, that maybe being the case, what would he have considered good counsel? The answer is that he would say that good counsel is any good word that points people to the Lord. The reason for saying that is because he said that they have joy by the answer from their mouth. But what can bring greater joy to anyone than being able to say that he or she has come to the Lord by faith, has made a commitment to Him, is trusting in Him, and has entered into a personal relationship with Him? Once a person has crossed into eternity, none of the usual business-related decisions will mean anything. The only thing that will matter is what people have done in their hearts with the Lord.

The last clue that good counsel means pointing people to the Lord is that it will cause a person to look above for life and to depart from *hades* below. Those are eternal concepts that imply that good counsel is also related to eternal issues.

Godly Understanding and Sweet Pleasant Words (16 September)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 16:22-24

"Understanding is a wellspring of life unto him that hath it: but the instruction of fools is folly. The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips. Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones."

In looking at the above passage, Solomon clearly distinguished between godly understanding and ungodly knowledge. Ungodly knowledge is a fool's knowledge or perception of the things of this world. Solomon simply called it folly. But godly understanding is a wellspring of eternal life within each person that has it. The Hebrew word that was used for "understanding" means to have insight, prudence, or good sense. The psalmist wrote in Psalm 111:10, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever." Thus, in using the same Hebrew word as the above passage, the kind of understanding that becomes a wellspring of eternal life to the possessor is also the same understanding that one acquires from fearing or revering the Lord. So by default, that also means that the person that does not fear or revere the Lord also does not have that understanding or the eternal life that results from it.

When speaking to the Pharisees, Jesus said that what one speaks out loud is usually an accurate reflection of the person's heart. Matthew 12:34-35 says, "O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things." Thus, in agreeing with Jesus, Solomon next said that the heart of the wise teaches his or her mouth what to say and that the heart also adds knowledge to the person's lips. So when trying to see if someone is in the Lord or is not in Him, one of the quickest ways to know is to listen to his or her speech. If one listens long enough, the person's language will eventually show his or her true allegiance. Pleasant words consistently come from the lips of those people that truly love the Lord and that are truly committed to Him. Those words, according to Solomon, are like honeycomb because they are sweet to a person's soul and also producers of good health to one's bones.

Having a Foolish Child or Having a Merry Heart (17 September)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 17:21-22

"He that begetteth a fool doeth it to his sorrow: and the father of a fool hath no joy. A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones."

Solomon said above that the parents of a fool will be unhappy. The Hebrew word that he used for "fool" means to be a simpleton, dumb, or just plain stupid. So such an individual is a "dumb fool" rather than an "evil fool." He said that the parents are saddened when their children turn out to be "dumb fools" and he had good reasons for saying that. According to him, "dumb fools" frequently get involved with the wrong kinds of people. Those wrong people can then lead them into lives of immorality or even into lives of crime. He said that foolish people usually cannot or do not control their language. They always either intentionally or unintentionally say the wrong things. So those tendencies are pretty bad. But even more tragically, Solomon also said that the "dumb fool" will someday fall.

However, one should be careful to note that he was talking about more than just falling in the sense of having difficulties in this life. He was talking about that. But he was also talking about having difficulties on the other side of the grave. Whenever he spoke about fools, he was always speaking about people that have chosen to not come to the Lord by faith in the right spirit and with the right attitude. That conclusion is logical because only a fool would say no to the Lord. Psalm 14:1 says, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works...." In the original manuscripts, the words "There is" do not appear in the above verse. So the actual rendering should be that the fool has said no to God in his or her heart. That being the case, the solution for the fool is to simply say yes to Him. Come to Him by faith. Receive Him as Savior and Lord. Commit to Him. Trust in Him. Enter into a personal relationship with Him. Then by doing those things, the "dumb fool" will become among the wise, and the sad parents will become among the glad parents.

Thus, choosing to come to the Lord by faith leads to the merry heart about which Solomon next spoke. That means that godliness always leads to earthly and eternal happiness and joy. But choosing the ungodly path leads to a broken spirit.

Settle Disputes by Witnesses or by Casting Lots (18 September)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 18:17-18

"He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him. The lot causeth contentions to cease, and parteth between the mighty."

Solomon first said in the above passage that a person that puts his or her own cause ahead of the truth will frequently be found out when all of the facts are known. The Hebrew word that was used for "cause" means a controversy, a dispute, or even a case before the courts. Therefore, the scenario is pretty simple. Whenever there is some kind of dispute or controversy, he said to be wary of only hearing one side of the argument. By saying that the person was first in his or her own cause, Solomon was implying that the truth was not as important to the individual as was coming out on top. That is why witnesses are so important in such matters. To get at the most reliable version of the truth, one should hear multiple accounts of the events in question so that the best decision can be made. Matthew 18:15-16 says, "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established."

So as a minimum, Jesus said that one should hear at least two or three witnesses before deciding a matter. But after Solomon spoke about the person that is first in his or her own cause, he next said that the lot causes contentions to cease and causes a separation between the mighty. By those words, he was referring to the casting of lots. During biblical times, the casting of lots was often used to settle disputes when nothing else worked. Many people might consider the casting of lots as a form of gambling since the Roman guards had cast lots for the garments of Jesus while He was being crucified. However, at the same time, Aaron had cast lots to determine the goat to be sacrificed. Leviticus 16:8 says, "And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the LORD, and the other lot for the scapegoat." Joshua had also cast lots to divide the Promised Land to the people. Joshua 18:10 says, "And Joshua cast lots for them in Shiloh before the LORD: and there Joshua divided the land unto the children of Israel..." So the casting of lots had been an acceptable way during those times for people to settle disputes.

Choosing the Lord's Plans and Being Ethical (19 September)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 19:21-22

"There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand. The desire of a man is his kindness: and a poor man is better than a liar."

Solomon first said above that a person has many purposes, thoughts, plans, or devices in his or her heart but that the purposes of the Lord are the ones that should actually come to pass. That is the same as saying that His will or that His plans are always better than those of each person. But there is an important consideration that must be taken into account with that statement. It is called free will. II Peter 3:9 says, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." According to that verse, the Lord wants everyone to be saved. So that means that His will or that His plan is for all people to come to Him by faith, to commit to Him, to trust in Him, and to enter into a personal relationship with Him. However, because He loves all people, He does not force Himself on anyone. He gives them the choice to come to Him or to not come to Him. So what Solomon basically said above is that people would be better off if they forsook their plans and received the Lord's plans for their lives.

In the second part of the above passage, he said that the longing or that the desire of a person's heart is his kindness and that a poor person is better off than a liar. The Hebrew word used for "kindness" means goodness, kindness, or faithfulness. So that means that a poor person with integrity that has been found kind, good, or faithful is better off before the Lord than the person that has gained great success in the world by being deceitful. Solomon often spoke about the importance of living right and of doing right. Those qualities are much more important to the Lord than just being successful in the world's eyes. Proverbs 19:1 says, "Better is the poor that walketh in his integrity, than he that is perverse in his lips, and is a fool." Too many times, people are more concerned about achievement than about their personal ethics. For that reason, they will often do whatever it takes to get ahead. But poor ethical behavior always results in a poor quality lifestyle. Thus, people that have not come to the Lord by faith should do so today. But those that have come to Him should always live by the very highest biblical standards.

Wait on the Lord, Do Not Repay Evil, Be Honest (20 September)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 20:22-23

"Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the LORD, and he shall save thee. Divers weights are an abomination unto the LORD; and a false balance is not good."

Being patient is always good and always correct but even more so in the matter of repaying evil. Solomon said in the above passage that a person that has been hurt by someone should wait upon the Lord for revenge. Other writers of Scriptures also encouraged the same. David said in Psalm 27:14, "Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD." Paul wrote in Romans 12:17-19, "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible...live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."

There are at least four reasons for not taking revenge on other people. The first is that the person may get himself or herself into trouble by breaking the law. The second is that one may be further hurt if the attempt to repay evil turns ugly. The third is that the Lord has the perfect way to care for His saints and no one can improve upon that. The fourth is that the person that has done the evil has an eternity, too. So people that are in a personal relationship with the Lord should try to pray others into the fold rather than hurt them as they have hurt others.

In the second part of the above passage, Solomon once again encouraged honesty in business dealings. Earlier he had said in Proverbs 20:10, "Divers weights, and divers measures, both of them are alike abomination to the LORD." Those words were essentially the same as his above words. That suggests that merchants of his days might have been even more dishonest than at other times in history. The practice of using different weights and measures was used to determine how much of a particular product that the consumer had purchased. When the salesperson modified the weights and measures in his or her favor, then Solomon said that it was a disgusting thing to the Lord. All people should be honest. But those people that have come to the Lord by faith and whose primary hope is no longer in this life should be even more honest. With the Lord, cheating others is never right.

Seek God, Live for Him, and Trust in His Wisdom (21 September)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 21:21-22

"He that followeth after righteousness and mercy findeth life, righteousness, and honour. A wise man scaleth the city of the mighty, and casteth down the strength of the confidence thereof."

Solomon said above that the person that follows after righteousness and mercy will find life, righteousness, and honor. While his words might have had a temporal rendering, the much more important rendering relates to eternity. The Hebrew word that he used for "righteousness" means to be vindicated or to be justified by God. The Hebrew word that he used for "mercy" means goodness or kindness. Thus, the eternal significance is clear. Jeremiah 29:12-13 says, "Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." According to those verses, the person that seeks the Lord with all of his or her heart will find Him.

John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The Greek word that was used for "believeth" means to commit to and to trust in the object of one's belief. So according to that verse, the person that commits to the Lord and that trusts in Him will not perish but have everlasting life. Thus, that truth and the above truth when put together clearly show that the goodness of God and that the salvation of God are directly related to seeking Him with all of one's heart, to committing oneself to Him, and to trusting in Him. When those things are done humbly from a pure heart, the person will be born again. Then he or she will enter into an eternal personal relationship with the "Creator of Everything."

In the second part of the above passage, Solomon indicated that godly wisdom is greater than physical strength. The Hebrew word that he used for "wise" means to be shrewd, to be prudent, to be ethically wise, or to be religiously wise. Thus, whenever he used that word, he was always referring to a godly person because he would never call wise an ungodly person. So his above words about the wise meant that the godliness of the godly is always better than the false confidence of the ungodly. In this life and beyond, the Lord and His people will always prevail.

Understanding the Value of Eternal Truth (22 September)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 22:20-21

"Have not I written to thee excellent things in counsels and knowledge, That I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth; that thou mightest answer the words of truth to them that send unto thee?"

In a court of law, nothing is more important to a case than that the truth be known. In the same sense, in the eternal courts of the Lord nothing is more important than that the truth be known there, too. But in those two situations, the parties that need to know the truth are different. Also their reasons for needing to know the truth are different, too. In a court of law, the judge or the jury needs to know the truth so that he or they can render the correct decision. But in the Lord's eternal courts, He is not vulnerable to the lies of witnesses or defendants. In fact, He already knows the whole truth and whether or not the defendant is innocent or guilty without ever hearing from any witnesses. So the person that will need to know the truth in His court is the defendant.

In the above passage, Solomon said that he had told excellent things to his listener so that he or she would know the truth and know how to answer. Of course, he was talking about the eternal truths concerning the Lord and how to be right with Him. No knowledge has any value if it does not keep a person from dying lost. So the first important thing for each person to know is that he or she is birthed into this life already guilty before God and already separated from Him. The reason for that guilt and separation is the sin of Adam. Because every person born from Him has inherited his sin nature, every person is born already a sinner before he or she ever does the first wrong thing against the Lord.

Therefore, no one can ever do anything of his or her own to reverse that guilt and separation because the works of an individual will not suffice. Isaiah 64:6 says, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags...." According to that verse, everything that a person might do to make things right with the Lord is as filthy rags in His sight. So the second important truth is that no person can reconcile himself or herself to the Lord. But through the death of Jesus on the cross, any person can come to Him by faith, be cleansed from his or her sins, and be saved. According to the Scriptures, that is the truth.

Giving the Lord one's Heart and Living for Him (23 September)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 23:26-28

"My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways. For a whore is a deep ditch; and a strange woman is a narrow pit. She also lieth in wait as for a prey, and increaseth the transgressors among men."

In the above passage, Solomon seemed to be stepping outside of himself to speak to all young people from within a divine context. One can know that for sure because no person would ever benefit eternally simply by coming to him. That being the case, the opening plea for the young person's heart and for his or her observing certain ways must be coming from the Lord. He is the one that calls people unto Himself. He is the one that makes Himself available to all of those that seek Him with all of their heart. Jeremiah 29:12-13 says, "Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."

Thus, to come to the Lord by faith, to commit to Him, to trust in Him, and to then enter into a personal relationship with Him is what Jesus later described as being born again. Being born again means that the person is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. It means that he or she will be led into the right paths of this life. It is also what Solomon meant above when he said that the Lord desires for young people to observe His ways. So, all young people are commanded to live according to the Lord's standards rather than according to their own. However, one should note that to an eternal God that always has been, is, and always will be that everyone is young. Therefore, no one is exempt or excluded from the command.

One might question why the Lord wants people to live according to His ways. The reasons are pretty simple and even obvious. First, He is holy. In Him is no darkness. He hates sin. People are born into this existence separated from Him because of their sin. Jesus died on the cross at Calvary to pay the human penalty for sin even though He was without sin. So for all of those reasons, He wants those people that have come to Him by faith to live holy lives that are separated from the evils of this life. The second reason that the Lord wants people to live according to His ways is because outside of His ways one will only find trouble. Thus, it is not His desire for any person to live in sin or to be involved with sin.

It is Important to be Honest with the Wicked (24 September)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 24:24-26

"He that saith unto the wicked, Thou art righteous; him shall the people curse, nations shall abhor him: But to them that rebuke him shall be delight, and a good blessing shall come upon them. Every man shall kiss his lips that giveth a right answer."

Nothing in this life is much worse than someone that tells lies. Such a person cannot be trusted or counted upon for conveying critically important information. So in the above passage, Solomon spoke about the individual that is intentionally dishonest. He then spoke about the person that is intentionally honest. But one should be very careful about how he or she understands what Solomon was saying because more people may be guilty of being dishonest than what many might think. The lie of the dishonest person is that he or she tells a wicked person that the wicked person is righteous. By definition, a wicked person is someone that is hostile towards the Lord. A righteous person is someone that has been vindicated or justified by Him. Therefore, the two are very different and they will have very different eternal outcomes.

Wicked people will die lost and be forever separated from the Lord in a place of eternal torment and suffering. By contrast, righteous people will go to be with the Lord at death and be forever with Him. The Apostle Paul wrote in II Corinthians 5:8, "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." So the reason that many people might be guilty of the above lie is because they might want to be kind and give their hearers more confidence in their eternal destiny than what they should rightfully have. To tell someone that has not come to the Lord by faith and that has not committed himself or herself to Him that everything is alright with the Lord is actually cruel and a disservice. So that leads to the person that is intentionally honest with wicked people. By telling them about their true eternal condition, the wicked, ungodly person has the chance to come to the Lord by faith and be saved. That is far better than ever giving someone false confidence in their eternal destiny.

Solomon concluded the above passage by saying that people will kiss the lips of the person that gives the right answer. So once again, he praised being honest.

Where to Turn in Trouble or with a Heavy Heart (25 September)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 25:19-20

"Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint. As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, and as vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to an heavy heart."

Every person must occasionally face some tough times in his or her life. For that reason, when Solomon spoke above about having confidence in an unfaithful person, he had in mind the kind of person that someone might turn to when those troubles and difficulties arise. His conclusion was that one cannot turn to an unfaithful person because that would be like having a broken tooth or having a foot out of joint. In other words, an unfaithful person is pretty much useless to anyone that really needs help. The Hebrew word used above for "unfaithful" means someone that acts treacherously or is deceitful. Thus, Solomon's opinion was that such a person would not be any help during times of trouble.

So the obvious question is to whom can someone turn when in a very troubling or a very difficult situation? The answer quite simply is that he or she can always turn to the Lord. He is an ever present help in the time of need. He will never turn anyone away that comes to Him by faith in the right spirit and with the right attitude. Thus, Hebrews 4:16 says, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." So the Lord is faithful. He happily and graciously receives sinners that are in trouble.

In the second part of the above passage, Solomon compared the taking away of one's garment in cold weather and the putting of vinegar upon nitre to that of singing joyful songs to cheer up someone that has a heavy heart. No one would ever consider taking someone's garment from him or her in cold weather to be a good thing. Similarly, the putting of vinegar on nitre or into a carbonated soda would not have been appropriate for someone with a heavy heart either. So his conclusion was that singing joyful songs to someone with a heavy heart will not comfort that person because the songs will not solve his or her problems. When people have a heavy heart, they need something or someone that can really meet them at their point of need. Thus, in that regard too, the Scriptures proclaim that the Lord can help a heavy heart. He will always help those that come to Him.

Deceiving one's Neighbor and Betraying Secrets (26 September)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 26:18-20

"As a mad man who casteth firebrands, arrows, and death, So is the man that deceiveth his neighbour, and saith, Am not I in sport? Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth."

Sometimes people make trouble for themselves by their own actions. One way is to do something particularly troubling to someone else and then to claim that it was all done just for fun. Solomon spoke about such people above when he said that they deceive their neighbor and then claim that they did not mean any harm. But to deceive someone means to betray them. So how can one individual betray another individual and then claim that it was all just for fun? The answer is that he or she cannot. Solomon compared being deceived by a supposed friend to being struck by a firebrand, by an arrow, or by death. Those three things are all pretty serious. A firebrand is like an arrow with a burning tip on the end. An arrow, of course, is very sharp and capable of penetrating skin, tissue, and critical organs. Those types of weapons kill people. So in the same sense, Solomon said that deceiving a friend is like killing that friend. Proverbs 24:28 says, "Be not a witness against thy neighbour without cause; and deceive not with thy lips."

He next spoke about the evils of being a talebearer. Such a person is someone that slanders or talks against other people usually behind their back. If one has a complaint or an issue with someone, though, he or she should always approach the individual and try to correct the matter. But the talebearer will usually tell everyone else about the complaint or issue except the offending party. Proverbs 11:13 says, "A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter." So in the second part of the above passage, Solomon compared the trouble that can be caused by a talebearer to the fire that can be caused by wood. To start a fire, all one must have is burnable material like wood, oxygen, and a spark. To start a conflict with another person, all one needs is a personal issue or private complaint, oxygen, and a talebearer. Proverbs 18:8 says, "The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly." So Solomon always advised people to be very careful around those kinds of people. Proverbs 20:19 says, "He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips."

Ungodly People are Very Different than the Godly (27 September)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 27:19-20

"As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man. Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied."

In the first part of the above passage, Solomon said that the heart of one ungodly person like water to water is very much like the heart of another ungodly person. Similarly, he said that the heart of one godly person like water to water is very much like the heart of another godly person. Because of that general truth, he was able to identify many common traits among ungodly people and many common traits among godly people, respectively. For example, he was able to say that ungodly people are troublemakers and that they speak negative things. Proverbs 16:27 says, "An ungodly man diggeth up evil: and in his lips there is as a burning fire." He was able to say that their path is figuratively in darkness. Proverbs 4:19 says, "The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble." However, by contrast, he was also able to say that godly, righteous people speak good things. Proverbs 10:11 says, "The mouth of a righteous man is a well of life...." He was able to say that they also desire good for themselves and for others. Proverbs 11:23 says, "The desire of the righteous is only good...."

So the two types of people share many common traits within their own group. But the traits of the two groups when compared to each other are quite different and often even opposites. The reason for those extreme differences is because of the change that has taken place in the latter group's heart that has not taken place in the former group's heart. In other words, the Scriptures teach that godly people have sought the Lord by faith, that they have committed themselves to Him, that they are trusting in Him, and that they have entered into a personal relationship with Him. Because of those common steps that lead to biblical salvation, Solomon could say that the hearts of the ungodly tend to be very similar and that the hearts of the godly also tend to be very similar. Unfortunately, those huge differences are representative of those people that die lost and of those people that die saved. Because godly people have come to the Lord by faith while in this life, they will go to be with Him forever and ever once they have died and left this life. But ungodly people will not go to be with Him because they have not come to Him by faith in this life. For that reason, Solomon sadly said that *hades* is never full.

How to have Plenty and How to be Blessed (28 September)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 28:19-20

"He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread: but he that followeth after vain persons shall have poverty enough. A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent."

Solomon earlier made a statement that was very similar to the first part of the above passage. Proverbs 12:11 says, "He that tilleth his land shall be satisfied with bread: but he that followeth vain persons is void of understanding." When one puts those two statements together, then they obviously compliment each other. First, he said that the person that tills his or her land will have plenty of bread and that he or she will also be satisfied with bread. That simply means that the hardworking person will be pleased with the fruits of his or her labor. Some people may think that simple bread is not much of a blessing. But the person that has labored diligently to produce it will be very pleased with the results. Second, he said that the person that lacks godly understanding will follow vain or ethically worthless people and end up in poverty. So his or her lack of godly understanding will cause him or her to choose the wrong kinds of companions. It will also cause him or her to focus on the wrong and the most unprofitable activities in life.

Therefore, in the first above case, the remedy is for the hardworking person to keep on keeping on. He or she does not need to change anything. But in the second case, the remedy is for the person that lacks godly understanding to come to the Lord by faith and to then let the indwelling Holy Spirit choose his or her companions and also control his or her activities. In the second part of the above passage, Solomon even said that the faithful person will be blessed. That means that the person that works hard and is satisfied with bread can be blessed. It also means that the person that once lacked godly understanding can be blessed, too. The reason that both individuals can be blessed is because being faithful to the Lord is a choice. Many people in life choose to work hard to accumulate a lot of money and be rich. But Solomon frowned on that because accumulated riches do not guarantee a blessing. The wealthy are often obsessed with either becoming wealthier or with losing what they have. So their riches are not a viable path to being blessed. What does guarantee being blessed, though, is to do what was just indicated. Come to the Lord by faith and let the Holy Spirit control one's life.

Ignoring Correction and Speaking Hastily (29 September)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 29:19-20

"A servant will not be corrected by words: for though he understand he will not answer. Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? there is more hope of a fool than of him."

In the first part of the above passage, Solomon spoke about the servant that will not be corrected by words even though he or she may understand the command. Such a servant is ungodly because not answering means to not obey. So from that one can see that there is godly understanding and worldly understanding. There is also godly wisdom and worldly wisdom. Godly wisdom and godly understanding come from the Lord. They are developed over time in the hearts and lives of those people that have come to the Lord by faith. By contrast, worldly wisdom and worldly understanding are developed in people that have lived in the world for a reasonable amount of time and have learned from their experiences. But the most important point is that worldly wisdom and worldly understanding are only of value in this existence. No matter how wise about the world that one might become in this life, that kind of wisdom and understanding all gets left behind. However, godly wisdom and godly understanding have eternal value because they benefit people in this life and they also prepare a person for the life to come.

Solomon next said that one who speaks too hastily has less hope than a fool. That is because once the words have been spoken, they cannot be retrieved. So because of that, James the half-brother of Jesus cautioned people to be careful about what they say. He described a person's tongue as being like the bridle on a horse and like the helm on a ship. A little movement in the bridle causes movement in the horse. A little movement in the helm causes movement in the ship. James 3:3-5 says, "Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" So people that speak too hastily without giving thought to their words will often later regret what they have said. But like with "dumb fools" that are caught in their foolishness, it will be too late to undo what they have already said.

Adulterous Wife Analyzed and Unseemly Things (30 September)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 30:20-23

"Such is the way of an adulterous woman; she eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness. For three things the earth is disquieted, and for four which it cannot bear: For a servant when he reigneth; and a fool when he is filled with meat; For an odious woman when she is married; and an handmaid that is heir to her mistress."

In the two verses preceding the above passage, Solomon described the sights of three things that were too wonderful for him to imagine and four things that were too difficult for him to understand. Proverbs 30:18-19 says, "...The way of an eagle in the air; the way of a serpent upon a rock; the way of a ship in the midst of the sea; and the way of a man with a maid." Thus, he thought that the way of an eagle flying through the air was a majestic and a wonderful sight. He thought that the way of a serpent slithering upon a rock was a wonderful sight. He also thought that a ship traversing its way through the sea was a wonderful sight, too.

All three of those sights were wonderful to him. He then concluded the list by indicating that he could not understand the way of a man with a maid or with a young virgin. However, it is not until one puts those two above verses with the first part of the above passage that one can really understand the entire meaning of his saying. In the two above verses, he described the steps of an adulterous woman when she is looking for a man to drag into her sin of sexual immorality. At first, she preys for him in the same way that an eagle flies through the air looking for its prey. Next she uses all of her abilities to allure him like a serpent that makes its way across the rocks. Then, she makes her way through dangerous waters like a ship that is passing through the sea. Finally, she tries to hide her adulterous activities like a man might try to hide his actions with a young virgin. According to Solomon, those are the progressive steps of an adulterous woman.

He concluded the above passage by listing four things that the earth cannot bear. First, it is not seemly for a slave to rule. Second, it is not good for a fool to be stuffed with food. Third, the earth cannot bear an ill-tempered wife when she is angry. Fourth, it is not good for servants to be the main inheritors of their master. While any of those things can happen, each one tends to go against the norm.

All Shall Eat the Fruit of their Ways and Devices (01 October)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 1:31

"Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices."

Godly wisdom unlike worldly wisdom will keep a person on the right paths in life and also prepare him or her for an eternity with the Lord. By contrast, worldly wisdom might place one among the rich, the successful, and the powerful of this world. But it will not do a person any good on the other side of the grave. Those things that only have value in this life will be left behind at death. Thus, they have no value to the individual once he or she has passed away. In the above passage, Solomon spoke about those people that ignore godly wisdom at the expense of all other things. They many times measure the success of their lives by financial status. But that is a big mistake that they will regret for all eternity.

Solomon said above that such people will eat the fruit of their own way. That is the same as saying that they will reap what they sow. A person plants an apple tree and someday assuming that all goes well expects to eat apples. Similarly, if a person does not come to the Lord by faith in this life while the opportunity is available, then he or she will suffer the fate of the above passage and also face an eternity without Him. But why does a person that does not come to the Lord eat the fruit of their own way and get filled with their own devices? The answer is simple. When someone seeks the Lord, commits to Him, trusts in Him, and enters into a personal relationship with Him, then he or she becomes a new person in Christ. II Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature...." It is that new creature in Christ who has been spiritually born again that will cause the person to behave differently.

But in considering the spiritual rebirth, the above passage is interestingly true for both saved and unsaved people. The unsaved person will not live for the Lord. So he or she will suffer from the fruit of their way and by being filled with their own devices. By contrast, the saved person will live for the Lord. So he or she will be rewarded by the fruit of their way and by their own devices. Thus, the simple conclusion is that the saved and unsaved have different ways and different devices. They will also have different final destinations.

Godly Wisdom Leads to Good, Right, and Life (02 October)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 2:20

"That thou mayest walk in the way of good men, and keep the paths of the righteous."

In the above verse, Solomon referred back to what he said earlier. Proverbs 2:10-20 says, "When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee... That thou mayest walk in the way of good men, and keep the paths of the righteous." So according to him, godly wisdom and godly knowledge can accomplish three things in a person's life. They can keep a person away from ungodly, evil people. They can keep him or her away from ungodly, immoral people. Then on the more positive side, they can encourage a person to live right. Solomon described it as walking in the way of good people and as staying in the paths of the righteous.

An important biblical truth, though, is that all people are born as sinners and as separated from God. Romans 3:23-27 says, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God...." Thus, if they live their entire lives and never do anything to remove that separation, then they will die separated from Him and be apart from Him for all eternity. Romans 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." But one should note that the second part of that latter verse says that a person can do something about their separation. They are separated from Him by their sin. However, Jesus died on the cross at Calvary to pay the penalty for sin. Therefore, anyone can come to Him by faith, receive His forgiveness for their sin, and then begin living their life anew for Him. Romans 10:13 says, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

When a person comes to the Lord by faith and enters into a relationship with Him, He puts that person on the path to godly wisdom and godly knowledge. At that point, the three benefits discussed above from godly wisdom and from godly knowledge are theirs for the choosing. But because God loves everyone, He gives them the free will to choose to come to Him or to choose to not come to Him. He also gives them the choice to live for Him or to not live for Him. But one should note that living for the Lord is the best life that one can possibly live.

Serving Others rather than Devising Evil (03 October)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 3:29-30

"Devise not evil against thy neighbour, seeing he dwelleth securely by thee. Strive not with a man without cause, if he have done thee no harm."

In the above passage, Solomon said to not make trouble for other people, to not start fights with others for no reason, and to not seek trouble with those that have not caused any trouble. To the Christians in Rome, the Apostle Paul spoke similar words about coexisting with other people. Romans 12:17-21 says, "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." By saying those things, though, Paul was not interested in simply heaping hot coals on anyone's head. His mindset had instead been on getting along with others so he could present the gospel of Christ to them.

Solomon had said his words for much the same reason. Those people that have come to the Lord by faith automatically become His ambassadors to a lost and dying world. Therefore, they should be more interested in seeing others come to Him than even in seeing themselves treated fairly. Paul was often mistreated. He was often arrested for preaching Christ. He was eventually even killed because of his zealousness to share the Lord with others. Should modern-day followers of Christ be willing to do anything less? The answer is no. Many people believe that godliness should lead to greater earthly wealth since the Lord owns the cattle on a thousand hills. But a far more important truth is that godliness should lead to a life of service and even personal sacrifice. Jesus told His disciples that His people to be great before the Lord should be servants and ministers. He then died on the cross at Calvary for the sin of the world. After that many of His followers were also martyred because they would not refuse the Lord. Should modern-day followers of Christ be willing to do anything less? The answer again is no. Proverbs 11:30 says, "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise." Jesus, Paul, and Solomon said to be a soul-winner is wise.

Words of Wisdom are for this Life and the Next (04 October)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 4:22-23

"For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh. Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."

Solomon told his son to listen to his words of wisdom. The Hebrew word used for "son" was not gender specific. Therefore, his words apply to all children whether male or female and whether then or now. Also his words of wisdom should not be confused with words of worldly wisdom because he was speaking only of godly wisdom. Godly wisdom teaches a person how to be rich in the things of the Lord. It shows a person how to be in a right relationship with Him. By contrast, worldly wisdom is in general very selfish. It tells a person to get a good education to get a good job to make a lot of money to be able to buy a lot of things and to have a prosperous end of life. Worldly wisdom says to buy a nice house or nice houses, to have nice vehicles, to wear the finest clothes, and to do those things that make one either materially rich or symbolically rich in the eyes of the world. Worldly wisdom often does things for show and likes to be seen by others. By contrast, godly wisdom leads one to do things for the Lord whether anyone is watching or not.

Worldly wisdom also offers nothing to people on the other side of the grave. But godly wisdom lives right in this existence and takes one to be with the Lord forever when this life is over. Therefore, Solomon said that his words are life to those people that hear them. But while they were directed to young people, they are still relevant to anyone that chooses to hear them and to live by them. The result of living by his words of wisdom is that the individual will seek the Lord with all of his or her heart. He or she will commit to Him, trust in Him, and then enter into a personal relationship with Him. Those are the steps for being saved. Once the person has done that, then he or she is indwelled by the Holy Spirit of God. The Spirit's role is to lead godly people in the paths that they should go. He is a comforter who helps and encourages them through difficulties in life. He also teaches them about the Lord and gives them the ability to believe some incredible truths. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, a follower of Christ can believe in His virgin birth and in His resurrection. They can believe that He was and is the Son of God. They can also trust Him with their life knowing that there is eternity.

The Ways of a Person are Always before the Lord (05 October)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 5:21

"For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, and he pondereth all his goings."

Solomon spoke much about improper sexual behavior in the fifth chapter of the book of Proverbs. His conclusion was given in the above verse when he said that the ways of a man are before the eyes of the Lord. The Hebrew word that he used for "man" almost always means one that is of the male gender. But the word does not have to exclusively refer to males. For example, Proverbs 3:31 says, "Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways." Proverbs 6:26 says, "For by means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread: and the adulteress will hunt for the precious life." In the first verse, he used that Hebrew word for "oppressor." In the second verse, he used it for "adulteress."

One should note, however, that the King James Version (KJV) translators are the ones that actually made the decisions about how the Hebrew word was rendered. But the real point is that the ways of all people whether male or female are before the eyes of the Lord. So no one ever escapes His ability to see all. Given that the Lord sees everything, then the question is why anyone would ever try to get away with so much. Why would two people engage in inappropriate sexual behavior? Why would people join together to commit other kinds of crimes? If God sees all and if He knows all then no one ever really gets away with anything. Therefore, it is not logical for him or her to even try. Yet all people still do try.

In response to that, there are at least two reasons why people do wrong. One is that they are born with a sin nature that is bent on doing wrong. When Adam disobeyed the Lord in the Garden of Eden, he brought upon all human beings death and separation from God. He also made it so that they inherit from him a sin nature. The only solution to those things is to come to the Lord by faith. However, even after having done that, one must still struggle with that nature against sin. A second reason why people do wrong is because the Lord does not immediately strike down wrongdoers. So they tend to think that they have gotten away with something when they really have not. Thus, it is critical to remember that God always has a payday for sin. No one escapes His all-seeing eyes.

Godly People Can Do Much to Eliminate Thievery (06 October)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 6:30-31

"Men do not despise a thief, if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry; But if he be found, he shall restore sevenfold; he shall give all the substance of his house."

Solomon spoke above about the thief that steals food because he or she is hungry. Most people tend to express understanding for those truly desperate people that steal food because they have no other way to supply their needs. However, while they may understand the reason for the act, they usually will not be very tolerant if the person is actually caught in the act. In fact, the Mosaic Law even specified some very severe penalties for a thief. Exodus 22:1-4 says, "If a man shall steal an ox, or a sheep, and kill it, or sell it; he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep...he should make full restitution; if he have nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft. If the theft be certainly found in his hand alive, whether it be ox, or ass, or sheep; he shall restore double." So while most people might take pity on the person that steals out of necessity to eat, very few people are actually willing to tolerate it. Even the law frowns heavily upon those people that steal out of their own need.

However, godly people above all of the other peoples of the world should have compassion and concern for those people in the world that are less fortunate than they. One reason is because having come to the Lord themselves by faith they have already been shown that same compassion and concern by Him. Another is that James the half-brother of Jesus wrote in James 2:15-17, "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." So people that have come to the Lord by faith, that have committed themselves to Him, that are trusting in Him, and that have entered into a personal relationship with Him should be quick to help those individuals around them that might legitimately need help. But even more than that, they should be quick to help simply because they have a genuine desire to be helpful. If more godly people would simply be faithful to the Lord by helping the less fortunate, then they would do much to eliminate the whole need for thievery.

Receive Godly Wisdom for Help against Sexual Sins (07 October)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 7:24

"Hearken unto me now therefore, O ye children, and attend to the words of my mouth."

In the preceding verses, Solomon warned young people about becoming involved with the wrong kind of people. Proverbs 7:21-23 says, "With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him. He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks; Till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life." However, even though those words might seem to be specifically addressed to a young man, they were actually not gender specific. That means that a young man can easily become sexually involved and hurt by being in a relationship with the wrong kind of woman. But a young woman can also easily become sexually involved and hurt by being in a relationship with the wrong kind of man, too.

So in the above passage, Solomon advised young people to pay very close attention to his words. The first thing to note about his words then is actually the last part of his whole discourse. In the above quoted verses, he said that the person that enters into the wrong kind of sexual relationship is basically playing with fire. Then he gave four very clear examples that would have been easy for anyone to understand. When the ox quietly goes to the slaughter, it is the ox that is about to die. When the fool is corrected, he or she is the one that will probably suffer some very difficult circumstances. When a deer is pierced by a dart or by an arrow, the result many times is the death of the deer. In the same way, the bird that hastens to the snare is also doing so to its own detriment. So the lesson from those analogies is for the young person to think very carefully beforehand about the consequences of his or her decisions and actions.

The second thing to note about Solomon's word is what he said earlier. Proverbs 7:4-5 says, "Say unto wisdom, Thou art my sister; and call understanding thy kinswoman...." The best way to never get into serious trouble is to come to the Lord by faith early in life and then get godly wisdom and godly understanding. They will lead a person into the right paths in life and away from the wrong paths.

None of the Reasons for Turning from God is Good (08 October)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 8:32

"Now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children: for blessed are they that keep my ways."

In Proverbs 7:24, Solomon told young people to hearken unto the mouth of godly wisdom. That verse says, "Hearken unto me now therefore, O ye children, and attend to the words of my mouth." In the above passage, he told them to hearken unto the ways of godly wisdom. So, those two examples of wisdom speaking and of it leading through life show that anyone can become wise in the things of the Lord and also live for Him. God has not hidden Himself in a dark, obscure corner where He can only be found by a select few. Similarly His wisdom has not been stuck away somewhere so that it is so very hard to find. Therefore, the logical question is why more people do not find Him and it. The answer in many cases is simply because they are not interested in the pursuit.

One reason for their disinterest is because the deceptive powers of this world proclaim that there is no God. Such arguments are usually wrapped in very persuasive packages. They are usually presented by very well-educated people that seemingly have all of their facts in order. So many times people listen to and believe the lies because they are very easy to accept. However, those individuals that embrace the lie that God does not exist do so at their own peril. The day will come when each of them will say goodbye to this world and enter into eternity to answer to the God that they do not believe exists. Another reason for so much disinterest in the Lord and in His ways is because people are looking for good times in life that are seemingly only experienced by the ungodly. However, there is nothing particularly good or fun in living as they do. So for the people that believe that lie, the day will come for them, too, when they will say goodbye to this world and enter into eternity to answer to the God that says that the really best times in life actually come from living for Him.

So the reasons that people do not seek the Lord and His wisdom are many. But none of them is good. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son on the cross to pay for the world's sin. He has made Himself available and easy to find. Therefore, godly wisdom says come. But the unwise still turn away.

Those that have Messed Up should come to the Lord (09 October)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 9:13

"A foolish woman is clamorous: she is simple, and knoweth nothing."

In the above passage, Solomon said that a foolish woman is clamorous, that she is simple, and that she knows nothing. The Hebrew word used for "clamorous" also means to be boisterous or to be turbulent. Thus, the entire passage is talking about the prostitute that invites young men to come to her for their immoral, sexual pleasures. However, while Solomon may have spoken his words to a young man about being involved with the wrong kind of woman, they actually apply to young people of both genders. Young men can get involved sexually with the wrong kind of woman and create much trouble for themselves. But young women can make the same mistake with the wrong kind of man. So the question is how one can know what kind of partner is the right kind of partner.

When using the Scriptures as one's basis, the first truth which is taught by the current passage is to stay away from prostitutes. Sexual relationships are only supposed to exist between married couples. To do otherwise is to invite both trouble and divine judgment. Hebrews 13:4 says, "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." The second truth is that marriage is supposed to be between one man and one woman for one lifetime. Genesis 2:24 says, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." To that, Jesus added that the only basis for divorce is when one of the marriage partners has committed some kind of fornication against the other. The third truth about marital relationships is that the husband and the wife should both have already come to the Lord by faith. They should both have already committed themselves to Him. That being the case, they will start their lives together on solid ground and with good footing. Their children, too, will be born into the best kind of home where they can learn sound biblical principles while they are still young.

Unfortunately, the above truths about marriage and sexual relationships are ideals that many times have not been practiced in real life. So what is a person to do that has already messed up? The answer is simple. Come to the Lord today by faith and give Him the broken pieces of life. He can turn the wrong into the right.

The Wicked are Nevermore but the Righteous Last (10 October)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 10:24-26

"The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him: but the desire of the righteous shall be granted. As the whirlwind passeth, so is the wicked no more: but the righteous is an everlasting foundation. As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that send him."

Solomon said above that the fear of the wicked will come upon them and that the desire of the righteous will be granted. Many people might think that the wicked do not really have anything to fear. But if they have any wisdom at all, then they will at least fear that day of their coming judgment. Hebrews 9:27-28 says, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment..." The Scriptures teach that every person has an appointment with death and that every person following his or her death will stand before the Lord in judgment. For those that are wicked, eternal judgment will result in eternal condemnation and separation from the Lord. But for those that are righteous, eternal judgment will be the first step towards eternal blessings and everlasting presence with the Lord.

Therefore, if the hope of the godly person is to be with Him and it should be, then that hope will be satisfied. Solomon next said that the wicked will pass away as quickly as a whirlwind. That does not mean that their years on earth will be few because life is short for everyone regardless of their time here. But it means that they will never be heard from again following the eternal judgment mentioned above. It will be just like they never existed. By contrast, those people that have come to the Lord by faith while in this life will be an everlasting tribute to Him.

Solomon concluded the above passage by speaking about the worthlessness of lazy people. The analogies of vinegar to the teeth and of smoke to the eyes express the regret that a person later has after using a slothful person to deliver a message. Any combination of things can happen in such a case. The sluggard may not deliver the message to the right place. He or she may not deliver in a timely manner. He or she may not even deliver the message. Then, even if the message is delivered, the sender may stress over getting a timely response from his or her message. Solomon never found any good traits in lazy people. But he often found bad traits in them. So his conclusion was that being lazy is very bad.

Presenters of the Gospel will be Abundantly Blessed (11 October)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 11:24-26

"There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself. He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him: but blessing shall be upon the head of him that selleth it."

In the above passage, Solomon said that there is blessing in scattering and that there is poverty in withholding. An application of those words can be given in a temporal sense and also in an eternal sense. In a temporal sense, he was talking about the individual who shares from his or her abundance to help those of greater need. In the sense that scattering seeds produces abundant crops, so the scattering of one's resources if done wisely can also produce abundant crops in the lives of others. A person should always take care to provide first for the needs of his or her own family. But no one needs to be a hoarder of this world's goods when others are suffering. In fact, Solomon said that withholding more than is needful leads to poverty. That poverty can be emptiness in one's soul. It can be the loss of the person's wealth or even leaving that wealth behind at death. By contrast, he said that sharing people will always have increase. Sometimes that increase will be in the form of good health, of well-being, or of even becoming wealthier.

In the eternal sense, Solomon was also talking about the spreading of the gospel. Proverbs 11:30 says, "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise." People that have freely received the grace of God should be eager to share that grace with others. Those that have been set free from their sins should be eager to also see others set free. The way to do that is by scattering spiritual seed wherever one goes. That seed can be as simple as a kind word or as complicated as opening the Scriptures to show someone how the Lord tries to draw all people to Himself. Solomon said that the liberal soul shall be made fat. The person that figuratively waters others shall be watered. Those truths find life in a person when he or she lives by the most important teaching in the Scriptures. Matthew 22:36-39 says, "Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

No Evil for the Just but Mischief for the Wicked (12 October)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 12:21-22

"There shall no evil happen to the just: but the wicked shall be filled with mischief. Lying lips are abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly are his delight."

In looking at the first part of the above passage, it is important to understand that Solomon often spoke in general principles rather than in spiritual absolutes. That means that the principles are in general almost always true. However, one cannot say with absolute certainty and without exception that they are always true. He said that no evil shall happen to the just but that the wicked will be filled with mischief. The first part of that statement will be absolutely true on the other side of the grave once one enters into eternity. The just are those individuals that have come to the Lord by faith and that have entered into a personal relationship with Him. So their eternity is secure and they will not have to endure any kind of evil on the other side.

But on this side of the grave, a person that has come to the Lord by faith cannot always be sure that evil times will never come. The deacon Stephen was stoned to death for being a positive witness for the Lord. The Apostle Paul was a godly man and was totally committed to the cause of Christ. In fact, he wrote much of the New Testament. But he still spent many years in Roman prisons just for trying to tell others about the Lord. Then in the end, he was martyred for the cause of Christ. Similarly, the Apostle Peter was crucified upside down because he also tried to share Jesus with others. So they are just three of the very, very many instances where godly saints were subjected to the evil devices of others through no fault of their own simply because they had tried to serve the risen Lord.

Solomon next said that lying lips are a disgusting thing to the Lord. In a court of law, failing to tell the truth can hurt an innocent party and favor a guilty party. In everyday life, failing to tell the truth can hurt someone's reputation. It can also cause a person to suffer wrongful loss. Therefore, all people but especially godly people should always be honest. Solomon said that people that deal in truth are a delight to the Lord. But those that do not are an abomination and will be judged.

Walking with the Wise versus walking with Fools (13 October)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 13:20-21

"He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed. Evil pursueth sinners: but to the righteous good shall be repayed."

The old adage of birds of a feather flocking together is definitely true based upon what Solomon said in the above passage. According to him, the sure path to godly wisdom is clear. Of course, it obviously must begin with the Lord because there is no godly wisdom apart from Him. But obtaining godly wisdom does not stop at that point. Psalm 111:10 says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments...." In response to that verse, people show their biblical fear for the Lord by revering Him in all of His splendor and glory. They also do so by coming to Him by faith in the right spirit and with the right attitude, by committing themselves to Him, by trusting in Him, and by entering into a personal relationship with Him. At that point, all of the pieces for obtaining godly wisdom will be in place. Then, there is only one more thing to be done. Solomon said above that people become wise when they walk with wise people. That is the same as saying that young born again saints mature in the Lord as they flock together with other more mature saints in the Lord. Thus, the whole process is simple and very much foolproof.

But in also speaking above about those people that have not come to the Lord by faith, Solomon first of all identified them as fools. The Hebrew word that he used for "fools" means to be a simpleton, to be dumb, or to be just plain stupid. So he was talking about "dumb fools." He then said that they and their companions will be destroyed both in this life and in the life to come. Thus, the end of ungodly people is eternal separation from the Lord. That also means to be condemned forever and ever without remedy. So Solomon's contrast between the godly and the ungodly was once again obvious in the above passage. The godly prosper and do well in this life. But the ungodly suffer calamity upon calamity. The godly have a personal relationship with the Lord in this life and into eternity. But the ungodly have no such relationship in this life or in the next. As a result, the conclusion is simple. To die lost is the worst way to leave this existence. But many will do so because they have chosen to not have any part in the Lord or in His way of life. To die saved, though, is the best possible way to leave this life.

Fear the Lord and be Slow to Get Angry (14 October)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 14:27-29

"The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death. In the multitude of people is the king's honour: but in the want of people is the destruction of the prince. He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly."

Solomon said in the above passage that the fear or the reverence of the Lord is a fountain of life that leads one from the snares of death. To fear the Lord means to revere Him and to hold Him in the highest esteem. It means to commit oneself to Him and to trust in Him concerning all of the important issues of life. According to Solomon, fearing the Lord is a person's pathway to gaining earthly and eternal safety. It is also the pathway to gaining godly wisdom, godly understanding, and godly knowledge. Psalm 111:10 says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever." Proverbs 1:7 says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge...." So the obvious conclusion is that one can live their best possible life by first fearing the Lord. The wisdom, understanding, and knowledge that one acquires from fearing Him will show the individual those things to say and to do in this life while leading him or her from those things not to say and to do.

So truly fearing the Lord is a tremendous blessing that goes right along with receiving honor. Solomon next said that a multitude of people are the king's honor but that the terror or the destruction of a prince occurs when the people want or are lacking. The likely meaning is that godly leaders will fear the Lord and will be good, righteous leaders. As a result, they will be honored by having a large group of satisfied followers. By contrast, ungodly leaders will not fear the Lord, be good, or be righteous. So the resulting unwillingness of the people to follow them will be their destruction or worst nightmare. Another important trait for godly leaders and for godly people, in general, is to be patient and slow to anger. Solomon concluded by saying that the people will have great difficulty following someone that is emotional and easily angered. Thus, having patience and self-control are very important. II Peter 3:9 says, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

The Proud, the Wicked, the Pure, and the Greedy (15 October)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 15:25-27

"The LORD will destroy the house of the proud: but he will establish the border of the widow. The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the LORD: but the words of the pure are pleasant words. He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live."

Solomon said above that the Lord will destroy the house of the proud but that He will establish the border of the widow. Those words show that He will pull down those people that exalt themselves beyond measure but that He will push up or care for those people that are in great need. In considering what he said, though, one must distinguish between the two kinds of pride. The kind of pride that causes a person to do a good job is good. The kind of pride that causes a person to take care of his or her possessions is also good. But the kind of pride that causes a person to turn from the Lord is not good. Psalm 10:4 says, "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts." Similarly, the kind of pride that causes an individual to be exalted in his or her own eyes is also not good. Proverbs 16:18 says, "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."

Solomon next said that the thoughts or the devices of the wicked are disgusting but that the words of the pure are pleasant. The Hebrew word used for "pure" in that verse means to be ethically and morally clean. The Hebrew word used for "wicked" means to be evil, displeasing, or unpleasant. Therefore, he said that the thoughts or the devices of evil, displeasing, or unpleasant people are disgusting to the Lord. At the same time, however, ethically and morally clean people speak good words. But it is important to understand that people actually choose whether or not to be "pure" or to be "wicked." Romans 3:10-11 says, "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God." According to those verses, no one initially chooses the Lord in life. But when they see Him as the "Creator of Everything," they can come to Him by faith and become ethically and morally clean. Another ungodly trait that often goes away when one comes to the Lord by faith is greed. Solomon said that greedy people trouble their own house. But coming to the Lord should cause a person to not be so motivated by bribery or by other forms of wrong gain.

There is a Way that Seems Right to Man but it is Not (16 October)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 16:25-27

"There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death. He that laboureth laboureth for himself; for his mouth craveth it of him. An ungodly man diggeth up evil: and in his lips there is as a burning fire."

To die lost and to be eternally separated from God in never ending torment and suffering is the worst possible outcome to this life for any human being. But according to Solomon in the above passage and Jesus in the below passage, many people will think that they are eternally alright when they really are not. So how absolutely tragic it is that so many people are so wrong about something that is so important. Nevertheless, Jesus said in Matthew 7:13-14, "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

So what did Jesus mean by the strait and narrow gate? Unfortunately, while many people might correctly understand that a strait gate will be hard through which to pass, they incorrectly conclude that the way through it will be by doing a lot of good works while on earth. Thus, some people think that eternal salvation comes by being good. But what is good? Jesus said that there is none good but God. Some people think that if they are more good than bad, then that is what it will take. But that is as wrong as thinking that one can do it just by being good. Some people think that a loving God would never send anyone to *hades*, and they are absolutely correct. But the truth is that they send themselves by rejecting the work of Christ on the cross at Calvary. He died to pay the sin debt for those that will come to Him by faith in the right spirit and with the right attitude. Thus, to somehow think that one can enter into the kingdom of God just by being good or by doing more good than bad is to trample upon the Lord's good name. That kind of thinking represents a way that seems right to man but leads to eternal death.

Solomon concluded the above passage by saying that the good things that one will acquire in this life requires honest labor and hard work. But an ungodly person is someone that is worthless and good for nothing. So such a person makes trouble for others and speaks evil things that are only intended to hurt innocent people.

Wicked People Bribe but Godly Wisdom brings Joy (17 October)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 17:23-24

"A wicked man taketh a gift out of the bosom to pervert the ways of judgment. Wisdom is before him that hath understanding; but the eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth."

Solomon first said above that wicked people will sometimes use their money to pervert justice. That means that they will offer bribes if necessary or whenever possible to buy their way out of difficult situations. In fact, when the Apostle Paul had been unjustly imprisoned for ministering for the Lord, the Roman curator Felix had hoped that he would give him money to purchase his freedom. But Paul would not do that. So he remained in prison. Acts 24:24-27 says, "And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee. He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him. But after two years...Felix, willing to shew the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound."

Therefore, Paul remained in prison for several more years, was released, was arrested again, and was later executed all because he would not initially bribe the curator. Next after having spoken about paying bribes, Solomon then said above that godly wisdom is before those people that have understanding. According to him, those are people that have come to the Lord by faith. They have committed themselves to Him. They have the Holy Spirit of God dwelling within them. So because of those things and by the Lord's help, such people are able to live lives of inner peace and of inner joy regardless of their outer circumstances. They can also have an inner confidence in Him as they live for Him. So while living for the Lord in this life may not always be easy, it can still always be done victoriously. By contrast, Solomon said that the eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth. That means that they cannot find true lasting peace and joy even though they search the whole world for them. The reason for their failure is very simple. Proverbs 3:33 says, "The curse of the LORD is in the house of the wicked: but he blesseth the habitation of the just." Therefore, the godly are blessed. But the ungodly are not.

Being in Christ Helps Resolve and Avoid Offenses (18 October)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 18:19-20

"A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle. A man's belly shall be satisfied with the fruit of his mouth; and with the increase of his lips shall he be filled."

Solomon said above that an offended brother or an offended sister is harder to be won back than trying to overthrow a strong city. He also said that the contention or the strife that is between them can sometimes become like the bars of a castle or of a very strong fortress. That means that both sides will put up their defenses and be very unwilling to compromise. Therefore, Solomon strongly advised great care in dealing with relatives and also in dealing with other people of like faith. Feuds within a family are often caused because two members have a disagreement that keeps growing and growing into something bigger and bigger. Eventually, the feud gets to the point that various family members stop talking to each other and may even become violent against each other. So Solomon said that such situations should be avoided at all costs. In the same way, however, contentions and disagreements between brothers and sisters in the Lord can also mushroom into much bigger disturbances.

When that happens, a church split can occur simply because of a contention that was allowed to grow out of control and beyond measure. Therefore, Solomon proposed an intelligent solution to the problem by saying that people should be careful about what they say. When he said that a person's belly will be satisfied with the fruit of his or her mouth, he meant that the person's inner being will be satisfied by his or her good speech. James the half-brother of Jesus wrote that the tongue is an evil member of the body that no person can tame. But when people come to the Lord by faith in the right spirit and with the right attitude, then they are born again. Then when those born again people commit themselves to the Lord, then their tongue also becomes part of that commitment. That means that coming to the Lord by faith and committing to Him will clean up people from the inside out. It also means that they will be much more agreeable and much less likely to let contentions arise and grow. Solomon spoke above about an offended brother or sister. Nevertheless, those people that love the Lord and that love each other can choose to not offend others and to also not be so easily offended.

Fearing the Lord is Good but Being Slothful is Bad (19 October)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 19:23-24

"The fear of the LORD tendeth to life: and he that hath it shall abide satisfied; he shall not be visited with evil. A slothful man hideth his hand in his bosom, and will not so much as bring it to his mouth again."

Solomon said above that the fear of the Lord tends to life, that it causes one to be satisfied, and that it protects from evil. Based upon those thoughts, four questions can be asked. First, what does it mean to fear the Lord? Fearing the Lord means to hold Him in the highest esteem and to put Him first in one's life ahead of everything else and ahead of everyone else. Second, how or why does it tend to life? The Scriptures teach that the beginning of godly wisdom and the beginning of godly knowledge result from fearing the Lord. So when one comes to Him by faith and is put on those paths of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge, his or her whole life will be honoring to the Lord. That means that he or she will be led into the right paths of life and away from the wrong paths. Third, why is a person that fears the Lord satisfied? The answer is that the resulting godly life produces joy and peace in the person's heart. That equates to satisfaction. Fourth, why does such a person gain protection from evil? The protection from evil results since lives on the right paths usually do not tangle with lives on the wrong paths.

Following those words about fearing the Lord, Solomon next spoke about slothful people. He often said negative things about them. In fact, he never associated being lazy with being godly. So he would probably even say that a lazy person is too lazy to come to the Lord by faith. But whether or not he would actually say that, he did say above that lazy people are too lazy to feed themselves because of the effort required. On other occasions, he said that slothful people will always be under someone else in life, that they will not prepare a meal for themselves, that they are comparable to those people that are wasteful, that they refuse to work, and that they do not take care of their property. Therefore, his view of them was that they are among the most pathetic people in this whole existence. However, if they have never expended the energy to even come to the Lord by faith, then their being lazy in that regard is causing them to make the biggest mistake that one can make in this life. That is true because life is very short and because eternity will be very, very long. No one will want to spend their eternity apart from the Lord.

Godly Leading, Making Vows, and Divine Discipline (20 October)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 20:24-26

"Man's goings are of the LORD; how can a man then understand his own way? It is a snare to the man who devoureth that which is holy, and after vows to make enquiry. A wise king scattereth the wicked, and bringeth the wheel over them."

Solomon said above that a person's goings or steps are of the Lord. However, it is important to understand that the person's actual choices are not. One can know that for sure because of the words of the Apostle Peter. II Peter 3:9 says, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Thus, the Lord wants all people to be saved. But not all people choose to be saved. Therefore, what Solomon said implies that God orders their steps so that they will see Him as God and then have an opportunity to come to Him by faith and be saved. For example, a person might see the Lord as the Creator of the world in a beautiful sunset and be drawn to Him. He or she might hear a gospel song or a gospel message and be drawn to Him in that way. A person might read the Scriptures and then recognize his or her need for the Lord. So the Lord reveals Himself in many ways. But it is up to the person to respond.

Solomon next said that a person is snared or trapped when he or she devours that which is holy after having made a vow to do something. The Hebrew word that he used for "devoureth" means to speak rashly. Therefore, he was talking about the person that speaks rashly or foolishly to vow to do something to the Lord or for the Lord and then decides not to do it. On another occasion, he indicated that that kind of behavior is not wise. Ecclesiastes 5:4-5 says, "When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay." Solomon concluded his thoughts by talking about how a wise king deals with wicked people. Those words have a clear temporal interpretation. But the much more important eternal interpretation will be when the Lord as king judges all lost people and forever separates them into eternal condemnation and torment. That will be a horrible time for those people that do not know Him as Savior. So it is very important for them to know that today is the day of salvation. The Lord will never turn anyone away that sincerely comes to Him by faith.

Keeping One's Tongue, the Proud, and the Slothful (21 October)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 21:23-25

"Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles. Proud and haughty scorner is his name, who dealeth in proud wrath. The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour."

One of the most important things that any person can do is guard what he or she says. Solomon said that the person that keeps his or her tongue under control avoids a lot of trouble. But James the half-brother of Jesus wrote that the tongue is a small member of the body and that it can sometimes be a source of great evil. James 3:6-8 says, "And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison."

He also said that no one can tame his or her tongue. While that does not mean that a person can never keep himself or herself from saying unkind things, it does mean that no one can keep from ever saying unkind things. Jesus said that people speak out of the abundance of their heart. So that means that a godly heart will tend to speak pleasant, godly things and that an ungodly heart will tend to speak unpleasant, ungodly things. Therefore, the solution to an evil tongue is to come to the Lord by faith and be saved.

Solomon next said that a proud and haughty scorner deals in proud wrath. By that, he was speaking negatively about the extremely proud and arrogant person. Obviously those are not the traits of the godly. But even worse than that, they are the traits of the worst ungodly. Such people have the kind of pride that makes them lift themselves up in their own eyes. They are boastful even when they have nothing about which to boast. They are also sometimes internally angry and very easily provoked to outward anger. So for them like for the person with the evil tongue, the solution is again to come to the Lord by faith. Finally, Solomon concluded his words by saying that slothful people figuratively kill themselves by refusing to work. They desire to have more. But they are too lazy to try to obtain what they desire. Thus, he implied that it is better to be stupid than to be lazy.

Do Not Rob the Poor or Oppress the Afflicted (22 October)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 22:22-23

"Rob not the poor, because he is poor: neither oppress the afflicted in the gate: For the LORD will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those that spoiled them."

In the above passage, Solomon said to not steal from the poor just because they are poor. He also said that making fun of or abusing them is the same as blaspheming the Lord for having created them. Proverbs 17:5 says, "Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker...." In identifying poor people, though, he was really talking about anyone that might be given underdog status in this life for whatever the reason. So, one should not take advantage of the weak, the sick, the afflicted, or anyone else that is vulnerable. One reason for not doing so is because it is wrong to treat people wrong.

Another reason is because the Lord will take care of the poor and the afflicted by taking from those that have taken from them. In addition to the above passage, David also indicated that the Lord will come to the aid of all vulnerable people. Psalm 12:5 says, "For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the LORD; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him." Of course, one should note that both Solomon and he were speaking in general principles rather than in spiritual absolutes. In this case, that means that God's payday may or may not always be in this existence. But the important thing to remember is that He will always render the right judgment in His time. Therefore, one should be very careful about ever looking down on other people. It is not right, and godly people should never do so.

From a completely different perspective, though, everyone comes into this existence poor. Of course, that statement does not have anything to do with his or her financial status. It pertains to their spiritual status. Matthew 5:3 says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." To see oneself as being spiritually poor is to also see oneself as being in need of the Lord. Such people will seek Him with all of their heart, will commit to Him, will trust in Him, and will enter into a personal relationship with them. Then they will go from being spiritually poor to being spiritually rich regardless of their finances.

Intoxicating Beverages Have Two Extreme Sides (23 October)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 23:29-30

"Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine."

Just a few verses earlier, Solomon cited the likely consequences for those people that are either drunkards or gluttons. He said in Proverbs 23:20-21, "Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags." A winebibber is someone that drinks intoxicating wine or banquet wine to excess and becomes drunk. A glutton is someone that eats too much food too often and then jeopardizes his or her health and appearance. Neither condition is healthy. Neither condition should be considered wise. Neither condition will do anything positive to make one wealthier. In fact Solomon said that both conditions taken either separately or together will likely cause the afflicted person to be poor and to be reduced either literally or figuratively to rags.

In the above passage, Solomon added that people that drink alcoholic beverages to excess will also usually have woe, sorrow, and contentions. Their speech will usually be babbled so that they slur their words and talk foolishly. They will sometimes hurt themselves or others by their behavior. An example is that such people often cause very serious automobile accidents. The final calamity cited above is that too much drinking of intoxicating beverages causes bloodshot eyes.

So what is the biblical case for alcoholic beverages? At another time, Solomon spoke about the deceptiveness of liquor. Proverbs 20:1 says, "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise." To be a mocker means that the alcohol will cause a person to boast great things, to have maybe too much confidence, or to even be careless with his or her words. Thus, drinking too much might contribute to the woe, sorrow, and contentions stated above. At the same time, though, drinking wine can have a positive aspect, too. Proverbs 31:6-7 says, "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more." So wine has two sides with which one must deal.

Prepare before Building and only Cautiously Tattle (24 October)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 24:27-28

"Prepare thy work without, and make it fit for thyself in the field; and afterwards build thine house. Be not a witness against thy neighbour without cause; and deceive not with thy lips."

The two key words in the first part of the above passage are "prepare" and "afterwards." Solomon's simple point is to make all of the necessary preparations for building the house and after having done that then build the house. One will occasionally see a location where the construction of a building has begun. But the building was not completed because the builders had not adequately prepared. When those types of things happen, the builders will usually be embarrassed because they could not finish the work and the partially constructed building will be an eyesore within the community. Luke 14:28-30 says, "For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish." In the same sense, Solomon and Jesus both taught that people should always create a sound plan for accomplishing whatever their purpose. When the purpose is big, then the plan should be very detailed.

Solomon next said that people should not be witnesses against a neighbor or a friend without a cause. They also should not speak lies about the neighbor or the friend if they do speak. People sometimes call someone that runs to a person of authority to report even the least deviant behavior of another person a tattletale. So Solomon's advice was to not be a tattletale unless the situation really warranted it. For example, a person in a group might see someone take two donuts when the instructions are to only take one. Obviously the person taking the two donuts has disobeyed the instructions. But is it really important to say anything to the group leader? The answer is probably not. On the other hand, one may see another person taking illegal drugs or doing something else to harm themselves or others. Should the person witnessing that event say something to someone that can help? The answer is probably yes. Solomon's point was to use discretion about when to tattle and when not to tattle. Some events are not so important that they need to be shared with anyone. But his second point was to be truthful when tattling.

Caring for One's Enemies and Handling the Tongue (25 October)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 25:21-23

"If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee. The north wind driveth away rain: so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue."

Solomon's opening statement in the above passage might seem confusing until one actually considers what he was really saying. Most people would say that a person should do whatever it takes to destroy his or her enemies. In wartime situations, for example, to not eliminate one's enemies would probably mean to be eliminated by one's enemy. Nevertheless, Solomon said to feed a hungry enemy and to give drink to the same thirsty enemy. The Apostle Paul later added to what Solomon said. Romans 12:18-21 says, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men...Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

So why did both men say such a ridiculous thing? The answer is that they were being eternally-minded rather than being temporally-minded. To be eternally-minded means to see one's enemy in the same way that the Lord sees them. Every person that has ever come to Him by faith was once His enemy. However, God still showed each of them His love, His kindness, and His goodness even though those things were not immediately returned to Him. Because He loves even those people that have made themselves His enemies, godly people should do the same.

Solomon next said that an angry countenance drives away a backbiting tongue in the same way that a north wind drives away the rain. But in Jerusalem, the north wind actually brings the rain. So the preferred rendering should be that an angry countenance drives away a backbiting tongue just as the north wind brings in the rain. However, regardless of how one understands that expression, a person that reacts angrily to a backbiter will still correct the situation. That means that if the victim of the backbiter or if the hearer of the backbiting reacts negatively, then the backbiting will cease. The reason is because the backbiter will no longer have an audience. Solomon often said that the tongue is an evil that must be guarded.

Contentious People and Talebearers Kindle Strife (26 October)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 26:21-22

"As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife. The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly."

Solomon above compared coals to burning coals, wood to fire, and a contentious person to kindling strife. But he did not use the same Hebrew word for the two occurrences of "coals." Instead the words that he used meant to add new coals to coals that are already burning. Of course when that happens, the new coals will almost immediately begin to burn, too. In the same way, adding wood that is not burning to a fire will soon cause the new wood to also start to burn. So that is the same way that a contentious person causes strife or trouble. He or she may be put into a stress free environment where there is not any trouble. But pretty soon, the trouble arises simply because he or she creates a stressful environment.

However, it should be pointed out that Solomon said in the preceding verse that a fire will go out if one removes either the wood that is contributing to the fire or if one removes the fire itself. In the same way, the stressful environment will also go away if either the contentious person is removed or if the fire is removed. Thus, his message was simple. A contentious person causes strife or trouble by saying bad things about other people. So the solution is to either remove the negative tongue that is saying the bad things about other people or to remove the ears that are feeding on the bad things that are being said. Another way of saying the same thing is that a gossip's or a talebearer's damage will be greatly reduced simply by not listening to his or her words.

In the second part of the above passage, Solomon continued talking about those people that cause strife or trouble by saying bad things about others. By calling their words wounds that can go into the innermost parts of the belly, he showed just how much a person's words can hurt. Also since that was the second time that he spoke about the hurtful words of a talebearer, it shows the extent of his concern for words that should never be spoken. Proverbs 18:7-8 says, "A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul. The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly."

How to Receive Praise and Removing Foolishness (27 October)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 27:21-22

"As the fining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold; so is a man to his praise. Though thou shouldst bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him."

Solomon first spoke above about how well a person receives praise from others. A fining pot is used to heat silver and gold to very high temperature so that the dross and the impurities can be removed. Once that has been done, the refiner will then know if the metal is pure and useful for other purposes. In the same sense as the fire on the precious metal, the compliments of another person will also show the true character of an individual. Some people crave recognition by other people. So if the praise causes him or her to be puffed up or inflated in his or her own eyes, then it has done more harm than good. In writing about having godly love for one another, Paul wrote in I Corinthians 13:4, "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up," Thus, he was saying that love that is puffed up or inflated is not true godly love. At the same time, though, some people hear praise but do not let it change their focus or demeanor. So Solomon would say that praise for those kinds of people is warranted.

He next said that foolishness cannot be removed from a fool. To bray something means to pound it or to beat it. Thus, the idea of pounding a fool in mortar with wheat is that a fool combined with pure wheat in a mixture that permanently holds the two things together still will not make the fool any less of a fool. The Hebrew word that he used for "fool" refers to someone that despises godly wisdom, that is quarrelsome, or that is licentious. So unlike the "dumb fool" who is just plain stupid, the fool in the above passage is an "evil fool." One should note, though, that the "evil fool" is an "evil fool" by choice. Because of the death of Jesus on the cross at Calvary, any person can choose to come to the Lord by faith and leave his or her foolishness far behind. No one can beat foolishness out of a fool. But by a spiritual rebirth and by the indwelling Holy Spirit, the fool can become wise because he or she is a new creature in Christ. II Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

Do Not Be a Respector of Persons but Love the Lord (28 October)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 28:21-22

"To have respect of persons is not good: for for a piece of bread that man will transgress. He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him."

Solomon said above that an individual should not be a respector of persons. To be a respector of persons means to show favorable treatment to some people over other people for all of the wrong reasons. For example, he said that a respector of persons will even show special treatment to other people for something as basic as a simple piece of bread. So that behavior in his opinion was very disgusting. The simple truth is that every person deserves to be treated like his or her own person. No one should ever be judged or be evaluated by characteristics or traits that are beyond his or her control. In fact, biblically speaking, no person should ever be judged by any other person anyway. The Lord is the only true judge. In His own time, He will judge all people according to His perfect standards. So similar to Solomon's viewpoint, being a respector of persons was said by the Apostle Peter to also be very much unlike the Lord. Acts 10:34-35 says, "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respector of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." So God is not a respector of persons, and no human being should be either.

Next Solomon concluded the above passage by talking about people that have an unhealthy love for money. In fact, he even said that such people have an evil eye and that poverty shall come upon them. The Apostle Paul also wrote about the evils of an unhealthy love for money. I Timothy 6:10 says, "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." Economists would define money as a scarce resource. They would say that people should be very prudent and very wise in all of their financial affairs. However, while taking care of one's money is quite smart, loving money is neither economically prudent nor spiritually wise. Therefore, four very simple financial principles apply. First, avoid unnecessary debt. Second, work hard for those things that one needs or wants. Third, people should own their money rather than being owned by their money. Fourth, they should love the Lord and one another rather than wealth.

Not Servant to Child and People that Cause Trouble (29 October)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 29:21-22

"He that delicately bringeth up his servant from a child shall have him become his son at the length. An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression."

Solomon said above that a master that delicately brings up a servant from youth shall have him or her for a child in the end. Those words might sound like something good when first read. But Solomon did not mean them to be positive. In fact, his actual intent was to show that it is not good for a master to delicately bring up a servant from childhood. Of course in saying that, it is important to understand that bringing up a servant delicately does not mean to do so with great care. Instead it means to pamper, to spoil, or to indulge the young servant. The contrast to that would be to mistreat the young person. But that is not correct either. Matthew 10:24 says, "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord." So first, a good servant should not be above his or her master. Second, a good servant should faithfully serve his or her master. Matthew 25:21 says, "His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant...." Therefore, a good servant should never be pampered or given the same rights and privileges as the master's own children.

Solomon next spoke about the dangerous behavior of an angry and furious person. They stir up trouble. They abound in sin. At the same time, though, they do not simply fall into trouble. Most of the time, they actually cause it. They delight in creating anxiety and strife. They find joy in doing those things that are wrong. Obviously, those kinds of people have not come to the Lord by faith. They have never committed themselves to Him or entered into a personal relationship with Him. The tragic part of their plight in life, though, is that most of the time they probably think that they have everything under control. But they are only fooling themselves. They think that the good life is being carefree. But the problem with that thinking is that their life will someday be over. Then they will have to stand before the eternal Lord that they have rejected and have to give answer to Him. At that time, they will be eternally condemned. But it does not have to end that way. If they will seek the Lord by faith in the right spirit and with the right attitude, then they will find Him and be accepted by Him. But they must choose.

One can Learn from Four Tiny but Wise Creatures (30 October)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 30:24-28

"There be four things which are little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise: The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer; The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks; The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands; The spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings' palaces."

Solomon or Agur spoke above about four very tiny creatures that are very wise. The first type of small creature is the ant. Even though ants are very small and not very strong, they are still able to gather and store their food in the summer months that will last them through the fall and the spring months. One should note that they do not eat during the winter months because they are hibernating during that time. However, when they are compared to the lazy person, they are easily very industrious and very energetic. Proverbs 12:27 says, "The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting...." Proverbs 26:14 says, "As the door turneth upon his hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed." So in choosing to be like one of the two, Solomon or Agur would say to choose to be like the ant.

The second type of small creature is the conies or the field mice. In being feeble, they are not very strong. So they make their homes in the rocks where they can find protection from stronger predators. Their wisdom is that they recognize their insufficiency and that they seek safety in the rocks. The Apostle Paul wrote that Jesus is the rock in whom weak and insufficient lost sinners can also find safety. I Corinthians 10:1-4 says, "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ."

The third type of small creature is the locust. They do not have a leader. But they are wise to be able to travel in large organized groups from one place to another. Jesus is the unseen leader and organizer of the church. The fourth type of small creature is the spider. They are wise to be able to get into places where they have not been invited. In the same way, the church is an uninvited guest in this world.

Her Husband is Known in the Gates (31 October)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 31:21-26

"She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet. She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple. Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land. She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant. Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness."

In the above passage, the list of outstanding achievements for the virtuous woman continues. In the verses preceding that passage, she was described as being committed to her family and able to run all aspects of her household. She could buy a field, take care of herself, and do whatever necessary on behalf of those around her. In the current passage, she provides the proper clothing for her family in every season. So they are appropriately attired no matter what the weather. The expression clothed with scarlet means that they probably have double clothing for very cold weather. The coverings of tapestry suggest suitable seating for those people that visit the family.

At the same time, her husband is known in the gates and sits among the elders of the land. The elders would normally make important decisions for the local people. Because the husband of the virtuous woman sits among those elders, he is almost certainly one of the elders, too. So because his wife attends to the things in the home, he is free to be a part of that gathering and of the local government.

The virtuous woman makes and sells fine linen. She is mentally strong. She is honorable. She possesses godly wisdom. She speaks with kindness. In looking at her and her family, one might be tempted to think that they are the way they are because they have everything going for them and because they work hard at the job. But that is not correct. Many years earlier, David had identified the source of all legitimate virtue and strength. Psalm 18:31-32 says, "For who is God save the LORD...It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect." The Hebrew word used for "strength" in that passage is the same word used above for "virtuous." So the source of all virtue and strength for everyone is the Lord.

Apostasy Taught in the Old and New Testaments (01 November)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 1:32

"For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them."

The Hebrew word used in the above verse for "turning away" means to turn away, to apostatize, or to backslide. It was used twelve times in the Old Testament. In every case except in the above verse it was always translated as backsliding. So Solomon was actually talking about simple people being slain by their turning away, by their apostatizing, or by their backsliding. The Hebrew word used for "simple" means to be foolish or to be naïve. He always used that word to describe people that have not come to the Lord by faith. Proverbs 1:22 says, "How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity..." According to him, simple people are simple because they love being that way. The solution to being simple, though, is to seek the Lord with all of one's heart and to come to Him by faith.

An interesting parallel to the word for "turning away" in the above verse is to a similar word that was used in the New Testament. II Thessalonians 2:1-4 says, "Now we beseech you, brethren... That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first..." The Greek word that was used for "falling away" in that passage also means to apostatize or to turn away. But because the Apostle Paul wrote those words about the rapture to people in the church at Thessalonica, many scholars and theologians believe that he was talking about Christians falling away or turning away from the Lord. If that is true, then it implies that saved people can lose their salvation.

However, the fact that Paul wrote to Christians about a falling away in the world does not logically demand that Christian people are the ones that are falling away. He could easily have been talking about a general decline in religion throughout the world rather than about Christians falling from Christ. In the above verse by Solomon, the simple people that had turned away had turned from godly wisdom from the beginning. They had not come to the Lord and then changed their mind. Instead they had never come to Him. So the same may be true in Paul's writing.

Lasting Blessings for the Right and the Mature (02 November)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 2:21

"For the upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it."

James the half-brother of Jesus wrote that a godly person can ask for and receive wisdom from the Lord. James 1:5-7 says, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord." Solomon said that the Lord gives wisdom to all of those people that have come to Him by faith. But the wisdom about which James and Solomon spoke was godly wisdom rather than worldly wisdom. While worldly wisdom might encourage a person to be all that he or she can in the world, godly wisdom encourages a person to be all that he or she can for the Lord.

Between the two, godly wisdom is vastly more valuable than worldly wisdom. One that is wise in the things of the world may prosper greatly in the world. But if it is all lost in this life or left behind at death, then it does not have any staying power. By contrast, one that is wise in the things of the Lord has something in Him that will get him or her through this life and also into the life to come. So, one should consider the logic of the situation. First, if God is real, then absolutely nothing makes more sense than learning how to be right with Him. In fact, being right with Him is so important that one should never trust the matter to another person. God is pleased whenever those people that want to be in a personal relationship with Him will study His Word so that they can learn more about Him. Second, if heaven is real, then absolutely nothing makes more sense than going there at death. For that reason, all people should again try to be Bible scholars rather than being overly casual about the most important things in this existence.

Solomon said that the upright shall dwell in the land and that the perfect shall remain in it. Since he spoke about godly wisdom, knowledge, discretion, and understanding, his intended meaning was that people that have come to the Lord by faith will dwell in the land. The image of dwelling in the land shows peace in this life and eternal blessings in the life to come. Consistent with that, the perfect remaining in the land conveys the importance of maturing in the Lord.

Do Not Envy Successful People or Evil People (03 November)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 3:31-32

"Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways. For the froward is abomination to the LORD: but his secret is with the righteous."

All people whether godly or ungodly have the tendency to look at other people. Sometimes they will even let themselves be jealous or envious of those people that appear to be either more successful or to have more things. It is easy to look at someone that has much and wonder what it would be like to be in that person's shoes for a little while. But Solomon encouraged godly people to not fall into that trap. He especially encouraged them to not envy violent people that get what they have by dishonest means. His basic teaching is that a godly person should never envy anyone because a personal relationship with the Lord surpasses everything that is in this world by far.

Solomon's father, David, also encouraged people to not be envious of what others have. Psalm 37:1-2 says, "Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb." The reason for his words is simple. Those people may seem to have much in this life. But they will someday die lost if they have never come to the Lord by faith. To someone that is very young, growing older may seem like an eternity. But to someone that is very old, the question of where all the years went is usually foremost in his or her mind. So the simple adage of "this too shall pass" applies to something like envying someone else for any reason. Riches either do not last or they are soon left behind. Poverty may seem like it lasts forever. But it too will soon be over.

Therefore, a person should seek the Lord, commit to Him, trust Him, and enter into a personal relationship with Him. Regardless of how pathetic a godly person's life may seem, it will soon be over. Regardless of how wonderful an ungodly person's life may seem, it too will soon be over. Nothing in this life lasts forever, and many things do not even last very long. So the Apostle Paul put all of this into the right context when he said in Colossians 3:1-2, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."

Put Away a Filthy Mouth or Risk Being Chastised (04 November)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 4:24-25

"Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee. Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee."

The interesting thing about the above passage is that Solomon showed that godly people can still do some very ungodly things. While they should not, they are still capable. Therefore, he told them to put away a filthy mouth and perverse lips. He also gave them the illustration of children that have frontlets on their eyes so that they can only look straight ahead. In that context the Prophet Moses wrote in Deuteronomy 6:6-8, "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes."

In consideration of Solomon's advice, though, one might question how it can be known that he was talking only to godly people. The simple answer is that it does no good for ungodly people to clean up their language if they will still die lost. Therefore, he would have definitely encouraged them to first come to the Lord by faith rather than telling them to just do away with their wicked tongue. To clean up one's language without getting or being right with the Lord is literally putting the cart before the horse. So the very wise Solomon would never have done that.

The next question pertains to free will and choice. For godly people to use filthy language is wrong. But a loving Lord gives them the free will to come to Him or to not come to Him. He gives them the free will to live for Him or to not live for Him. That being the case, an important aspect of free will comes into play for people that have already come to the Lord by faith. While He gives them the freedom to choose many things for themselves, they will never get beyond His ever extending reach. That means that when they continually choose to do wrong whether in their speech or otherwise, then they will eventually come under the heavy arm of His chastisement. While His correction or chastening might seem to be somewhat light, it can also seem very harsh. While it can seem to be quick and easy, it can also seem to be lasting forever. So every person should be warned.

Wicked People will be Brought down by their Sins (05 November)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 5:22

"His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins."

In the verses preceding the above verse, Solomon warned husbands to stay away from women to whom they were not married. Proverbs 5:15-20 says, "Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well. Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad, and rivers of waters in the streets. Let them be only thine own, and not strangers' with thee...rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe...be thou ravished always with her love. And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger?" Solomon concluded his words by asking why any man would ever be satisfied with a woman to whom he was not married. Of course, one should realize that his above words actually apply both ways. Why would any woman ever be satisfied with a man to whom she was not married?

The best probable answer to those questions is that all people are sinners. They often want to have everything except those things that they already rightfully have. They often let their wandering eyes seek out those things to which they have no right. Then of course, some people many times are just looking for the extra excitement in life that multiple sexual partners might be able to provide. But one should always be aware of one very important biblical truth. Solomon said above that the sexually immoral person will be brought down by his or her sins. In this life, such people sometimes contract sexually-related diseases. In fact, sometimes those diseases can be life disabling or even life threatening. But those possible diseases are not even the worst possible outcome for such people. Hebrews 9:27-28 says, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment..." According to those verses, every person will someday die and leave this existence. Then they will stand before the Lord in eternal judgment and be required to give answer for how they have lived their lives.

Jesus died on the cross at Calvary so that lost sinners can come to Him and be saved. His Holy Spirit then indwells them and leads them into the right paths of life. Therefore, He is the only real answer to wickedness and sexual immorality.

Physical and Spiritual Adultery are close Kin (06 November)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 6:32-33

"But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul. A wound and dishonour shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away."

In the previous two verses, Solomon spoke about the plight of thieves. Proverbs 6:30-31 says, "Men do not despise a thief, if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry; But if he be found, he shall restore sevenfold; he shall give all the substance of his house." So while many people might understand why such individuals would steal, very few people are actually tolerant and forgiving of thieves. In the above passage, Solomon spoke about another kind of thievery that in most ways is much worse than the simple theft of food by someone that is hungry. He spoke about when people steal other people from their marriage partner and place them into immoral sexual relationships outside of marriage. Physical adultery is very detestable in the Lord's eyes. But He hates it so much because He has often been a victim of spiritual adultery. Some people might have difficulty with those words. But whenever someone chooses someone else or something else over the Lord, he or she makes God a victim of spiritual adultery.

The theme of spiritual adultery was often used in the Old Testament when the Lord spoke to the Jewish people through His prophets. Jeremiah 3:6-8 says, "The LORD said also unto me in the days of Josiah the king, Hast thou seen that which backsliding Israel hath done? she is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot. And I said after she had done all these things, Turn thou unto me. But she returned not. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it. And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also." So that passage shows the spiritual aspect of committing adultery against the Lord. Many people might think that God's chief desire is for all people to live right and to do right. But that is not entirely correct. His real desire is for them to first come to Him by faith and to second love Him above everyone else and everything else. When someone does that, then he or she enters into a personal relationship with Him. After that, he or she will then try to live right because living right is right.

Many People are Destroyed by Sexual Immorality (07 November)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 7:25-26

"Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths. For she hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men have been slain by her."

Solomon spoke above about the weakness of young men regarding sexual matters. Proverbs 7:1-5 says, "My son, keep my words, and lay up my commandments with thee. Keep my commandments, and live; and my law as the apple of thine eye. Bind them upon thy fingers, write them upon the table of thine heart. Say unto wisdom, Thou art my sister; and call understanding thy kinswoman: That they may keep thee from the strange woman, from the stranger which flattereth with her words." So the first truth about those words by Solomon is that sexual indiscretion does not only exist with young men. Any male and any female can let themselves be drawn into compromising sexual situations and stumble. The second truth is that his words also do not just apply to the young. Men and women of all ages can become vulnerable to their sexual passions. Therefore, Solomon said to listen to the words of wisdom and follow godly understanding. They will keep a person on the right paths in life and away from the bad paths.

He next said that many people have been hurt or destroyed by their immorality and by their sexual misbehavior. In the above scenario, the young man became involved with either a married woman or with a woman that was already living with someone else. Therefore, an immediate danger to that young fool might be if the woman's companion comes looking for revenge. Another possible danger could come in the form of disease. Many people have been afflicted by life-changing or by life-ending diseases simply because of their sinful, promiscuous behavior. Another danger is that living in sexual sin brings reproach upon the name of the Lord. It is the exact kind of behavior that is not fitting for someone that has come to the Lord by faith and that has committed himself or herself to Him. Another danger for any person that is engaged in inappropriate sexual behavior is that it can destroy a person's marriage. Many people through the years have experienced divorce because of the infidelity of either one or both partners.

The Scriptures teach one man for one woman for one lifetime. So a godly person should live a life that is honoring to the Lord. One way to do that is self-control.

Blessed is the Person that Chooses Godly Wisdom (08 November)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 8:33-34

"Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors."

The above passage shows a person's free will to come to the Lord or to not come to Him. In that respect, Solomon said to hear instruction, to be wise, and to not refuse that instruction. Thus, each of those verbs shows that the individual has been given a choice. He or she can hear or not hear instruction, be wise or not be wise, and refuse or not refuse instruction. So how would Solomon have defined godly wisdom? He would say that the wisdom that is from above must begin with the Lord that is above. That means that one must seek the Lord with all of his or her heart. It means that he or she must come to Him by faith in the right spirit and with the right attitude. It means that he or she must commit himself or herself to Him. It means that he or she must trust in Him. It means that he or she must enter into a personal relationship with Him. When a person does those things, he or she will be spiritually born again from above. He or she will be changed from the inside out and automatically made receptive to the things of the Lord. So that is what it means to be a new creature in Christ and to possess godly wisdom.

Solomon next said that those people that have come to the Lord by faith will be blessed. Thus, spiritual blessedness according to him comes from hearing the words of wisdom, by eagerly watching daily for her at the gates of one's life, and also by anticipating her at the posts of the doors of one's heart. Those images show the person's strong desire to invite godly wisdom into his or her life, and the reasons for that eagerness even make sense. With godly wisdom, one gets godly understanding and knowledge. Those things will lead him or her into the right paths in life and away from the wrong paths. They will enable him or her to live the best possible life in this earth. Then when this life is over, they will carry him or her to be with the Lord forever and ever. Thus, that way of life and that way of ending one's life are so much better than what people not in Christ have waiting for them. To leave this life without having come to the Lord by faith will mean eternal doom and everlasting condemnation for that individual. He or she will be forever separated from the Lord and also quickly forgotten. So those people that are wise will choose to come to Him by faith and with that gain godly wisdom.

Like People Draw to Like People and Act Likewise (09 November)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 9:14-17

"For she sitteth at the door of her house, on a seat in the high places of the city, To call passengers who go right on their ways: Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: and as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant."

In the above passage, Solomon described the ways of a prostitute. She sits at the door of her house and waits for the opportunity to entice the simple young man to come in unto her. The Hebrew word that he used for "simple" refers to someone that is naïve and foolish. But one should understand that in the current world that there are many male and female prostitutes and that there are many young male and female naïve, foolish people. So while Solomon's words may be addressed primarily to young men, they actually apply to both genders. By his above words, he indicated that the prostitute uses the same language that is involved in all kinds of sin. The first line is that it will be fun to do something that is biblically wrong. He or she says that stolen waters are sweet, which means no one will ever know. The second line is that it will be fun. Thus, bread eaten in secret will be pleasant.

However, Solomon concluded the above account by saying that sexual impurity leads to death. That means that the guilty person may contract a life-changing or even life-threatening illness. All kinds of negative outcomes can occur by having illicit sex. But that is only the half of it. To die young might be bad enough. But to die lost is the absolutely worst way for a person's life to end. People are saved when they seek the Lord with all of their heart and when they commit themselves to Him. Such people are immediately indwelt by the Holy Spirit. They are led by the Spirit into the right paths of life and away from the wrong. Then when they leave this life, they go to be forever with the Lord. But those that do not come to Him by faith will not have those things. That means that the death about which Solomon spoke is physical death and spiritual death. It is to be forever separated from the Lord. Thus, so much for having fun and no one knowing.

The above account suggests that when ungodly people are drawn to other ungodly people, then ungodly things begin to happen. However, at the same time, when godly people are drawn to other godly people, then godly things begin to happen.

Prolonging Days, Eternal Hope, and Way to Life (10 November)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 10:27-29

"The fear of the LORD prolongeth days: but the years of the wicked shall be shortened. The hope of the righteous shall be gladness: but the expectation of the wicked shall perish. The way of the LORD is strength to the upright: but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity."

The correct way to understand Solomon's above statement about the fear of the Lord prolonging one's days and about the years of the wicked being shortened is that those people do it to themselves. Therefore, it is not like the Lord looks down from above and decides to let some people live longer just because they fear or revere Him. Similarly, Solomon's statement does not mean that the Lord always chooses to take people out of this life just because they are wicked. Those truths are obvious because plenty of people die young and plenty of people die old. So what he was actually saying is that people that fear of revere the Lord in general live longer because they have healthier lifestyles. At the same, though, he was also saying that wicked people in general do not live as long because they have unhealthy lifestyles. Drunkards get themselves killed in a variety of ways. So do criminals and drug addicts. People that do not eat right often develop life-ending or life-shortening diseases. So the lifestyle that one chooses is important.

However, choosing the right lifestyle is not important just so that a person will live longer in this existence. The average person will live seventy, eighty, maybe even ninety or more years. But this life still ends. So the much more important issue is what happens after death. Solomon next said above that the hope of the righteous will be gladness and that the expectation of the wicked will perish. He said that the way of the Lord is strength to the upright but that destruction will be to those people that practice sin. Both of those sayings relate to eternity. The hope of the righteous or of those people that have come to the Lord by faith will be gladness because their hope will be in forever being with Him. Similarly, their strength in this life and in the afterlife will be that they have followed His ways. By contrast, the wicked and the workers of iniquity are by definition hostile to God. They cause trouble for themselves and for others. So they have no eternal hope. In fact, their expectations for eternity will come to naught. Their ends shall be eternal doom and destruction. Therefore, one should choose the Lord and live.

Trusting in the Lord rather than Financial Wealth (11 November)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 11:27-29

"He that diligently seeketh good procureth favour: but he that seeketh mischief, it shall come unto him. He that trusteth in his riches shall fall: but the righteous shall flourish as a branch. He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind: and the fool shall be servant to the wise of heart."

In the first part of the above passage, Solomon implied that there are not any shortcuts to success. He then said that the person that seeks mischief shall find it. His first statement comes under the heading of general principle rather than of spiritual absolute. That means that hard work usually leads to good success. But it does not always do so in the way that a person might like. For example, if the individual is looking for upward movements in a career, then he or she may or may not find it. If the individual is looking for financial gain, then again he or she may or may not find it. When it comes to being successful, everyone has his or her own idea of what true success actually means.

But the one way that people can always guarantee maximum success in this existence is by coming to the Lord early in life and by then letting Him have His way in their life. That will ensure that they will always be where they are supposed to be, never where they are not supposed to be, and always doing what the Lord wants them to be doing. One cannot possibly do any better than that. By contrast, the person looking for mischief and finding it is probably much more of a certainty. But that is also the path that leads to failure and eternal judgment.

Solomon next said that a person should not trust in riches because in the end they will fail. When it comes to having enough money, no one ever knows how much they will need. When it comes to saving enough money, no one ever knows how much they should save because there are simply too many uncertainties in life. So much of a person's life is lived in figurative darkness because no one ever knows what lies around the next corner. Therefore, the only life that makes any sense is the one that leans wholly upon the Lord and trusts completely in Him. People that trust in the Lord flourish as a branch. But those people that trust only in their riches especially if they were acquired unethically will find as much joy in them as someone that is feeding on the wind.

Knowing when to Speak and when to be Quiet (12 November)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 12:23-25

"A prudent man concealeth knowledge: but the heart of fools proclaimeth foolishness. The hand of the diligent shall bear rule: but the slothful shall be under tribute. Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad."

There is an old adage that encourages silence when one cannot say something nice. In addition, there are other times when silence is also the better course of action. For example, in the navy there is an expression that says loose lips sink ships. That means that when military personnel talk too much about military matters that they may sometimes tip off the enemy. With respect to talking too much, Solomon said that wise people store knowledge for later use but that fools run off at the mouth without really considering what they are saying or the impact that their words may have on others. Proverbs 10:14 says, "Wise men lay up knowledge: but the mouth of the foolish is near destruction." Similarly, he also said that some people cannot wait to share with others gossip and other forms of scandalous talk. For some reason, they seemingly cannot keep negative talk about others to themselves for very long. But Solomon credited the person that has a faithful spirit with being able to do so.

Proverbs 11:13 says, "A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter." So in the first part of the above passage, he said that a prudent person conceals knowledge rather than foolishly proclaiming all that he or she knows about something. Therefore, knowing when to speak or when not to speak is a very positive character trait. Unlike the prudent person, though, he said that fools show their foolishness by what they say. He then said that the hand of the diligent will bear rule but that lazy people will be their slaves. So while only a few diligent people ever rise to the top of the ruling class, most lazy people do usually manage to cling to the bottom of the ladder and perform the most menial tasks. For that reason, Solomon always spoke well of hardworking, industrious people. But he never said anything good about lazy people. He concluded the above passage by indicating the benefits of kind words to others. While fools do not know when to be quiet, prudent godly people that are committed to the Lord will be led to say the right things at the right times to benefit many or most.

Leaving a Godly Inheritance and Working Hard (13 November)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 13:22-23

"A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children: and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just. Much food is in the tillage of the poor: but there is that is destroyed for want of judgment."

Solomon said above that good people leave an inheritance to their children and even down to their grandchildren. However, even though many people might automatically associate an inheritance with financial wealth, the idea actually goes much deeper. The Hebrew word used for "inheritance" can also mean one's heritage. Psalm 119:111 says, "Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart." In that verse, the psalmist had taken the Lord's testimonies for a heritage or for an inheritance because it gave him joy to reflect upon them. In the same way, a person can take a parent's testimonies or a grandparent's testimonies as his or her heritage from them. Thus, that is one clear reason that Solomon had used the word "good" in the above passage. The testimonies of an ungodly parent or grandparent do not have much eternal value. But the testimonies of a godly parent or of a godly grandparent can encourage those that follow to also live for the Lord. Of course, an inheritance can involve financial wealth, too. So when it does, he suggested under the influence of the Holy Spirit to spread one's monetary resources to children and to grandchildren.

In the second part of the above passage, Solomon compared an industrious hardworking, poor person to an unwise, wasteful person. According to him, the industrious poor person that works hard for his or her return is always better off than the unwise, wasteful person that either seeks wrongful gain or that wastes whatever he or she has gained. The moral of his words is that life is difficult for most people. Very few individuals are actually born with a silver spoon in their mouths. So, most people must work hard to create their own silver spoon. For many, that means getting a job and then carefully managing their resources. But even then, the challenge is usually just to keep up rather than to actually get ahead. However, Solomon recognized those hardworking people as honorable. By contrast, unwise, wasteful people often seek dishonest gain at the expense of others or sometimes they are simply wasteful with what they have. So in both cases, he said that such people are brought down by their need of correction.

Envy, Helping the Poor, and Righteous Hope (14 November)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 14:30-32

"A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones. He that oppreseth the poor reproacheth his Maker: but he that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor. The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death."

Being satisfied with one's lot in life is a wonderful blessing. Solomon said above that it also leads to a healthier life. Too many people are dissatisfied either by their careers or by the amount of money that they make or by the job that they have or by the job that they do not have but want or by the size of their home or by the kind of car that they drive or by many, many other things. Seemingly all or at least most forms of people's wanting are driven by envy. Those people that are dissatisfied with their careers or with their jobs are really wishing that they had someone else's job. Either that or they wish that they could be treated in that career or in that job as well as someone else is being treated. That same argument applies to all of the other above forms of want, too.

Thus, when people see what someone else has, they often wish to have it for themselves. Of course, Solomon also said that such envy can figuratively make one's bones rotten and lead to poor health. So he next said that people reproach or blaspheme their Creator when they oppress the poor but that honoring the Lord is a way to show them mercy. The Hebrew word used above for the first "poor" means to be weak, economically poor, or poor in spirit. In the second use, the Hebrew word means to be poor in the sense of lacking, being in want, or being a beggar. So, Solomon was literally saying that one treats the Lord in the same way that he or she treats the weak, the poor in spirit, and the beggar. Therefore, while he always advocated financial prudence, a godly person should seek the balance between being wise with his or her money and with being helpful to the needy.

His final comment above pertained to life after death. Many people may not believe in eternal judgment or even in an afterlife. But the Scriptures teach both. Hebrews 9:27-28 says, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment...." So according to Solomon, the godly have hope in death. But the wicked because they have not come to the Lord by faith have no after hope.

How the Righteous Answer and Answered Prayers (15 November)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 15:28-29

"The heart of the righteous studieth to answer: but the mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things. The LORD is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous."

Solomon first said in the above passage that righteous people consider carefully before they blurt out an answer but that wicked people usually just recklessly let their words fly from within their own wicked heart. The Hebrew word used for "righteous" means to be justified or to be vindicated by the Lord. The Hebrew word used for "wicked" means to be hostile towards God. Therefore, Solomon was comparing and contrasting the manner in which the two very different types of people answer. Godly people are more careful about what they say than are the wicked. Thus, Proverbs 10:13 says, "In the lips of him that hath understanding wisdom is found...." Proverbs 10:32 says, "The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable: but the mouth of the wicked speaketh frowardness." On another occasion, he said that the wise will sometimes keep quiet. Thus, Proverbs 10:19 says, "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise." So one's speech or lack thereof often shows his or her true nature.

Solomon next said that the Lord is far from the wicked but that he hears the prayers of the righteous. Once again, he used the same Hebrew words for "righteous" and for "wicked" as he had above. The teaching concerning the Lord not hearing certain prayers, however, must be qualified. He will not hear the foolish prayers of wicked people. For example, if a wicked person asks the Lord to help his or her favorite team win the big game, then he or she may as well not bother. But of course, that is probably also true for the godly. However, if that same ungodly individual humbly comes to the Lord by faith and petitions to enter into a personal relationship with Him, then that prayer will most definitely always be answered. Jeremiah 29:13 says, "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." II Peter 3:9 says, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." So the Lord may not care who wins the big game. But He most definitely cares about entering into personal relationships with truly repentant sinners.

Kinds of People that Cause Trouble for Others (16 November)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 16:28-30

"A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends. A violent man enticeth his neighbour, and leadeth him into the way that is not good. He shutteth his eyes to devise froward things: moving his lips he bringeth evil to pass."

Solomon said above that perverse people are troublemakers and that whisperers slander against others to cause problems between good friends. Both behaviors pertain to what people say. Both are examples of evil people speaking unkindly about or to other people. In the first case, perverse people bring disharmony to harmonious situations. By their words, they make trouble for themselves and for others. Solomon earlier said that godly wisdom and godly knowledge will deliver a godly person from those kinds of people. He also said that such people disgust the Lord. In the second case, he said that whisperers are people that talk about others behind their backs. Since the Hebrew word that he used for "whisperer" means to slander, the obvious conclusion is that they are not saying nice things about the person being discussed. Their entire purpose is to stir up trouble. Thus, by speaking so negatively about those kinds of people, Solomon implied that godly people should look for nice things to say rather than trying to dig up dirt.

In the same sense, Jesus told a crowd of gatherers that the second great commandment is to love one's neighbor as oneself. So those people that are constantly trying to make trouble for others by the things that they say and do are definitely not living by that divine instruction. Next Solomon said that violent people entice or persuade others to join them in their devilish deeds. By leading others into the way that is not good, he indicated that they make trouble for everyone. But in contrast to the above perverse people and the whisperers, violent people actually bring physical distress to others. They not only hurt with their words, but they also hurt with their hands by the things that they do. Brawlers and murderers are examples of violent people. Solomon advised young people to stay away from them and to never be a part of what they are doing. He concluded the above passage by saying that wicked people shut their eyes to all other possible behaviors. They are so committed to their objectives of causing hurt and pain for others that they do not even want to think about anything else.

Choosing to Come to the Lord and to Live for Him (17 November)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 17:25-26

"A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him. Also to punish the just is not good, nor to strike princes for equity."

In the above passage, Solomon said that foolish children grieve their parents. The Hebrew word used for "foolish" means to be a simpleton, to be dumb, or to be just plain stupid. So he was talking about the "dumb fool" rather than about the "evil fool." But the thing that makes such young people so foolish and so distressing is not that they were born stupid. It is that they have made stupid decisions because of some very bad choices. The Scriptures teach that the Lord reveals Himself to people as the "Creator of Everything." He puts into them a belief in the existence of a Supreme Being. He also puts into them the internal belief that something is missing from or empty in their lives. At that point, they can make some choices.

They can choose or not choose to seek the Lord with all of their heart. They can choose or not choose to commit to Him. They can choose or not choose to trust in Him. They can choose or not choose to fear Him and to hold Him in the highest esteem. All of those choices are freely available to all people. Thus, even being saved or not being saved is an individual choice. So if the "dumb fool" chooses to make those positive choices, then his or her foolishness will be replaced by godly wisdom, by godly understanding, and by a godliness that will actually please his or her parents. Psalm 111:10 says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments...."

Solomon concluded the above passage by making a comment about what is right and about what is wrong. For example, while it might be right to put criminals into prison, it is wrong to imprison innocent people. While it might be right to eternally condemn a person that has chosen to not come to the Lord by faith, it is wrong to eternally condemn someone that has come to Him by faith. That is what Solomon meant when he said that it is not good to punish the just or to strike a prince for doing his job. Those forms of reproof or correction are intended for the unjust and for those wicked leaders that do not lead their people in the right way. Thus, Proverbs 12:21 says, "There shall no evil happen to the just: but the wicked shall be filled with mischief." So wise people choose the Lord and live for Him.

Death, Life, the Tongue, and a Good Wife (18 November)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 18:21-22

"Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof. Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD."

James the half-brother of Jesus wrote that the tongue is an evil member of the body that no person can tame. However, Solomon created a conflict above by saying that death and life are in the power of the tongue. In a temporal context, the conflict is that a person can get himself or herself killed by saying the wrong thing to the wrong person at the wrong time. But in an eternal context, the conflict is that a person can be caught in the middle between two extremes with little or no hope of ever acquiring eternal life. If as James said the tongue truly is evil, then what chance does a person really have of avoiding eternal death and of receiving eternal life? The answer is none if one only considers what people can do for themselves.

Isaiah 64:6 says, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." Thus, based upon the authority of that verse, nothing that a person can say or can do within his or her own strength will help that person gain eternal life. That verse says that no person can ever be good enough or righteous enough. But fortunately, there is another way to gain eternal life that is not based upon a person's goodness. In fact, it is the only way. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." That verse says that one can have eternal life by believing in the name of Jesus. However, the Greek word used for "believeth" means to commit to and to trust in the object of one's faith. Therefore, believing in Jesus in the context of John 3:16 actually means to commit to Him and to trust in Him. When one has done that, then he or she will be born again and will be on the unalterable path to eternal life.

Solomon concluded the above passage by talking about a young man or about a young woman finding a good, godly spouse. When one has done that, then he or she has found favor with the Lord. Thus, that person has reason to rejoice in Him.

Be One with Understanding and Honor Parents (19 November)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 19:25-26

"Smite a scorner, and the simple will beware: and reprove one that hath understanding, and he will understand knowledge. He that wasteth his father, and chaseth away his mother, is a son that causeth shame, and bringeth reproach."

Solomon said above that a simple person will learn from seeing a scornful person being corrected or punished and that correcting or reprovng a person that has godly understanding will increase his or her godly knowledge. According to him, a simple person is someone that is naïve, that is foolish, or that has not yet matured. So in most cases, that probably means that he or she is young. Solomon said that such a person will learn from seeing the correction of others. But while that might be good to some extent, the person of understanding being corrected is much more beneficial. The reason is because the Hebrews words that were used for "understanding" and for "knowledge" are associated with fearing the Lord and with being godly.

Proverbs 1:7 says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge...."
Proverbs 10:13 says, "In the lips of him that hath understanding wisdom is found...." Thus, one might reasonably argue that the simple person will become less simple by seeing a scorner punished. But if becoming less simple does not include bringing the person to the Lord by faith in the right spirit and with the right attitude, then it has no eternal value. Similarly, if becoming less simple does not cause one to commit oneself to the Lord and to trust in Him, then once again the whole episode has been wasted. The goal of every person in this life should be to enter into a personal relationship with the Lord and to prepare for eternity.

Solomon concluded his thoughts in the above passage by basically restating the fifth commandment of the Ten Commandments. By way of review, Exodus 20:12 says, "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee." So he said that people should always honor their parents and should always hold them in high esteem. To do otherwise will bring the individual reproach and shame. It will make him or her into a fool and bring his or her parents great sadness and sorrow. Proverbs 17:21 says, "He that begetteth a fool doeth it to his sorrow: and the father of a fool hath no joy."

Making Right Choices and Living for the Lord (20 November)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 20:27-28

"The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly. Mercy and truth preserve the king: and his throne is upholden by mercy."

Solomon said above that the spirit of a person is the candle of the Lord that searches the inner person. Some people might call that spirit a conscience since it shows a person the difference between right and wrong. So while plenty of people might do wrong things in this life, the important thing to note about what Solomon said is that the doing of wrong is always a personal choice. The Lord gives everyone a free will to choose between right and wrong. He also gives them a spirit that shows them the right choices to make. He will even do all that He can to encourage individuals to make those right choices. But He will not go beyond that. It is His desire that all people will choose to come to Him by faith in the right spirit and with the right attitude. It is His desire that all people will choose to commit to Him, will choose to trust in Him, and will choose to enter into a personal relationship with Him. But a person's choice to come to Him by faith is a personal choice. So is a person's choice to reject Him and die lost. The road to eternal salvation exists. But each person must choose whether or not to get on it.

Solomon next said that mercy and truth are important preserving qualities for a king. Not all kings exhibit those traits. But the best kings with the most stable governments do. Proverbs 16:6 says, "By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil." Proverbs 16:12 says, "It is an abomination to kings to commit wickedness: for the throne is established by righteousness." So as one understands more and more about Solomon's views for being a king, it becomes clear that he believed the throne to be about more than just having power. The right kind of king is a godly king. The right kind of king loves the Lord, lives for Him, and employs godly principles of leadership. Thus, it is no wonder that he often said that the people rejoice when a godly person is in charge. But it is important to understand that his instructions for kings apply to all people. Every person is better off loving the Lord, living for Him, and using godly principles in his or her life. That is true simply because this life is more about honoring the Lord and about living for Him than it is about anything else.

Against Laziness, Wickedness, and the Untruthful (21 November)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 21:26-28

"He coveteth greedily all the day long; but the righteous giveth and spareth not. The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination: how much more, when he bringeth it with a wicked mind? A false witness shall perish: but the man that heareth speaketh constantly."

Proverbs 21:25 says, "The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour." In that verse, Solomon said that the desires of the slothful will destroy them because they are too lazy to work for the things that they want. In the above passage, he also said that the slothful person is greedy and that he or she wants things continually throughout the day. So that attitude is obviously a problem for a couple of reasons. It is first a problem because people need to control or to put limits on the things that they want.

The Apostle John even cautioned about being too attracted to the things of this world. I John 2:15-16 says, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." Thus, being too much in the world is part of the problem. But it is also a problem to want so much and to then be too lazy to work for those wants. Solomon said in contrast to those lazy people that righteous people are unlimited givers. Thus, he was implying that laziness and greed are traits of the ungodly and that sharing with others is a trait of the godly.

He next said that the sacrifices of the wicked and the ungodly are disgusting. The reason is because the wicked and the ungodly can only give or sacrifice those things that are wicked and ungodly. In addition to that, Proverbs 21:3 says, "To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice." So the Lord wants people to come to Him by faith so that they can be saved. He wants to put into them a clean heart so that they will do pure and righteous things. He cannot be bought off by the senseless trinkets of this world. So the instruction from Solomon is to separate from the world and to seek the Lord. He next spoke about the value of a faithful witness. A false witness cannot be counted on for the truth. So he or she shall be destroyed. Thus, his simple teaching is to be honest.

Avoid Angry, Furious People and Be Not a Surety (22 November)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 22:24-26

"Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go: Lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul. Be not thou one of them that strike hands, or of them that are sureties for debts."

Solomon said above to not be involved with angry or furious people. The reasons for that advice are probably somewhat obvious. First, the adage of birds of a feather sticking together is true. But second and perhaps even more importantly, the idea of an innocent person being drawn into the ways of the wrong kind of people is also true. People of evil, violent natures often try to attract other people that they think might be corruptible. If that happens, then the previously innocent person may find himself or herself in a lot of trouble.

Therefore, Solomon often warned about being drawn into relationships with the wrong kinds of people. In Proverbs 4:14-16, he said, "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men...For they sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall." He also indicated on another occasion, though, that prudent people will recognize the potential for trouble and stay away while simple people will continue on and be punished. Proverbs 22:3 says, "A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished." So in that verse, he was implying that people that are in a personal relationship with the Lord will often recognize a potentially dangerous situation and stay away. However, the reason for their prudence is because of the indwelling Holy Spirit who tries to lead them into the right paths of life. That is a very important benefit that godly people have over ungodly people. It shows that the Lord looks out for those that come to Him.

Solomon concluded the above passage by talking about striking hands and about entering into surety agreements. To be a surety for someone means to agree to pay his or her debts if the person defaults. In modern terminology, most people would recognize such an agreement as cosigning for someone. So Solomon said to not strike hands and to not enter into that kind of agreement. Striking hands meant to confirm the deal with a handshake. Therefore, he urged great caution because that is one decision that can really mess a young person up financially.

Little Good for the Godly in Intoxicating Wine (23 November)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 23:31-32

"Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder."

Why do so many people like to drink alcoholic beverages? One could safely say that there are probably many, many answers to that question. For example, many people like to drink alcoholic beverages because they like the taste. But that taste must be acquired because most people are overwhelmed when they taste liquor for the first time. Many people like to drink alcoholic beverages because it makes them feel good. But even that is questionable because a person must learn how much he or she can drink before getting sick from the alcohol. Many people like to drink alcoholic beverages because they consider it an adult pleasure. But that adult pleasure can become a youthful nightmare if one's children pick up the habit and become addicted. Many people like to drink alcoholic beverages because it helps them loosen up around others. But if those feelings are not naturally within the person, then any good feelings that are produced by the alcohol are phony. So in the above passage, Solomon warned people to stay away from all intoxicating drinks because in the end they bite like a serpent and sting like poisonous snake.

It is true that he also later said that wine can at times be a good thing because it can help a person forget his or her misery. Proverbs 31:6-7 says, "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more." But do the individuals that have come to the Lord by faith and that have committed themselves to Him really want to regularly drown their lives in forgetfulness? The answer is probably not. Also while they might be able to refute many of the above examples, the next question is whether the consumption of intoxicating beverages will bring one closer to the Lord. The answer to that question also is probably not. So a godly person might actually be able to drink intoxicating beverages responsibly and avoid all of the possible negatives. But if that behavior does not bring one closer to the Lord, then why would he or she want to do that? Solomon warned against such behavior because it is not consistent with someone that is trying to live for the Lord. He said that it is like playing with a rattlesnake.

Live by the Golden Rule and the Field of the Lazy (24 November)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 24:29-31

"Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me: I will render to the man according to his work. I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down."

In the previous verse, Solomon stated the first two of three statements about being a witness against a neighbor or a friend. Proverbs 24:28 says, "Be not a witness against thy neighbour without cause; and deceive not with thy lips." So his first statement was to not tattle against a neighbor or against a friend unless it is really important for someone of higher authority to be aware of the situation. His point was that many times the minor indiscretions of someone else do not really need to be advertised to another person. His second statement from the above verse was to always tell the truth about the person whenever it is necessary to tattle. In other words, one should not embellish the account just to make it a little juicier.

In the first part of the above passage, he made his third statement about being a witness against a neighbor or a friend. He said to not treat the offending person in the same way that the offending person may have treated him or her. Most people will probably recognize that advice as the Golden Rule. So Solomon advised to not tattle against someone for their minor indiscretion just because that person may have tattled against them. He also said to not lie about someone just because that person might have lied against them. Both of those behaviors constitute seeking revenge. But those people that have come to the Lord by faith and that are committed to Him are to let the Lord handle those times where revenge might be desirable. Thus, a godly person's whole duty is to love God and to love others.

Solomon concluded the above passage by sharing what he saw when he passed by the field of a slothful person. His observation was that the lazy person had let his or her property completely deteriorate to the point that it was in shambles. The vineyard had been taken over by thorns and by weeds. The wall had been broken down from neglect. So his or her place was in a complete mess. The point that Solomon was making is that one can learn much from the ways of lazy people.

A Brawling Spouse, Good News, and Judgment (25 November)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 25:24-26

"It is better to dwell in the corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman and in a wide house. As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country. A righteous man falling down before the wicked is as a troubled fountain, and a corrupt spring."

Solomon said in the first part of the above passage that it is better to dwell in the small corner of a housetop than to share one's life with a brawling woman in a great big house. The Hebrew word that he used for "brawling" means to be contentious or to cause strife. So such people are troublemakers. They tend to make life miserable for everyone. For that reason, Solomon said in Proverbs 18:22, "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD." Proverbs 19:14 says, "House and riches are the inheritance of fathers: and a prudent wife is from the LORD." One should note from those verses, however, that a brawling husband can also make life miserable for everyone. So any person male or female that finds a good spouse should rejoice and praise the Lord for His goodness and His mercy to them.

Solomon next spoke about how cold water satisfies a thirsty soul. He compared it to receiving good news from a far country. However, since good news would most likely always be somewhat satisfying, the fact that he specifically referred to good news from a far country is especially noteworthy. The far country to which he was probably referring is the dwelling place of the Lord. That being the case, the good news to which he was probably referring is the gospel of Christ. He lived many years before Jesus died on the cross at Calvary for the sin of those that would come to Him by faith. However, he still knew that the Lord receives every person that comes to Him by faith in the right spirit and with the right attitude. As a result, nothing can possibly be better news than that to a truly thirsty soul.

Solomon concluded his thoughts above by saying that a righteous person bowing or falling prostrate before a wicked person is most inappropriate. He compared it to having a troubled fountain or a corrupt spring. In the end of time at the final judgment, though, every knee shall bow to the righteous Lord and confess to Him. But a person can find refuge from that time by now coming to the Lord in faith.

Do Not Believe a Wicked Heart or Hating Lips (26 November)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 26:23-25

"Burning lips and a wicked heart are like a potsherd covered with silver dross. He that hateth dissembleth with his lips, and layeth up deceit within him; When he speaketh fair, believe him not: for there are seven abominations in his heart."

It is most unfortunate that some people in this world cannot be trusted. But such is the case. In the above passage, Solomon said to be careful around those people that have burning lips or a wicked heart. Do not believe what they say because they speak deceptively. Do not trust how they act because they have deceitful hearts. There are also seven abominations in their heart. According to him, such people are like a piece of plain pottery that has been covered with silver dross or with silver waste. When silver is purified in fire, the impure part that burns off into the fire is the dross. It is not good for anything. It is not even quality silver. But the intent of the potter is to make the piece look like it is very valuable silver. However, regardless of its outward appearance, it is still just a piece of clay. So that is the same as Solomon saying that those individuals with burning lips or with wicked hearts have adorned themselves outwardly to look like they are one thing. But inwardly they are actually something very different. Thus, they are phonies.

Solomon often spoke about those people that do not control what they say and also about those people that he called wicked. He said that wicked people rejoice to do evil. He said that their ways are of darkness. Proverbs 4:19 says, "The way of the wicked is as darkness...." He said that people with burning lips speak perversely and that they are troublemakers. Proverbs 6:12 says, "A naughty person, a wicked man, walketh with a froward mouth." Proverbs 10:32 says, "...the mouth of the wicked speaketh frowardness." However, in the end, he also said that such people will be cut off from the earth and come to an untimely end. That means that they will someday leave this life, enter eternity, and stand before the righteous Lord in judgment. That will be a horrible and dreadful time for anyone that has never come to Him by faith in the right spirit and with the right attitude. But it does not have to be. Any person can choose to come to the Lord by faith and receive Him as Savior and Lord. Any person can commit to Him, trust in Him, and enter into a personal relationship with Him. He will never turn anyone away that sincerely and humbly comes to Him in truth by faith.

Care for Flocks and Herds and Riches Soon Gone (27 November)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 27:23-24

"Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds. For riches are not for ever: and doth the crown endure to every generation?"

At the time that Solomon said the above words people's primary measure of wealth was in their flocks and their herds. Therefore, he encouraged them to be diligent in the care and the handling of their livestock. That meant that they should not leave their care to just anyone. It may be alright to hire an overseer of one's property. But people should occasionally check on the overseer. No one will care about another person's property more than that person. So while it is alright to be a little trusting of others, no one should be trusting to the point of absolute neglect. That same advice would apply in current times concerning those people that oversee other people's finances and investments. While it is alright to trust one's wealth to other people, Solomon's advice was to never be so trusting that one actually becomes neglectful. The reason that he offered that advice was because people that are not careful can lose everything by being too trusting of others. So while he never advocated seeking possessions and wealth ahead of all other things, he did advocate caring for one's own possessions.

In the second part of the above passage, he said something that may make many people very sad. He said that riches are not forever. In the previous statement, he advised people to take care of their possessions and wealth. But even as he said that, the simple fact is that everyone will someday be separated from their earthly possessions and wealth. In some cases, they will lose them through natural causes. The stock market could crash. The world economy could default. Many other things can happen that will leave a person penniless. But whether or not any of those things do happen, all people someday will still be separated from their wealth and possessions by death. So he ended the above passage by implying that the crown does not last forever. The only things that do truly last forever are those things that are done for the Lord. Matthew 6:19-21 says, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt... For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." So it all begins by first giving one's heart over to the Lord.

Correcting, Stealing, and Trusting in the Lord (28 November)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 28:23-25

"He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue. Whoso robbeth his father or his mother, and saith, It is no transgression; the same is the companion of a destroyer. He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife: but he that putteth his trust in the LORD shall be made fat."

Solomon spoke first in the above passage about the kind of person that offers constructive criticism and about the kind of person that uses flattery to gain influence with others. The first kind of person is usually honest and honorable because he or she seeks to help the individual being corrected. However, that may not always be the case. When an ungodly person reproves a godly person about going along with the crowd and about doing what the crowd is doing, then the godly person might be wiser to not do so. On the other hand, when one godly person encourages another godly person to lay aside a particularly bad habit, then that kind of reproof is probably good and should be received. Solomon said that when the correcting person corrects in the right spirit and with the right motives, then the individual being corrected will usually be pleased. But with flatterers, no one is pleased when they say something nice only because they want something.

Therefore, be a godly corrector that when warranted gives good godly advice. But never be a self-serving flatterer that only flatters others for his or her selfish purposes. Solomon next said that stealing from one's parents is despicable. He said that it is a sin that is even worse than that of the common thief. Stealing is always bad. But it is especially heinous when one steals from one's own family. It is also a sin that will not go unpunished. Hebrews 9:27-28 says, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment...." Solomon next concluded the above passage by talking about proud people that try to exalt themselves in the eyes of others and about humble people that put their trust in the Lord. While it is alright to take pride in doing one's best, it is never alright to try to make oneself look better than others. The Scriptures repeatedly say that every person is a sinner. They say that every person needs to come to the Lord by faith in the right spirit and with the right attitude. So no one ever has reason to exalt themselves. In fact, every person needs to come to the Lord and to trust in Him.

Negative Pride and Ungodly Friends Bring Down (29 November)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 29:23-24

"A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit. Whoso is partner with a thief hateth his own soul: he heareth cursing, and bewrayeth it not."

Solomon said above that a person's pride will bring him or her down but that honor will hold up those people that are humble. He made similar statements about pride and humility on three other occasions. Proverbs 11:16 says, "A gracious woman retaineth honour...." Proverbs 16:18 says, "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall." Proverbs 18:12 says, "Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honour is humility." So, he was always greatly concerned about how people are affected when they have a prideful heart and when they have a humble spirit.

However, one should be careful to understand that there is a positive pride and a negative pride. Thus, even though he did not clearly distinguish between the two, positive pride causes people to do their best whenever they undertake a particular task. It causes them to do things like try to look their best or try to take care of those things of which they have been entrusted. By contrast, the negative pride about which Solomon spoke causes people to be lifted up in their own eyes and to consider themselves better than everyone else. Thus, positive pride is good to have. But he said that negative pride will bring a person down. So those people that tend to fare well with the Lord are those that are honorable and humble. God watches over everyone that comes to Him by faith and that is committed to Him.

In the second part of the above passage, Solomon said that people that join with thieves hate their own soul because they make themselves as low as those thieves. They also risk suffering the same consequences. For that reason, making oneself part of the wrong crowd is another situation about which he often warned young people. He always encouraged them to come to the Lord while they are young because godly wisdom and godly understanding will guide them away from such dangerous paths in life. That was good advice in his days. It is still good advice today. The Lord always receives those people that humbly come to Him by faith in the right spirit and with the right attitude. He also still invites them to come.

Four Beings of Strength that show God's Work (30 November)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 30:29-31

"There be three things which go well, yea, four are comely in going: A lion which is strongest among beasts, and turneth not away for any; A greyhound; an he goat also; and a king, against whom there is no rising up."

Solomon or Agur spoke above about four beings that cannot easily be overcome within their own areas of strength. The first being or the first animal is the lion. Often called the king of the jungle, his strength and power are not to be outdone. While most animals struggle for basic survival against other predators, the lion prevails over all other animals. According to the above verses, he does not turn from anything or from anyone. For that reason, Solomon said that the righteous are bold as a lion. Proverbs 28:1 says, "The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion." So they are strengthened by their standing with the Lord, and they do not turn away when faced with adversity. The Apostle John wrote that Jesus is the lion of Judah. Revelation 5:5 says, "And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof." So He also will prevail in the end and not turn from His adversaries.

The second being listed above was the greyhound. But the Hebrew word that was used for "greyhound" actually means loins, and it was translated as "loins" in most of its other Old Testament uses. So Solomon might have been referring to the comeliness of the greyhound that runs effortlessly through the open land. But because of the ambiguity of the Hebrew word, he could have also been talking about horses because of the tremendous strength in their loins. If the latter is correct, then the comeliness of the horse is in the majesty of its dress while in harness. So followers of Christ can exhibit both traits by being quick to serve the Lord and also by appropriately dressing their heart. The third being listed above was the he-goat. The he-goat leads other goats. So in the same way, those people that have come to the Lord by faith and that are committed to Him can lead other saints and especially younger saints in the ways that they should go. The fourth being that was listed above was a very powerful king that cannot be overturned. That means that parents should rule their homes for the Lord with a strong hand. The image also shows the Lord ruling with a strong hand during the Millennium.

Wisdom Produces Safety and Freedom from Fear (01 December)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 1:33

"But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil."

Proverbs 1:20-32 says, "Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets: She crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words, saying, How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity... Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you... For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them." The above passage belongs with the above verse. Solomon said that godly wisdom cries out to those people that have not come to the Lord by faith. She invites them to come to her so that their lives will go well and so that they can be in a personal relationship with the Lord. To turn at the reproof of or at the correction of godly wisdom is the first step to obtaining biblical salvation.

But it is also a continuing step for those individuals that have come to the Lord by faith so that they can be under the constant care and guidance of the indwelling Holy Spirit. By contrast, the turning away of the simple ones in the above passage applies to ungodly people that do not accept godly wisdom's invitation to come. On one occasion, Jesus rebuked some Jewish people because they would not come to Him. John 5:40 says, "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." In His doing that, though, one should note that not coming to godly wisdom and not coming to Jesus are the same. Therefore, the results to both sets of people are also the same. To refuse godly wisdom's invitation to come or to refuse to come to the Lord means eternal condemnation on the other side of the grave. Such people will miss out on the joy of having a personal relationship with the Creator of the world. They will also miss out on an eternity with Him. So nothing is more important than knowing the Lord as one's personal Savior.

Solomon said that the people that accept godly wisdom's invitation to come are the same as those that accept the invitation of Jesus to come. Their rewards are dwelling safely, not fearing evil, and being with the Lord for all eternity. So the Spirit says to come, and one would be wise to do so.

The Wicked and the Transgressors are Prevented (02 December)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 2:22

"But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it."

Solomon earlier said that the godly wise will dwell in the land and that the spiritually mature will remain in it. Those words have both earthly and heavenly connotations. To those people that have come to the Lord by faith and that have embarked on a path to godly wisdom, the Lord gives safety and peace in this world. Therefore, even though they might suffer persecution, they will still have peace, contentment, and joy in their heart. When the Apostle Paul was to be martyred, he said that he was ready for the torture that awaited him. II Timothy 4:6-8 says, "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." So in the midst of what might have easily been his greatest fear, he had also found his greatest peace. That peace then translated to heavenly peace in that he would soon be going to be with the Lord forever.

However, while godly people can usually find peace in the worst of situations, the ungodly cannot usually find peace in the best of situations. The immoral person is never satisfied with the status quo. He or she is always looking for another chance to be immoral. The person of wicked deeds is always looking for more wicked deeds to do. Thus, godliness tends to feed on godliness to the betterment of the person. But in the same sense, ungodliness tends to feed on ungodliness to the destruction of the person. In the above verse, Solomon said that the ungodly will be cut off from the earth and that the sinners will be rooted out of it. While those words may not seem to be true in every instance, they are true to an extent. As bad as this world may seem at times, it would be much worse if the Holy Spirit were not holding back the ungodly. In writing to the church at Thessalonica, the Apostle Paul said that He is keeping the wicked from taking complete control of the world. II Thessalonians 2:7 says, "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way." But once the Holy Spirit stops holding back wickedness then all *hades* will break lose.

The Wicked are Cursed but the Just are Blessed (03 December)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 3:33-35

"The curse of the LORD is in the house of the wicked: but he blesseth the habitation of the just. Surely he scorneth the scorners: but he giveth grace unto the lowly. The wise shall inherit glory: but shame shall be the promotion of fools."

The first part of the above passage is very interesting. It sounds like some persons in life have automatically been cursed and that some persons have automatically been blessed. But to believe that is not biblically correct. The important element that does not show up in what Solomon said is choice. All people are born guilty and separated from God because of the sin of Adam in the Garden of Eden. But they are also all born with a free will from the Lord that lets them either choose Him or reject Him. That means that a wicked person is wicked by choice. It also means that a just person is just by choice. There is no such thing as someone being forced to either be wicked or be righteous. That being the case, each of the above types of people, respectively, brings their own fate upon themselves. The wicked by their own choice are cursed. The just by their own choice are blessed.

Next Solomon said that the Lord scorns the scorners but that he gives grace to the lowly. Scorners are boasters. They maliciously mock or deride others. They also talk very arrogantly. Therefore, Solomon said that the Lord gives them some of their own medicine. At the same time, though, He also gives grace or favor to the lowly or to those people that are meek and humble. The point is that being a scorners is very negative but that being meek and humble are very positive. Psalm 25:9 says, "The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way." Thus, the meek and the lowly are close to the Lord. But the scornful and the arrogant are by choice very far away. Proverbs 19:29 says, "Judgments are prepared for scorners, and stripes for the back of fools."

Finally, Solomon said that glory will go to the wise and that shame shall be for the fools. In speaking about the wise, he was talking about those that are shrewd, prudent, ethically wise, and religiously wise. They are people that have come to the Lord by faith and have also committed themselves to Him. Their end will be glory. By contrast, the fools about which he spoke are the simpletons or the ones that are by choice dumb and stupid. So the end of the "dumb fool" is shame.

Establish Thy Ways and Turn Not From It (04 December)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 4:26-27

"Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil."

Solomon spoke above about how godly people should approach their daily lives. He told them to ponder the path of their feet and to let their ways be established. That means that an individual should consider or weigh the reasonableness of their actions. Life is not always simple. Understanding the Lord's leading is not always obvious. Therefore, even godly people that love the Lord and that are committed to Him must be careful about how they live. That is one of the main reasons that Solomon spoke so often about getting godly wisdom and godly understanding. To be eternally saved and to be with the Lord in heaven forever and ever simply requires a person to come to the Him by faith in the right spirit and with the right attitude. But to daily live for Him requires a total commitment to Him. It requires learning to lean upon Him and to trust His leadership in every aspect of one's daily life. Proverbs 3:5-6 says, "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

But for those people that have never come to the Lord by faith, the first step must obviously be to do so. Living a godly life is not just choosing to try to do better. It is actually recognizing that one can never satisfy a holy God. It is then humbly seeking Him with all of one's heart and making Him the fundamental controller of one's life. When those things happen, then the person is born again. From there, to get this life right, he or she must learn to rely totally upon the Lord. Solomon said to let all of one's ways be established and to then not turn to either the right or the left. In saying that, he was actually describing living for the Lord as a journey between two distant points. One of the keys in that situation is to remain firmly focused on the destination ahead and to not become distracted by all of life's sideshows. It is easy to be subtly drawn from righteous living to unrighteous living just by occasionally making a few unwise decisions. It is also easy to get so caught up in this life that one loses sight of eternity and forgets the importance of making good daily choices. Thus, the only way that a person can successfully get it right is by pondering every step in life as to whether it is of the Lord or not.

Sexually Impure People are Rejecting the Lord (05 December)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 5:23

"He shall die without instruction; and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray."

Solomon often warned young people about the perils of sexual impurity. Some of the more obvious dangers that can occur in this life are through illness. For example, sexually immoral people often contract serious diseases that can greatly affect their current lives or that even threaten their lives altogether. They often get caught in their promiscuity and feel that they must choose an unquestionably extreme and sad way to solve the problem. People sometimes even get murdered because of their sexually immoral behavior. Proverbs 6:34-35 says, "For jealousy is the rage of a man: therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance...." So all sorts of very bad things can happen whenever people involve themselves sexually with people to whom they have no right. Therefore, Solomon said above that such people risk dying without ever coming to the truth. They may lose their life and then enter into eternity with only immorality on their breath. But while most people probably understand the wrongness of that kind of behavior, they may not understand what it means to be guilty of spiritually immoral behavior.

In their mind when they think about God, thoughts of doing right and of not doing wrong probably immediately come to mind. But that is not what godliness and what coming to the Lord are all about. When people reject Him and refuse to come to Him by faith, they are literally putting Him into the same position as the cheated spouse. That is why Solomon so often spoke about avoiding sexual sins. God is not a super policeman that is simply trying to make everyone live right or else. He is actually a loving heavenly Father that wants people to love Him back. In saying that, though, He does not just want any ole casual type of relationship. He instead wants each person to love Him supremely above everything else and above everyone else. When they do that, then they will choose to live right because they will want to love and honor Him and to give Him the glory. But when they reject Him and choose to not come to Him, then they make themselves the adulterers that are having improper relationships with the things of this world. God does not want to be a super policeman. He simply wants to be in an intimate close relationship with each person of His Creation.

Bad Outcomes of Physical and Spiritual Adultery (06 December)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 6:34-35

"For jealousy is the rage of a man: therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance. He will not regard any ransom; neither will he rest content, though thou givest many gifts."

In the two preceding verses, Proverbs 6:32-33 says, "But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul. A wound and dishonour shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away." Added to that, Solomon said above that the victim of the adultery also will not be appeased or satisfied by the adulterer no matter what the price that is offered. So adultery is a form of thievery that cannot be reversed. Even though the Mosaic Law outlined ways that a thief can compensate his or her victim for the crime, there is no way that one that is guilty of having taken another person's spouse can ever satisfy the offended individual. As a result, Solomon indicated above that the adulterer may even be in danger of retaliation by the victim.

In addition to the above physical adultery, though, the Scriptures also teach that Judah and Israel committed spiritual adultery against the Lord. Jeremiah 3:6-8 says, "...And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also." So from those two examples, it is clear that people commit spiritual adultery against the Lord when they fail to love Him with all of their heart and when they do not put Him first in all aspects of their lives. In God's eyes, spiritual adultery is a serious condition that has very devastating consequences. In fact, in the case of Israel, they were conquered by the Assyrians and never again existed as a people. In Judah's case, they were conquered by the Babylonians and taken to Babylon into captivity.

But the consequences of spiritual adultery did not end with those above rebellious people. Hebrews 9:27-28 says, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment..." So, all people that have ever lived will stand before the Lord in eternal judgment on the other side of the grave. Those people that have loved Him and committed themselves to Him in this life will go to be with Him forever and ever. Those people that have not will be eternally condemned.

Eternal Condemnation and the Harlot's House (07 December)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 7:27

"Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death."

The above passage about dying lost presents an often greatly misunderstood truth in the Scriptures. Many, many people believe that if they are very, very good, then they will go to heaven when they die. Many, many people believe that if they are simply more good than bad, then they will go to heaven when they die. Even Solomon in the above verse said that the house of the harlot leads to eternal doom and condemnation.

However, it is critically important for one to understand that people do not get into heaven simply because they are good. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." The Apostle Paul wrote in that passage that people would be able to boast to the Lord about their goodness forever and ever if they could get into heaven by being good. Similarly people also do not go to *hades* simply because they are bad. If that statement were true, then everyone would be going to *hades*. Isaiah 64:6 says, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." Jeremiah 17:9 says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

So the truth is that people go to heaven when they come to the Lord by faith and receive Him as their personal Savior and Lord. That is the only way. John the Baptist identified Jesus as the Lamb of God because by His death on the cross at Calvary He took away the sin of the world. John 1:29 says, "The next day John seeth Jesus...and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." The Apostle John wrote that there is no other name given among men by which people can be saved. Acts 4:12 says, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Thus, eternal salvation is and always has been by the name of the Lord. So what is the relationship between goodness and heaven and between badness and *hades*? It is that saved people are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. He leads them into the right places. But none of those places are the harlot's house.

Godly Wisdom Gives Eternal Life and Favor (08 December)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 8:35-36

"For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death."

The pronoun "me" about whom Solomon spoke in the above passage is godly wisdom. He said that those people that find godly wisdom will find life and favor and that those people that hate godly wisdom have wronged their own soul and have loved death. Earlier he said in Proverbs 8:11-21, "For wisdom is better than rubies...I wisdom dwell with prudence...The fear of the LORD is to hate evil...Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom: I am understanding; I have strength. By me kings reign, and princes decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth. I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me. Riches and honour are with me; yea, durable riches and righteousness. My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold; and my revenue than choice silver. I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment...." So the obvious question based upon those words is why any person would ever reject the godly wisdom that offers so many terrific benefits.

According to Solomon, those individuals that turn from godly wisdom are not interested in the Lord or in living for Him. The above passage says that the fear of the Lord is to hate evil. Therefore, to not hate evil is to also not fear the Lord. So based upon some of his other sayings, evil people are quick to shed innocent blood. They have untruthful, perverse tongues. They do ungodly works. They have wicked imaginations. They engage in sexually immoral behavior. The list can go on and on. However, the reasons why some people might engage in such activities can also go on and on. They may not believe that the Lord really exists. They may not believe that they need Him or His restrictive lifestyle. They may not think that the kind of life that one finds with godly wisdom is the kind of life that they want. They may not be interested in obtaining the Lord's favor. They may not believe that there will be any negative eternal consequences for refusing the Lord's invitation to come. But if they have turned from Him and His wisdom for any of those reasons, then they have made a huge mistake. Hebrews 9:27-28 says, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment...." Thus, eternal judgment is coming, and only those truly in Christ will be ready.

Sin Separates One from the Lord but Jesus Saves (09 December)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 9:18

"But he knoweth not that the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depths of hell."

Young people are often very naïve and too trusting. Thus, in the above passage, Solomon concluded his advice to young people about the seeking of the wrong kinds of pleasures with or from the wrong kinds of people. One should note a couple of things, however, about what he said. First, he addressed his remarks to young men about being involved with prostitutes. However, his words apply just as much to naïve young women as they do to naïve young men. In fact, when one is talking about sins of fornication and immorality, age and gender are probably not even factors. People of all ages and of both genders can get themselves into much trouble by engaging in inappropriate sexual behavior.

He also specifically said above that being drawn into sexual immorality with a person of ill-repute puts one in the company of the dead. By that, he meant that people can contract serious diseases by inappropriate sexual behavior and then actually die prematurely. He also meant that they can die lost, experience never ending torment, and be forever separated from the Lord. So the second thing to note about his illustration of the young man being drawn to the prostitute is that dying lost and experiencing physical death and spiritual death are not limited to just fornicators. All people are born into this existence as sinners. Because of that, they are all born already separated from the Lord. Thus, the above reference to the depths of *hades* and the resulting eternal separation from Him is neither enhanced nor made worse by the sin of fornication. The point is that all sin is sin and that all sin separates one physically and spiritually from the Lord.

That being the case, every human being birthed into this existence has entered into life already in trouble. Because of the sin of Adam in the Garden of Eden, every person born from him inherits his same sin nature. Therefore, it is one's sin nature that keeps him or her from the Lord even before he or she ever does the first wrong thing in life. However, when Jesus died on the cross at Calvary, He paid the sin debt for every person that comes to Him by faith in the right spirit and with the right attitude. Therefore, every person needs to come to Him to be saved.

Righteous People Remain and Speak Wisely (10 December)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 10:30-32

"The righteous shall never be removed: but the wicked shall not inhabit the earth. The mouth of the just bringeth forth wisdom: but the froward tongue shall be cut out. The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable: but the mouth of the wicked speaketh frowardness."

Solomon spoke in the first part of the above passage from the perspective of wicked people. By that, he probably meant that those people that are hostile towards the Lord would probably love to remain in this existence forever. They probably have many things going right for them in their lives. So their desire is to never leave. By contrast, those people that have come to the Lord by faith and that have right standing with Him are probably in the way of those wicked people. Therefore, the wicked would probably like nothing more than to see all of the righteous completely removed from this existence. However, in addressing that ungodly crowd, Solomon told them that they would not be getting what they want. Instead, the righteous will not be removed. They will have life on this earth and in heaven. But the wicked will die and leave this existence far behind.

In the next part of the above passage, Solomon spoke about the use of the tongue. James the half-brother of Jesus wrote in James 3:5-8, "Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things...it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." So James wrote that people cannot control their own tongue. However, if they humbly come to the Lord by faith and commit themselves to Him, then they are saved. They are also indwelt by the Holy Spirit. So while people on their own cannot clean up their language, the Holy Spirit can and will.

Thus, the godly according to Solomon speak wisely. They say acceptable things. The wicked, though, speak perverse things that cause trouble for themselves and for others. In ancient days, one possible punishment for treason, for blasphemy, or for other crimes of speech was tongue extraction. So Solomon was probably referring to that ancient tradition when he said the forward tongue will be cut out.

Soul Winners are Wise and the Just are Rewarded (11 December)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 11:30-31

"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise. Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner."

Solomon said in the first part of the above passage that the fruit of the righteous is a tree of life. Thus, a person can understand his words in both a temporal sense and also in an eternal sense. The Hebrew word that he used for "righteous" means justified or vindicated by God. So he was talking about the fruit of people that have already come to the Lord by faith, that are already committed to Him, that are already trusting in Him, and that are already in a personal relationship with Him. The fruit of such people in a temporal sense might be some of the practical ways that people can try to take care of themselves. Some simple examples might be getting regular exercise, eating right, and avoiding those foods and activities that can be harmful to one's body.

Godly people should do all that they can to take care of themselves because their body is not their own. I Corinthians 6:19-20 says, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you...ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price...." However, despite that, understanding Solomon's words in the eternal sense is vastly more important than understanding them in the temporal sense. He said that the person that wins souls is wise. Therefore, his simple conclusion was that all people that have come to the Lord by faith should also be actively involved in trying to bring others to Him. So while taking care of oneself in this life might have some importance, nothing is more important than trying to reach others for the Lord.

In his final statement above, Solomon said that the righteous will be recompensed or rewarded in this existence. He then concluded by saying that the wicked and the sinful will also appropriately be rewarded in this existence. For the righteous, righteousness is reward enough in itself. A person's life is greatly blessed when he or she is led by the Lord into the right paths and away from the bad paths. At the same time, though, the wicked and the sinful will suffer the consequences of their being led by their own wickedness and sinfulness. Therefore, be righteous.

Being Saved Means to Seek, Commit, and Trust (12 December)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 12:26-28

"The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour: but the way of the wicked seduceth them. The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting: but the substance of a diligent man is precious. In the way of righteousness is life; and in the pathway thereof there is no death."

In the first part of the above passage, Solomon spoke about the righteous person and about his or her wicked neighbor. Because the righteous person has been justified or vindicated by the Lord, he or she is better off than the ungodly neighbor or friend that has not been. Many times, ungodly people will boast of their superiority based upon their worldly wealth or because of their position in the world. But Solomon said that the individual that has position with the Lord by virtue of a personal relationship with Him is more excellent. The problem for people that have not come to the Lord is that they cannot see the long-term consequences of their decisions. But the eternal fate of the ungodly is eternal separation from the Lord combined with never ending agony and condemnation.

Solomon next said that the lazy person is so lazy that he or she will not even prepare the game that he took while hunting. It is a million wonders that he or she even put out the energy to go hunting. But the point is that slothful people are not good for much. They will not work. They will not even do basic tasks to take care of themselves. By contrast, what a diligent person produces is a blessing.

Solomon's final point above is that the righteous are on the path that leads to life and that death is nowhere in that path. Above it was indicated that the ungodly often put too much confidence in their worldly wealth or in their worldly position. But doing those things is exactly what causes them to die lost. A person is declared righteous and is given right-standing with the Lord when he or she figuratively or literally falls before the Lord and asks for mercy. Contrary to what many people may think, though, salvation is not completely free. It requires faith and humility. Jeremiah 29:12-13 says that it requires seeking the Lord with all of one's heart. John 3:16 says that it requires a commitment to the Lord and trusting in Him. So while those traits may begin in a small way in born again saints, they mature and grow over time so that the person becomes more and more like Christ.

Correcting One's Children and Being Moderate (13 December)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 13:24-25

"He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes. The righteous eateth to the satisfying of his soul: but the belly of the wicked shall want."

In the first part of the above passage, Solomon spoke about the importance of correcting one's children. He was not advocating physical child abuse. But he was saying that an uncorrected child is a, figuratively speaking, hated child. When parents correct their children, they show that they are taking responsibility for their children's behavior. It also shows the children that they belong to their parents, and that is far more important than what many people might think. The writer of the book of Hebrews wrote that the Lord's correction of those people that have come to Him by faith shows that He recognizes them as His own. In that regard, ownership provides assurance. Hebrews 12:6-8 says, "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement...then are ye bastards, and not sons." However, a parent's correction should never be mean-spirited. It should always be administered with genuine love. Parents should correct wrongdoing, punish evildoing, and learn to recognize the difference.

Solomon next said that righteous people tend to consume the pleasures of this life to a healthy moderate extent. By contrast, he said that wicked people never seem to get enough. Why is that? One reason might be because all people are born separated from God by the sin of Adam in the Garden of Eden. That separation causes them to feel like something is missing on the inside of their being. So, they go all through life searching for that one thing that will satisfy their hunger or thirst for that thing that is missing. They may think that the missing part can be satisfied by seeking pleasure. They may think that it lies in success or in making a lot of money. But none of those things truly satisfy. So they go after even more and more but still never find that true satisfaction. By contrast, the righteous have filled that part of what was once missing in them, too, by coming to the Lord by faith in the right spirit and with the right attitude. None of the things in this life will ever satisfy the hungry, thirsty soul like coming to the Lord by faith.

Wisdom, Exalting a Nation, and the King's Favor (14 December)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 14:33-35

"Wisdom resteth in the heart of him that hath understanding: but that which is in the midst of fools is made known. Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people. The king's favour is toward a wise servant: but his wrath is against him that causeth shame."

Solomon said above that wisdom indwells the heart of the person that has understanding but that the heart of a fool will soon be known. So in speaking about wisdom and understanding, he was actually talking about godly wisdom and about godly understanding. Proverbs 2:6-8 says, "For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly. He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints." Thus, the purposes of godly wisdom and of godly understanding are to lead a godly person into the right paths of life and away from the wrong paths.

They will keep him or her in the Lord's will and for the most part out of trouble. But by contrast, the "dumb fool" who is just plain stupid will constantly be going astray because of his or her foolishness. Next Solomon said that righteous people make up a righteous nation and that that righteous nation is exalted or lifted up in the sight of the Lord. Thus, if God's will is for people to live right and to bring Him honor and glory, then His will for a whole collection of such people will be to form a nation that also brings Him honor and glory. But the opposite of that happens with people that have not come to the Lord by faith. In their situation, they bring reproach and disgrace upon themselves as well as upon Him.

Finally, Solomon said that a king prefers wise servants to unwise servants. That is the same as preferring godly people to ungodly people. The reason for that preference, though, may not be difficult to understand. If everyone is faithfully living for the Lord, then the community will not need a police force. There will not be any persons of ill-repute or the illnesses that such people can sometimes cause. Its citizens would be looking out for each other rather than just looking out for themselves. Therefore, it would be an almost perfect society. But when a city is comprised mostly of ungodly people, there is much less peace and order.

Getting Saved, Receiving Correction, and Honor (15 December)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 15:30-33

"The light of the eyes rejoiceth the heart: and a good report maketh the bones fat. The ear that heareth the reproof of life abideth among the wise. He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul: but he that heareth reproof getteth understanding. The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom; and before honour is humility."

In the first part of the above passage, Solomon said that the light of the eyes rejoices the heart and that a good report makes the bones fat. Thus, the light of the eyes that rejoices the heart could be a couple of things. First, it could be a reference to the beauty seen in nature. However, second and more likely, it is the moment that one sees the truths of the Lord for the first time. That rendering seems more logical because the good report that follows would then refer to him or her coming to the Lord by faith to be saved. While nothing is worse than dying lost, nothing is better than hearing about the salvation of another. Solomon next spoke about one's willingness to accept reproof or godly correction. When a follower of the Lord makes a mistake, the Holy Spirit lovingly puts that person back on the right path. According to Solomon, a godly person will receive that reproof and be glad. But an ungodly person will many times refuse correction.

Because of that, he said that those people that refuse correction despise their own soul while those that receive it will increase in godly understanding. The reason that the first group hates their own soul is because they are basically saying that they do not want any part in the Lord. If the person is already saved, which is very questionable with that kind of attitude, then that reluctance may result in even more intense correction. But if the person is not saved, which is much more likely, then that reluctance will turn the Holy Spirit away because He never forces Himself on anyone. In either case, though, the results are not good. Therefore, Solomon concluded his comments in the above passage by saying that the fear of the Lord is an instruction in wisdom and that humility precedes honor. Thus, in reference to his earlier remarks about godly correction, he was saying that people become even wiser and are also honored when they humble themselves and receive reproof or correction. Proverbs 13:18 says, "Poverty and shame shall be to him that refuseth instruction: but he that regardeth reproof shall be honoured."

A Crown of Glory and Being Slow to Anger (16 December)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 16:31-33

"The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness. He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city. The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD."

In ancient days, the winner of a sporting event was given a wreath or a crown to parade through the town. Sometimes the crown would even entitle him or her to receive special favors. But always it was a positive symbol to be worn with great pride and distinction. In the above passage, Solomon likened old age to receiving that same crown of glory. However, he did not stop by just acknowledging the blessings of having lived a long life. He actually further qualified his words by saying that the real glory is for the elderly person that has lived righteously for all of his or her years. One must be very careful, though, to not misunderstand how he intended that word. The Hebrew word used for "righteousness" means to be vindicated or to be justified by God. So it literally means to be saved. Therefore, Solomon was saying that a long life that has been lived for the Lord is a great blessing to the person. But it is also a great blessing to the Lord. Jesus even said on one occasion that the path to life is narrow and that most people are not on it.

In the second part of the above passage, Solomon spoke about another trait that is very important. Many times, people have great difficulty controlling their temper. Something to their disliking occurs and they immediately fly off the handle. One should note, however, that that is not just a problem among the ungodly. Godly people that say they love the Lord with all of their heart will sometimes lose their temper, too. For that reason, Solomon said that being slow to anger is better than being strong and mighty. Being able to rule one's spirit is better than being able to overthrow a powerful people. So what was his solution for controlling one's temper? He concluded above by saying that the lot is cast into the mix and that the Lord decides how each part of the mix will be disposed of or handled. That simply means that God is in control of everything. Everything that happens in life is either by His direct control or by His permission. So some things He controls. Some things He allows. But either way, the events that cause people the most distress should be taken to Him and trusted to Him. They will help build patience

Sparing One's Words and Having a Good Spirit (17 December)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 17:27-28

"He that hath knowledge spareth his words: and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit. Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding."

Solomon said above that a person of few words has knowledge and that a person that has an excellent spirit is a person of understanding. Concerning the first part of that statement, he spoke earlier about the evil of many words. Proverbs 10:19 says, "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise." So his very simple point in both cases is that a lot of people talk too much. According to him, talking should be kept to a minimum unless the person actually has something meaningful to communicate. The commonly used analogy of people having two ears and only one mouth also applies. It is often much better to be a listener than to be a talker. So one should listen and learn. Also in the above passage, Solomon said that even a fool is considered wiser by refraining from so much talk. He then said that people of understanding will not talk so much either. So in the above passage, he actually said two very important things about people of understanding. First, he said that they will have an excellent spirit. Second, he said that they will not talk so much.

So what is it about people of understanding that creates within them an excellent spirit and the good sense to not talk so much? The first truth is that Solomon said that that kind of understanding comes from the Lord. The second truth is that he said that it will keep a person in the right paths of life and away from the bad paths. Proverbs 2:6-17, "For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding...understanding shall keep thee: To deliver thee from the way of the evil man..." So the qualities that cause a person to have that kind of godly understanding result when he or she comes to the Lord by faith in the right spirit and with the right attitude. Solomon was always quick to point out that godly people consistently make wise decisions. He was also always quick to point out that their lips speak good things while those that have not come to the Lord speak perversely. Throughout the entire book of Proverbs, he always spoke about the wisdom of those people that have come to the Lord by faith and about the ungodliness of those that have not. Thus, his sure advice was always to come.

Being Rich in the Lord and Seeing Him as Friend (18 December)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 18:23-24

"The poor useth intreaties; but the rich answereth roughly. A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother."

Solomon said above that the poor use entreaties and that the rich answer roughly. An entreaty is a request for favor. To answer roughly means to respond with little or no concern for the feelings of others. Thus, those words have a clear temporal, practical application because poor people in this world are usually put beneath the financially affluent and well off. They must put up with their personal indignities. They must also accept the crumbs of life that might fall to them from the wealthy.

But Solomon's words also have an even more important eternal application. Rich people are many times exalted in their own eyes. But when they stand before the Lord in judgment, their wealth will have been left behind. So it will just be the Lord and them. Then they may not be so well off. Matthew 19:23-24 says, "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." But Solomon's point was not that rich people will have a hard time getting into heaven. It was that every person will be poor when standing before the Lord in judgment. Therefore, the right solution is to be rich towards Him while living in this existence and to not focus so much on earthly riches.

He concluded the above passage by telling people how to have friends. He said that a person must be friendly to have friends. In fact, the rich person mentioned above that answers roughly might have people around him or her. But let that person lose that wealth, and those friends will probably be long gone. That is what happened to the Prodigal Son. As long as he had money to bestow upon those around him, the people stayed close. But when his money was gone, they were gone, too. True friends are friends through thick and thin, which leads to the final point in the above passage. The friend that sticks closer than a brother is Jesus. When one is in a relationship with Him, He will never leave nor forsake that individual. He is the one true eternal friend to all that come to Him by faith.

Bad Instruction, Ungodly Witnesses, and Scorners (19 December)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 19:27-29

"Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge. An ungodly witness scorneth judgment: and the mouth of the wicked devoureth iniquity. Judgments are prepared for scorners, and stripes for the back of fools."

Solomon said above that people should ignore and not listen to the kind of bad instruction that causes them to stray from the words of knowledge. His reasons for saying that are pretty obvious. He said on one occasion that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. Therefore, to stray from that kind of godly knowledge is to also stray from the God of that knowledge. On other occasions, he said that godly knowledge will keep a person from evil people and from those people that speak perversely. He said that it will keep a young person from being inappropriately involved sexually with the wrong kind of people. However, on the positive side, he also said that wise people lay up godly knowledge. So that associates them with godliness. As a result, the words of godly knowledge will guide a person through this life, will lead him or her into a personal relationship with the Lord, and will also prepare him or her for eternity. All of those things are very, very important for people that will only be in this life for a short while.

He concluded his remarks in the above passage by saying that an ungodly witness perverts justice and that the scorners will be judged for being scornful. In the first part of that statement, ungodly witnesses pervert justice because they cannot be counted upon to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth. In a courtroom environment, those people that must decide a case need to have good, accurate information to render a proper decision. So the whole judicial process is greatly hampered if one cannot rely upon the witnesses. In the last part of his statement, he said that scornful people will be judged. Scornful people mock or make fun of others. They are boastful. They try to put themselves on a pedestal before others. They are very arrogant in their speech and behavior. During the Incarnation of Jesus, the Pharisees had closely matched those descriptions. They loved to ascend to the high places so that they could be seen by others. They loved to proclaim their godliness by expounding on their dedication to the Mosaic Law. However, Jesus called them hypocrites and told His disciples to not be like them.

Strength, Beauty, and the Chastening of the Godly (20 December)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 20:29-30

"The glory of young men is their strength: and the beauty of old men is the gray head. The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil: so do stripes the inward parts of the belly."

Solomon used different Hebrew words in the above passage for "glory" and for "beauty." But both Hebrew words mean splendor, glory, honor, or beauty. By drawing a comparison between young people and old people, however, he was showing that people have varying strengths at all ages. A young person will often glory in his or her personal strength and ability to complete certain physical tasks. At the same time, though, their minds are often more attached to the things of this world than to the things of eternity. But according to Solomon, different strengths or different sources of beauty emerge with age. The older person will probably not have retained much of his or her youthful physical strength. But he or she will be closer to eternity and will as a result probably be much wiser about eternal things. That is not to say that Solomon was suggesting that people should come to the Lord late in life just before they die. He always taught that one should come to Him by faith early in life so that his or her life will go well and be mostly trouble free. Nevertheless, it is better to come to Him late in life than not at all.

He concluded the above passage by talking about how the blueness of a wound cleans the wound and how that stripes clean the inner person. The Hebrew word that he used for "blueness" means to unite or to join together. Thus, when the sides of a cut come together and adhere to each other, the wound is healing. In much the same way, stripes clean the inner person. The Hebrew word that was used for "stripes" means to get a beating or to be scourged. One should note, though, that the stripes mentioned by Solomon most likely were not literal. The writer of the book of Hebrews wrote that God chastens those people that have come to Him by faith. But that chastening probably is not of a physical or violent nature either. Hebrews 12:6-8 says, "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons." So the Lord's chastening will teach a godly person how to live.

God Guides Upright, Overcomes, and Gives Safety (21 December)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 21:29-31

"A wicked man hardeneth his face: but as for the upright, he directeth his way. There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the LORD. The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but safety is of the LORD."

According to Solomon in the above passage, a wicked person is stubborn and obstinate while an upright person is motivated and directed by the Lord. The Hebrew word that he used for "wicked" means to be hostile towards the Lord. The Apostle Paul wrote about that kind of person. Romans 3:10-12 says, "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." The problem with what Solomon said and with what Paul wrote, though, is that every person comes into this existence as wicked. Not one person born from Adam has ever been born seeking after the Lord by faith. Every person is born with a sin nature and separated from God. Therefore, every person is born needing to come to Lord, commit to Him, trust in Him, and then enter into a personal relationship with Him. At that point, he or she will be born again, and the indwelling Holy Spirit will direct his or her path through this life.

While people not in the Lord might look down on that kind of existence, it is still the best life that one can live. So Solomon next said that there is no wisdom or understanding or counsel against the Lord. That means that no one and no thing can ever conquer or outdo Him. He is supreme. He is divine. He shall prevail in the end. Thus, even though it may not always seem like it, He is sovereign and in control of everything that happens in this existence. Revelation 22:13-14 says, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." Thus, eternal life awaits those people that come to Him in this life. But eternal death awaits those that do not. So, wisdom says to come to Him while the opportunity is available. Solomon ended the above passage by saying that safety is of the Lord. He used the analogy of a soldier preparing for battle and putting everything in order for the conflict. However, the ultimate victory will only come because the Lord allows it to come.

Creditworthiness, Boundaries, and Being Diligent (22 December)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 22:27-29

"If thou hast nothing to pay, why should he take away thy bed from under thee? Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set. Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men."

Solomon first said above that a poor person should not be left destitute simply because he or she is poor. However, there are a couple of other ways to look at that verse than what it may seem upon an initial reading. First, if a poor person cannot pay for a benefit that he or she is about to receive, then that person should be honest enough to not enter into the financial agreement. Second, the creditor should determine the creditworthiness of the other person before ever entering into any kind of financial agreement. From that, however, one should note that Solomon was not opposed to helping someone in need. What he was warning against was being forced to be charitable rather than choosing to be charitable.

He next said that one neighbor should not cheat another neighbor by changing the property lines between them. So, just as he encouraged honesty in the above financial situation, he also encouraged honesty by recognizing and by respecting the original boundaries of one's property. In those days, people marked their boundaries with stones that could be fairly easily moved. Thus, the ability to cheat a neighbor on one's property line clearly existed. But Solomon taught people to be completely honest with each other. The simple, biblical principle is that no one should ever greedily want what rightfully belongs to someone else.

He then concluded the above passage by saying that a diligent person will prosper and that he or she will have favorable acquaintances and positive circumstances in life. While that instruction represents a general principle rather than a spiritual absolute, it is still a good instruction by which to live. No one is ever damaged in his or her being by being hard-working and diligent. But even better than that is choosing while young to come to the Lord by faith in the right spirit and with the right attitude. Not only will making that decision put a person on the right paths in this life and prepare him or her for eternity, but it will also lead him or her to be the kind of diligent person about whom Solomon spoke above.

Living for the Lord beats Intoxicating Beverages (23 December)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 23:33-35

"Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things. Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again."

In the above passage, Solomon warned that drinking too much intoxicating drink can have disastrous effects on a person. It is true that a great many people are able to consume their liquor and not destroy their lives. However, the question is whether or not anything good comes from drinking too much. The answer to that question is probably not. In fact, Solomon only recognized two instances where strong drink and intoxicating wine might possibly be the answer. Proverbs 31:6-7 says, "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more." Thus, for people that have no more hope in this life, he sort of advised to just get drunk and forget everything. However, that is not the same advice that he would give the average person. Most people are not battling a terminal illness. Most people are not desperately poor. Therefore, most people do not come under his only real guidelines for drinking intoxicating beverages.

One can look at the above passage, though, and perhaps understand why he told the person with no hope in life to maybe drink to excess. One consequence of drinking too much is that the drunk might be drawn to ungodly people and get put into an immoral situation. Another possible outcome is that the person that drinks too much might speak evil and perverse words. No one should ever want to do either of those things. But maybe such behavior would be more understandable in one that is completely without hope in this world. However, in having said that, one should always remember that the name of Jesus is synonymous with hope. Even when people have no other place in this world to turn, they can always turn to Him and find acceptance. He is the Lord. He will never turn away anyone that comes to Him by faith in the right spirit and with the right attitude. Therefore, while alcohol might help people forget some of the things that they might like to forget, Jesus gives the victory over those kinds of things and even over death.

Lazy People do not get Laziness from the Lord (24 December)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 24:32-34

"Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man."

In the above passage, Solomon spoke about what he learned from passing by the field and the vineyard of a lazy person. Proverbs 24:30-31 says, "I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down." So the vineyard was covered with thorns and brush. Also the wall was broken down. Therefore, his observation was that the slothful person did not take very good care of his or her property.

But one should note from those verses that the slothful person was also void of understanding. Thus, the natural question to ask is from where or from what does one acquire the understanding that the slothful person lacked. The Hebrew word that Solomon used for "understanding" refers to the soul or to the inner heart of the person. That means that a person's understanding is a direct reflection of the person's heart. Proverbs 3:5-6, "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." The Hebrew word used for "heart" in those verses was the same as was used above for "understanding." Therefore, there is a spiritual aspect to having the right kind of heart, and the slothful person mentioned above did not have it. According to Solomon, he or she was more interested in sleeping or in folding his or her hands as a form of inactivity than in trying to care for the field.

Thus, the understanding that the slothful person lacked comes from the Lord. Proverbs 16:1 says, "The preparations of the heart...is from the LORD." So if he or she lacked the understanding that comes from Him, then Solomon was saying that the lazy person had never come to the Lord by faith. That means that he or she was not saved. But while automatically drawing that conclusion might be something of a stretch, what is less of a stretch is that laziness is not from above. Godliness breeds holy, righteous living. It creates within a godly person a natural love for the Lord and for others. However, it does not naturally produce laziness.

People Should Not Boast but Control their Spirit (25 December)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 25:27-28

"It is not good to eat much honey: so for men to search their own glory is not glory. He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls."

Whenever people feast themselves on too many sweets, they frequently make themselves sick. If they do so too often, then they many times develop long-term illnesses that may even threaten their lives. For that reason, eating much honey or eating too many sweets is not considered healthy for one's body. In the same sense, Solomon compared eating too much honey in the above passage to the individual that seeks his or her own glory. By doing that, he likened a person's desire to put himself or herself on a pedestal to the regular ingestion of the wrong kinds of food. While in His incarnated form, Jesus even told a parable about a person that tried to position himself in the highest room of a wedding banquet.

Luke 14:8-11 says, "When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Thus, Jesus said that self glory may cause one to be embarrassed and put to shame. Solomon said that self glory is not glory at all. He also said in Proverbs 27:2, "Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips." So humility reigns over all.

In the final part of the above passage, Solomon compared people that cannot control their spirit to a city that has been broken down and is without walls. In ancient days, the walls around the city provided protection from outside invaders. Therefore, when individuals cannot control or rule their spirit, then they become defenseless. If they cannot control their temper, then they will constantly have strife and trouble. If they cannot control their tongue, then they will constantly be saying the wrong things. Therefore, Solomon said that self-control is important.

Hating Lips, Wickedness, Digging a Pit, and Lying (26 December)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 26:26-28

"Whose hatred is covered by deceit, his wickedness shall be shewed before the whole congregation. Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein: and he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him. A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth worketh ruin."

In the above passage, Solomon continued his description of those people that have hating lips or a wicked heart. Earlier he said that such people cannot be trusted because they make trouble with their words and because they devise evil in their hearts. For example, Proverbs 11:18 says, "The wicked worketh a deceitful work...." Proverbs 12:5-6 says, "...the counsels of the wicked are deceit. The words of the wicked are to lie in wait for blood...." Proverbs 12:13 says, "The wicked is snared by the transgression of his lips...." So Solomon seemingly never ran out of bad things to say about those people that have hating lips or a wicked heart. In the above passage, he even added that such a person's hatred is hidden by his or her own deceit.

Nevertheless, he also said that the time will come when the wicked will be laid out before the whole congregation. There will be a time when they will fall into the pit that they have dug. There will be a time when the stone that they have rolled will roll back onto them. Thus, there will be an eternal payday for the wicked and for those with hating lips. Not only that, but when that time comes, the psalmist wrote that the outcome will not be good. Psalm 7:16 says, "His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate." Psalm 9:17 says, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." Thus, the only hope for the wicked is to come to the Lord by faith while the door to Him is still open. It will not always be so.

Solomon concluded the above passage by again talking about the lying tongue that inflicts hurt upon others. Many times, people say things that never need to be said. Many times, they speak words that intentionally hurt others. Thus, the old adage of not saying anything at all if one cannot say something nice definitely applies. Being able to audibly communicate with others is a wonderful gift from the Lord. Therefore, people should use that gift in ways that would please Him.

Hay, Grass, Herbs, Lambs, and Serving the Lord (27 December)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 27:25-27

"The hay appeareth, and the tender grass sheweth itself, and herbs of the mountains are gathered. The lambs are for thy clothing, and the goats are the price of the field. And thou shalt have goats' milk enough for thy food, for the food of thy household, and for the maintenance for thy maidens."

In the above passage, Solomon spoke about the importance of diligently caring for one's flocks and for one's property because they were in those days a measure of one's wealth. If properly cared for, any of those things could someday become a source of care for the individual and for his or her family. Therefore, when the hay appeared, when the grass grew, and when the herbs of the mountains were gathered, it was time to send the young lambs and the young goats out into those fields for pasturing. That way they could get the nourishment that they needed. But they would not be able to destroy the property of the landowner. Then in the course of time, those lambs and those goats could provide milk and clothing for the family and for the servants. They could also even be used as a source of money to purchase needed things for the family.

In today's culture, Solomon would advise similar care for those things that could also someday be a source of care for the individual and for his or her family. For example, if a person owns a home, then he or she should take care of that property because it could someday perhaps be sold or rented for later life income. If a person has measurable financial resources, then he or she should care of those, too, by making wise lasting investments. Solomon said that when people are wise, prudent and diligent with those things that have been entrusted to them, then those positive character traits and skills will usually follow them into old age and become a source for their later life survival. However, there is another thing that all people also need to care for, too. It is their eternal soul. He often spoke about the wise, about the righteous, about the godly, about the prudent, and about the diligent. But whenever he did so, he always associated those traits with people that have come to the Lord by faith and that have committed themselves to Him.

So no matter what one obtains in this life, it all gets left behind at death. In fact, the only things that do remain are those things that have been done for the Lord.

Trusting the Lord, Giving to the Poor, and Rulers (28 December)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 28:26-28

"He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered. He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse. When the wicked rise, men hide themselves: but when they perish, the righteous increase."

Solomon first said above that only a fool trusts in his or her own heart but that those people that walk wisely will be delivered. In saying that, he was initially talking about the "dumb fool" that is a simpleton, dumb, or just plain stupid. He called the person that trusts his or her own heart a "dumb fool" because a person's heart is naturally wicked and cannot be trusted. Jeremiah 17:9 says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" Therefore, whenever someone says that another person has a good heart then according to Solomon and the Prophet Jeremiah he or she is probably wrong. However, at the same time, Solomon also said that the person that walks wisely will be delivered. To walk wisely means to be ethically and religiously wise. It is to commit to the Lord and to trust in Him. Thus, that person will be delivered not so much because of how they have lived but because of the one in whom they have trusted.

Solomon next said that charitable people will never lack what they need in life. By contrast, the greedy and the selfish will always be cursed with feeling like they never have enough. He then concluded the above passage by comparing the rule of wicked people versus the rule of godly people. By definition, a wicked person is hostile to God. So right from the start, one can know that such a leader is not too concerned about the people under his or her rule. Proverbs 29:2 says, "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn." Solomon said that the people are happy when their leader is an obedient servant to the Lord. The reasons for that are obvious. Wicked rulers are often very brutal. They can be very hard on their people. But righteous leaders have right standing with the Lord. They have humbly come to Him by faith. They trust in Him. They are eager to please Him. As a result of those basic traits, they also have a greater concern for the people under their care. So because of the extreme differences between the two, Solomon said that the people hide when the wicked are in control. But they rejoice when the godly rule.

Trusting the Lord Makes Safe but Unjust Disgusts (29 December)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 29:25-27

"The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe. Many seek the ruler's favour; but every man's judgment cometh from the LORD. An unjust man is an abomination to the just: and he that is upright in the way is abomination to the wicked."

Solomon first said above that the fear of man brings a snare but that trusting in the Lord will make one safe. Thus, the only kind of fear that is really healthy for any individual is to fear the Lord. Fearing Him or reverencing Him always puts one on the path to godly wisdom and to godly knowledge. It also brings eternal safety and everlasting presence with Him. Psalm 111:10 says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom...." Proverbs 1:7 says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge...." So while wisdom and understanding from above are very good to gain, fearing what others can do is neither healthy nor good. The Apostle Peter denied Jesus three times on the night before the Lord's crucifixion. Scriptures say that he afterwards wept very bitterly with great sadness and regret.

Solomon next said that many people look for favor from the king or from the ruler but that one's final judgment comes from the Lord. Thus, many people fall into the particular trap that was indicated by that saying. They try to impress other human beings so that they might receive special favors or favorable treatment. But they do so most foolishly because the Lord is the ultimate judge. Because every person will stand before Him on the other side of the grave, it makes much more sense to seek His eternal favor than to seek some ruler's fleeting acceptance.

To conclude the above passage, Solomon indicated the extreme difference between just and unjust people and between upright people and wicked people. He basically said that each one disgusts the other. By definition, a just person is righteous but an unjust person is unrighteous. The just person has been justified or vindicated by the Lord. But the unjust person has not been. Similarly, upright people are pleasing to the Lord. But wicked people are hostile towards Him. Therefore, the two differing groups have nothing in common with each other. So it is only reasonable that they would find each other objectionable. For that reason, the Apostle Paul told godly people to come out from among the ungodly.

Being Quiet is Better than Being Boastful (30 December)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 30:32-33

"If thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thyself, or if thou hast thought evil, lay thine hand upon thy mouth. Surely the churning of milk bringeth forth butter, and the wringing of the nose bringeth forth blood: so the forcing of wrath bringeth forth strife."

Solomon or Agur's said above that it is better to keep one's mouth shut than to be a boaster. On another occasion, he said in Proverbs 16:18, "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall." So while people can have good pride that causes them to do their best in everything, he was clearly talking about bad pride in the above verses. Bad pride seeks to make the individual that is boasting appear better than everyone else. It tries to put the person on a pedestal by himself or by herself. However, boasters usually have very little about which to really boast. If they have come to the Lord by faith, then their boasting should be in the Lord. But if they have not come to Him, then their boasting concerning worldly excellence is doubly foolish because it has no earthly or eternal value.

Therefore, Solomon or Agur advised the boaster to just be quiet. Solomon even said on another occasion that a wise person will be one of few words. Proverbs 10:19 says, "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise." He also said that godly people speak righteous thoughts and that ungodly people speak unrighteous thoughts. Proverbs 10:32 says, "The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable: but the mouth of the wicked speaketh frowardness." Proverbs 13:3 says, "He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction." So as the above passage says, the churning of milk does produce butter. Wringing the nose does make it bleed. Forcing wrath does lead to trouble. So the boaster should just be quiet.

Another unstated but implied conclusion of the above passage is that all people should come to the Lord by faith in the right spirit and with the right attitude. That will put them on the right path in life and keep them off the wrong paths. It will clean up their talk so that they will boast about the Lord rather than about themselves. Finally, it will put the individual in a personal relationship with the Lord and prepare him or her for eternity with God on the other side of the grave.

She Looks after Her Family and They Do Well (31 December)

Bible Passage: Proverbs 31:27-31

"She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates."

King Lemuel or Solomon as some commentators believe him to be in the above passage concluded his high praise of a godly wife. She and her husband maintain the same high standards for their lives. Because she already looks after so many of the important needs of the family, it gives him the freedom to participate in the decisions of their community. That is what is meant by Proverbs 31:23, which says, "Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land." Because they work together in all family matters, their home environment is pleasant and harmonious. She is the ideal wife, and that greatly contributes to their ideal family.

In considering such a family, though, one may not understand how their lives ever became so ideal. It was not because they had made a list of ideal family things to do and then started doing them. As the expression goes, that would have been putting the cart before the horse. The real key was stated above when it speaks about a woman that fears the Lord. It says that she shall be praised, and that is exactly what the preceding verses have been all about. To fear the Lord is not to be afraid of Him. But it is to have the highest regard and reverence for Him. It is to literally put Him ahead of absolutely everything else in this life. The woman in the above passage did that, and her godliness filtered down into her family. Thus, one should note that true godliness never goes unrewarded or unnoticed.

Many of Solomon's sayings have pertained to ungodly children that mock their parents, that become involved with the wrong kind of people, or that end up down the wrong paths of life. But one of the earthly rewards of being a godly parent is that their children see them, bless them, and grow up to be like them. Any parent that truly loves the Lord knows that it does not get any better than that.

Index

Aaron.....	138, 282
Abraham.....	87, 241, 272, 421
Abram	272
Adam 25, 56, 58, 100, 101, 131, 139, 147, 151, 156, 200, 207, 232, 264, 269, 286, 299, 358, 364, 368, 376	
Apostles.. 25, 29, 36, 40, 42, 43, 73, 79, 83, 96, 103, 104, 109, 110, 114, 128, 133, 139, 141, 142, 168, 175, 191, 204, 205, 220, 237, 241, 251, 265, 267, 288, 297, 306, 311, 314, 319, 322, 324, 326, 328, 346, 355, 357, 362, 376, 384, 422	
John.....	25, 83, 114, 141, 204, 205, 265, 346, 355, 362
Paul ... 25, 29, 36, 40, 42, 43, 73, 79, 96, 103, 104, 109, 110, 114, 128, 139, 142, 168, 175, 191, 204, 205, 241, 251, 265, 267, 288, 297, 306, 311, 319, 322, 324, 326, 328, 357, 362, 376, 384, 422	
Peter	133, 220, 237, 306, 314, 322, 384
Bible References	
Acts 10:34-35	322
Acts 12:1-4	133
Acts 13:2.....	55
Acts 13:21-22	55
Acts 24:24-27	311
Acts 4:12.....	362
Acts 9:5-6	36
Colossians 1:16.....	29
Colossians 1:16-17	29
Colossians 3:1-2	328
Daniel 2:48	133
Deuteronomy 6:6-8.....	329
Ecclesiastes 1:14.....	141
Ecclesiastes 12:13.....	108, 153
Ecclesiastes 12:13-14	108, 153
Ecclesiastes 3:1-8	223
Ecclesiastes 4:13.....	46
Ecclesiastes 5:4-5	314
Ephesians 2:8.....	27, 42, 58, 66, 85, 100, 114, 131, 362
Ephesians 2:8-10	66

Daily Devotions from the Book of Proverbs

Ephesians 2:8-9	27, 42, 58, 85, 100, 114, 131, 362
Ephesians 4:30.....	40
Ephesians 4:8-16	110
Ephesians 5:17-21	104, 229
Exodus 18:13	80
Exodus 20:12.....	145, 171, 242, 253, 344
Exodus 21:17	253
Exodus 22:1-4.....	300
Exodus 3:14.....	241
Ezekiel 3:18.....	77
Galatians 3:23-24.....	79, 108, 139
Galatians 6:7-8.....	113
Genesis 1:1	29, 201
Genesis 1:15-18	201
Genesis 15:3-5	272
Genesis 2:2	56, 239, 264, 303
Genesis 2:20-22	264
Genesis 2:24	56, 239, 303
Genesis 2:24-25	56, 239
Genesis 28:8-9.....	87
Genesis 29:30	130
Genesis 3:9	25
Genesis 3:9-10.....	25
Genesis 6:5	44
Genesis 6:5-6.....	44
Hebrews 11:1.....	185
Hebrews 11:24-26	274
Hebrews 12:5-6	164
Hebrews 12:6.....	32, 368, 375
Hebrews 12:6-8	368, 375
Hebrews 12:7-8	212, 277
Hebrews 13:4.....	85, 146, 303
Hebrews 4:16.....	289
Hebrews 7:19.....	185
Hebrews 9:27.....	224, 304, 330, 339, 353, 361, 363
Hebrews 9:27-28	224, 304, 330, 339, 353, 361, 363
I Corinthians 1:25	196

I Corinthians 13:4	321
I Corinthians 15:19	165
I Corinthians 6:19	366
I Corinthians 6:19-20.....	366
I Corinthians 8:13	43
I Corinthians 8:8-13.....	103
I John 2:15	346
I John 2:15-16.....	346
I Kings 11:1-4.....	50
I Kings 22:5	222
I Kings 4:30-32.....	21
I Peter 2:1-3	237
I Peter 3:15	220
I Peter 3:15-16	220
I Samuel 1:16.....	117
I Samuel 2:12.....	147
I Thessalonians 4:3-6.....	222
I Timothy 5:8.....	57
I Timothy 6:10.....	31, 42, 322
I Timothy 6:17.....	109
I Timothy 6:17-19.....	109
II Chronicles 36:18-21.....	45
II Corinthians 5:17.....	58, 72, 295, 321
II Corinthians 5:8.....	113, 288
II Corinthians 6:14-16	142
II Corinthians 6:15.....	112, 147
II Corinthians 6:16-18	206
II Kings 18:28-30	45
II Peter 3:9	89, 122, 142, 283, 308, 314, 340
II Samuel 11:1-4	107
II Thessalonians 2:1-4	326
II Thessalonians 2:7.....	357
II Timothy 4:6.....	357
II Timothy 4:6-8	357
Isaiah 40:22-23	272
Isaiah 55:6	53, 156
Isaiah 55:6-7	53, 156

Daily Devotions from the Book of Proverbs

Isaiah 64:6	151, 261, 286, 343, 362
James 1:1	112, 215
James 1:13	112
James 1:13-15	112
James 1:5-6	53, 84, 196
James 1:5-7	234, 327
James 2:1	83, 138, 162, 267, 300
James 2:15-17	138, 162, 267, 300
James 2:19	83
James 2:8-9	98
James 3:3-5	293
James 3:5	136, 166, 245, 365
James 3:5-6	136
James 3:5-8	245, 365
James 3:6-8	315
James 4:10	220
James 4:13-15	47
Jeremiah 17:9	151, 261, 362, 383
Jeremiah 23:5	105
Jeremiah 29:12-13	22, 27, 88, 94, 210, 255, 261, 285, 287, 367
Jeremiah 29:13	340
Jeremiah 3:6	331, 361
Jeremiah 3:6-8	331, 361
Job 5:17-18	126
John 1:29	269, 362
John 14:6	41
John 15:4-5	36
John 19:10-11	41
John 3:16	22, 25, 27, 83, 88, 94, 114, 156, 158, 255, 276, 285, 343, 367, 421
John 3:19	100, 133
John 3:19-21	100
John 4:24	41, 163
John 5:40	40, 356
John 6:4	58
John 6:44	58
John 8:12	100
John 8:57-58	241

Joshua 18:10	282
Judges 19:22	117
Judges 21:25	75
Leviticus 1:7-9	138
Leviticus 16:8	282
Leviticus 20:9	253
Luke 1:31-33	21
Luke 14:28-30	318
Luke 14:8-11	380
Luke 14:8-9	43
Mark 8:36	212
Matthew 10:1	170
Matthew 10:2	323
Matthew 10:24	323
Matthew 12:34	66, 184, 195, 280
Matthew 12:34-35	195, 280
Matthew 16:26	74, 149
Matthew 18:15-16	282
Matthew 19:21-22	234, 265
Matthew 19:23-24	190, 373
Matthew 22:36-38	221
Matthew 22:36-39	23, 124, 305
Matthew 23:1-7	105
Matthew 25:21	323
Matthew 25:23	86
Matthew 26:59-61	160
Matthew 28:1	276
Matthew 28:19	276
Matthew 28:19-20	276
Matthew 5:3	136, 239, 316
Matthew 5:31-32	239
Matthew 5:37-41	136
Matthew 5:6	107
Matthew 6:19-21	352
Matthew 6:33	91
Matthew 7:13-14	310
Proverbs 1:10	112, 257

Daily Devotions from the Book of Proverbs

Proverbs 1:10-16	112
Proverbs 1:1-4	21, 71
Proverbs 1:17-19	142
Proverbs 1:20-22	173
Proverbs 1:20-32	356
Proverbs 1:22.....	106, 109, 326
Proverbs 1:23.....	203
Proverbs 1:24-27	234
Proverbs 1:28-30	265
Proverbs 1:31.....	295
Proverbs 1:32.....	326
Proverbs 1:33.....	356
Proverbs 1:5.....	52, 183
Proverbs 1:5-6	183
Proverbs 1:5-7	52
Proverbs 1:7.....	25, 32, 34, 95, 163, 214, 224, 251, 308, 344, 384
Proverbs 1:8-9	63, 81, 119
Proverbs 10:10-11	121
Proverbs 10:11.....	291
Proverbs 10:12.....	151, 158
Proverbs 10:12-13	151
Proverbs 10:13.....	65, 152, 246, 340, 344
Proverbs 10:1-3	30
Proverbs 10:14.....	182, 337
Proverbs 10:14-15	182
Proverbs 10:15.....	190
Proverbs 10:16-17	212
Proverbs 10:18-20	243
Proverbs 10:19.....	98, 246, 340, 372, 385
Proverbs 10:21.....	129, 274
Proverbs 10:21-23	274
Proverbs 10:24-26	304
Proverbs 10:26.....	86
Proverbs 10:27-29	335
Proverbs 10:30-32	365
Proverbs 10:32.....	340, 351, 385
Proverbs 10:4-6	61

Proverbs 10:7-9	90
Proverbs 11:10.....	122, 193
Proverbs 11:10-11	122
Proverbs 11:12-13	152
Proverbs 11:13.....	290, 337
Proverbs 11:1-3	31
Proverbs 11:14.....	104, 183
Proverbs 11:14-15	183
Proverbs 11:15.....	184
Proverbs 11:16.....	213, 275, 354
Proverbs 11:16-17	213
Proverbs 11:18.....	244, 381
Proverbs 11:18-20	244
Proverbs 11:21-23	275
Proverbs 11:23.....	291
Proverbs 11:24-26	305
Proverbs 11:27-29	336
Proverbs 11:28.....	91
Proverbs 11:3.....	93, 297, 305, 366
Proverbs 11:30.....	297, 305, 366
Proverbs 11:30-31	366
Proverbs 11:4.....	62, 91
Proverbs 11:4-6	62
Proverbs 11:7-9	91
Proverbs 11:8.....	223
Proverbs 12:11.....	153, 292
Proverbs 12:11-12	153
Proverbs 12:13.....	184, 381
Proverbs 12:1-3	32
Proverbs 12:13-14	184
Proverbs 12:14.....	33
Proverbs 12:15-16	214
Proverbs 12:17-18	245
Proverbs 12:19-20	276
Proverbs 12:21.....	306, 342
Proverbs 12:21-22	306
Proverbs 12:23-25	337

Daily Devotions from the Book of Proverbs

Proverbs 12:24.....	228
Proverbs 12:26-28	367
Proverbs 12:27.....	61, 228, 324
Proverbs 12:4-6	63
Proverbs 12:5.....	104, 183, 381
Proverbs 12:5-6	381
Proverbs 12:6.....	184
Proverbs 12:7-8	92
Proverbs 12:9-10	123
Proverbs 13:1.....	33, 119, 154, 185, 215, 246, 249, 277, 370
Proverbs 13:10-11	154
Proverbs 13:12-13	185
Proverbs 13:13.....	249
Proverbs 13:1-3	33
Proverbs 13:14-15	215
Proverbs 13:16-17	246
Proverbs 13:18.....	277, 370
Proverbs 13:18-19	277
Proverbs 13:20-21	307
Proverbs 13:22-23	338
Proverbs 13:24-25	368
Proverbs 13:3.....	65, 385
Proverbs 13:4.....	64, 86
Proverbs 13:4-5	64
Proverbs 13:6-7	93
Proverbs 13:7.....	39, 91
Proverbs 13:8-9	124
Proverbs 14:1-2	34
Proverbs 14:12-14	155
Proverbs 14:15-16	216
Proverbs 14:15-17	186
Proverbs 14:18-20	216
Proverbs 14:21-23	247
Proverbs 14:24.....	194, 278
Proverbs 14:24-26	278
Proverbs 14:27-29	308
Proverbs 14:30-32	339

Proverbs 14:33-35	369
Proverbs 14:3-5	65
Proverbs 14:6-8	94
Proverbs 14:7	129
Proverbs 14:9	125
Proverbs 14:9-11	125
Proverbs 15:10-11	126
Proverbs 15:12-13	156
Proverbs 15:1-3	35
Proverbs 15:14.....	106, 187, 194
Proverbs 15:14-15	187
Proverbs 15:16-18	217
Proverbs 15:19.....	228, 248
Proverbs 15:19-21	248
Proverbs 15:22-24	279
Proverbs 15:24.....	37, 243
Proverbs 15:25-27	309
Proverbs 15:28-29	340
Proverbs 15:30-33	370
Proverbs 15:4-6	66
Proverbs 15:5.....	119
Proverbs 15:7-9	95
Proverbs 16:1.....	36, 127, 157, 188, 192, 218, 248, 309, 345, 354, 379, 385
Proverbs 16:10-12	127
Proverbs 16:12.....	345
Proverbs 16:1-3	36
Proverbs 16:13-15	157
Proverbs 16:16.....	188, 192
Proverbs 16:16-17	188
Proverbs 16:17.....	248
Proverbs 16:18.....	218, 309, 354, 385
Proverbs 16:18-19	218
Proverbs 16:20-21	249
Proverbs 16:22-24	280
Proverbs 16:25-27	310
Proverbs 16:27.....	291
Proverbs 16:28-30	341

Daily Devotions from the Book of Proverbs

Proverbs 16:30.....	121
Proverbs 16:31-33	371
Proverbs 16:4-6	67
Proverbs 16:6.....	345
Proverbs 16:7.....	96
Proverbs 16:7-9	96
Proverbs 17:1-2	37
Proverbs 17:12-14	189
Proverbs 17:15-17	219
Proverbs 17:18-20	250
Proverbs 17:21.....	281, 344
Proverbs 17:21-22	281
Proverbs 17:23-24	311
Proverbs 17:25-26	342
Proverbs 17:27-28	372
Proverbs 17:3-4	68
Proverbs 17:5.....	97, 316
Proverbs 17:5-6	97
Proverbs 17:7-8	128
Proverbs 17:9-11	158
Proverbs 18:11-12	190
Proverbs 18:12.....	354
Proverbs 18:1-2	38
Proverbs 18:13-14	220
Proverbs 18:15-16	251
Proverbs 18:17-18	282
Proverbs 18:19-20	312
Proverbs 18:21-22	343
Proverbs 18:22.....	63, 207, 233, 350
Proverbs 18:23-24	373
Proverbs 18:24.....	258, 260
Proverbs 18:3-4	69
Proverbs 18:5-6	98
Proverbs 18:6.....	129
Proverbs 18:7-8	129, 320
Proverbs 18:8.....	290
Proverbs 18:9-10	159

Proverbs 19:1 37, 39, 157, 164, 191, 207, 221, 229, 233, 252, 283, 350
 Proverbs 19:12..... 157, 191
 Proverbs 19:1-2 39
 Proverbs 19:12-14 191
 Proverbs 19:13..... 37, 229
 Proverbs 19:14..... 207, 233, 350
 Proverbs 19:15-17 221
 Proverbs 19:18..... 164, 252
 Proverbs 19:18-20 252
 Proverbs 19:21-22 283
 Proverbs 19:23-24 313
 Proverbs 19:25-26 344
 Proverbs 19:27-29 374
 Proverbs 19:29..... 358
 Proverbs 19:3-4 70
 Proverbs 19:5-6 99
 Proverbs 19:7-8 130
 Proverbs 19:9-11 160
 Proverbs 2:10-17 130, 174, 204, 235
 Proverbs 2:1-5 22, 106, 143
 Proverbs 2:18..... 235
 Proverbs 2:19..... 266
 Proverbs 2:20..... 296
 Proverbs 2:21 327
 Proverbs 2:22..... 357
 Proverbs 2:6..... 53, 82, 246, 369, 372
 Proverbs 2:6-17 372
 Proverbs 2:6-7 246
 Proverbs 2:6-8 369
 Proverbs 2:7..... 82
 Proverbs 2:8..... 113
 Proverbs 2:9..... 143
 Proverbs 20:1 40, 104, 111, 161, 183, 192, 199, 222, 253, 284, 290, 317
 Proverbs 20:10..... 284
 Proverbs 20:12-14 161
 Proverbs 20:1-3 40
 Proverbs 20:15-17 192

Daily Devotions from the Book of Proverbs

Proverbs 20:16.....	199
Proverbs 20:17.....	253
Proverbs 20:18.....	104, 183, 222
Proverbs 20:18-19	222
Proverbs 20:19.....	290
Proverbs 20:20-21	253
Proverbs 20:22-23	284
Proverbs 20:24-26	314
Proverbs 20:27-28	345
Proverbs 20:29-30	375
Proverbs 20:4.....	71, 86
Proverbs 20:4-6	71
Proverbs 20:7-8	100
Proverbs 20:9-11	131
Proverbs 21:10-12	132
Proverbs 21:1-3	41
Proverbs 21:13-14	162
Proverbs 21:15-16	193
Proverbs 21:17-18	223
Proverbs 21:19.....	37, 229, 254
Proverbs 21:19-20	254
Proverbs 21:21-22	285
Proverbs 21:23-25	315
Proverbs 21:25.....	159, 346
Proverbs 21:26-28	346
Proverbs 21:29-31	376
Proverbs 21:3.....	346
Proverbs 21:4-6	72
Proverbs 21:7-9	101
Proverbs 21:8.....	132
Proverbs 21:9.....	37, 254
Proverbs 22:10-11	133
Proverbs 22:12-13	163
Proverbs 22:1-3	42
Proverbs 22:14-15	194
Proverbs 22:16-17	224
Proverbs 22:17.....	255

Proverbs 22:18-19	255
Proverbs 22:2.....	26, 201, 286, 316, 347, 377
Proverbs 22:20-21	286
Proverbs 22:22-23	316
Proverbs 22:24-26	347
Proverbs 22:27-29	377
Proverbs 22:3.....	347
Proverbs 22:4-6	73
Proverbs 22:6.....	231, 240, 266
Proverbs 22:7-9	102
Proverbs 23:1-3	43, 103
Proverbs 23:13-15	164
Proverbs 23:16-19	195
Proverbs 23:19.....	256
Proverbs 23:20-21	225, 317
Proverbs 23:21.....	223, 227
Proverbs 23:22-25	256
Proverbs 23:26-28	287
Proverbs 23:27-28	207
Proverbs 23:29-30	317
Proverbs 23:31-32	348
Proverbs 23:33-35	378
Proverbs 23:4-5	74, 124
Proverbs 23:6-8	103
Proverbs 23:9-12	134
Proverbs 24:10-12	165
Proverbs 24:1-2	44, 75
Proverbs 24:13-16	196
Proverbs 24:17-20	226
Proverbs 24:21-23	257
Proverbs 24:24-26	288
Proverbs 24:27-28	318
Proverbs 24:28.....	290, 349
Proverbs 24:29.....	349
Proverbs 24:29-31	349
Proverbs 24:30-31	159, 379
Proverbs 24:32-34	379

Daily Devotions from the Book of Proverbs

Proverbs 24:3-5	75
Proverbs 24:6.....	104, 183
Proverbs 24:6-7	104
Proverbs 24:8-9	135
Proverbs 25:1	45, 50, 166, 197, 227, 258, 289
Proverbs 25:11-12	166
Proverbs 25:1-2	45
Proverbs 25:13-14	197
Proverbs 25:15-16	227
Proverbs 25:17-18	258
Proverbs 25:19-20	289
Proverbs 25:21-23	319
Proverbs 25:24.....	254, 350
Proverbs 25:24-26	350
Proverbs 25:27-28	380
Proverbs 25:3-4	76
Proverbs 25:5-7	105
Proverbs 25:8-10	136
Proverbs 25:9-10	166
Proverbs 26:10-11	167
Proverbs 26:12-13	198
Proverbs 26:1-3	46
Proverbs 26:14.....	61, 159, 228, 324
Proverbs 26:14-15	228
Proverbs 26:16-17	259
Proverbs 26:17.....	171
Proverbs 26:18-20	290
Proverbs 26:21-22	320
Proverbs 26:23-25	351
Proverbs 26:26-28	381
Proverbs 26:4-5	77
Proverbs 26:6.....	106, 197
Proverbs 26:6-7	106
Proverbs 26:7.....	137
Proverbs 26:8-9	137
Proverbs 27:1	47, 54, 168, 199, 229, 254, 260, 291
Proverbs 27:11-12	168

Proverbs 27:1-3	47
Proverbs 27:13-14	199
Proverbs 27:15	229, 254
Proverbs 27:15-16	229
Proverbs 27:17-18	260
Proverbs 27:19-20	291
Proverbs 27:2	197, 321, 352, 380, 382
Proverbs 27:21-22	321
Proverbs 27:23-24	352
Proverbs 27:25-27	382
Proverbs 27:4-6	78
Proverbs 27:7-8	107
Proverbs 27:8	168
Proverbs 27:9-10	138
Proverbs 28:1	48, 169, 200, 230, 261, 292, 355
Proverbs 28:11-12	169
Proverbs 28:1-3	48
Proverbs 28:13-14	200
Proverbs 28:15-16	230
Proverbs 28:17-18	261
Proverbs 28:19-20	292
Proverbs 28:2	169, 253, 322, 353, 383
Proverbs 28:21-22	322
Proverbs 28:22	253
Proverbs 28:23-25	353
Proverbs 28:26-28	383
Proverbs 28:4-6	79
Proverbs 28:6	39
Proverbs 28:7	108
Proverbs 28:7-8	108
Proverbs 28:9-10	139
Proverbs 29:11-12	170
Proverbs 29:1-3	49
Proverbs 29:13-14	201
Proverbs 29:14	172
Proverbs 29:15-16	231
Proverbs 29:17-18	262

Daily Devotions from the Book of Proverbs

Proverbs 29:19-20	293
Proverbs 29:2.....	172, 218, 230, 323, 354, 383, 384
Proverbs 29:21-22	323
Proverbs 29:23.....	218, 354
Proverbs 29:23-24	354
Proverbs 29:25-27	384
Proverbs 29:4-6	80
Proverbs 29:7-8	109
Proverbs 29:9.....	140, 170
Proverbs 29:9-10	140
Proverbs 3:11-12	126
Proverbs 3:1-2	23, 54
Proverbs 3:13-14	192
Proverbs 3:13-15	270
Proverbs 3:13-18	144
Proverbs 3:19.....	175, 205, 210, 241
Proverbs 3:19-20	175, 205
Proverbs 3:21-23	38
Proverbs 3:21-24	205
Proverbs 3:25-26	236
Proverbs 3:27-28	267
Proverbs 3:29-30	297
Proverbs 3:31.....	299, 328
Proverbs 3:31-32	328
Proverbs 3:33.....	311, 358
Proverbs 3:33-35	358
Proverbs 3:3-4	54
Proverbs 3:5.....	83, 96, 359, 379
Proverbs 3:5-6	96, 359, 379
Proverbs 3:5-8	83
Proverbs 3:9-12	114
Proverbs 30:10.....	171
Proverbs 30:10-11	171
Proverbs 30:12-13	202
Proverbs 30:1-3	50
Proverbs 30:14-16	232
Proverbs 30:17-19	263

Proverbs 30:18-19	294
Proverbs 30:20-23	294
Proverbs 30:24-28	324
Proverbs 30:29-31	355
Proverbs 30:32-33	385
Proverbs 30:4-5	110
Proverbs 30:5	141
Proverbs 30:6-9	141
Proverbs 30:7-9	227
Proverbs 31:10-15	233
Proverbs 31:1-3	51
Proverbs 31:16-20	264
Proverbs 31:21-26	325
Proverbs 31:23	386
Proverbs 31:27-31	386
Proverbs 31:4-7	111
Proverbs 31:6	317, 348, 378
Proverbs 31:6-7	317, 348, 378
Proverbs 31:8-9	172
Proverbs 4:10	145
Proverbs 4:10-11	145
Proverbs 4:12	176
Proverbs 4:1-2	24, 55
Proverbs 4:12-13	176
Proverbs 4:13	119
Proverbs 4:14-15	68
Proverbs 4:14-16	347
Proverbs 4:14-17	206
Proverbs 4:18-19	237
Proverbs 4:19	291, 351
Proverbs 4:20-21	268
Proverbs 4:22-23	298
Proverbs 4:24-25	329
Proverbs 4:26-27	34, 359
Proverbs 4:3	24, 55, 84, 115
Proverbs 4:3-4	55
Proverbs 4:5-6	84

Daily Devotions from the Book of Proverbs

Proverbs 4:5-7	87
Proverbs 4:7-9	115
Proverbs 5:1-2	25, 56
Proverbs 5:14.....	177
Proverbs 5:15.....	207, 269, 330
Proverbs 5:15-19	269
Proverbs 5:15-20	330
Proverbs 5:16-19	238
Proverbs 5:20.....	207, 269
Proverbs 5:21.....	299
Proverbs 5:22.....	330
Proverbs 5:23.....	360
Proverbs 5:3-4	56, 207, 269
Proverbs 5:5-6	85
Proverbs 5:7.....	116
Proverbs 5:8-13	146
Proverbs 6:10-12	117
Proverbs 6:12.....	147, 351
Proverbs 6:1-2	183
Proverbs 6:1-3	26
Proverbs 6:13-14	121
Proverbs 6:13-15	147
Proverbs 6:16-21	178
Proverbs 6:20-21	208
Proverbs 6:22-24	208
Proverbs 6:25-26	239
Proverbs 6:26.....	299
Proverbs 6:27-29	270
Proverbs 6:29.....	207
Proverbs 6:30-31	300, 331
Proverbs 6:32.....	159, 331, 361
Proverbs 6:32-33	331, 361
Proverbs 6:34-35	360, 361
Proverbs 6:4-5	57
Proverbs 6:6-9	86, 117
Proverbs 7:10-20	209
Proverbs 7:11-14	148

Proverbs 7:1-2	27
Proverbs 7:1-5	332
Proverbs 7:15-16	179
Proverbs 7:17-18	209
Proverbs 7:19-21	240
Proverbs 7:21-23	301
Proverbs 7:22-23	271
Proverbs 7:2-3	24
Proverbs 7:24.....	301, 302
Proverbs 7:25-26	332
Proverbs 7:27.....	362
Proverbs 7:3.....	58
Proverbs 7:4-5	87, 179, 207, 222, 240, 301
Proverbs 7:6-10	118
Proverbs 7:6-21	271
Proverbs 8:1.....	28, 149, 180, 192, 210, 363
Proverbs 8:10.....	192
Proverbs 8:11-12	149
Proverbs 8:11-21	363
Proverbs 8:13.....	180
Proverbs 8:1-3	28
Proverbs 8:13-16	180
Proverbs 8:17.....	210
Proverbs 8:17-22	210
Proverbs 8:23-26	241
Proverbs 8:27-31	272
Proverbs 8:32.....	302
Proverbs 8:33.....	119, 273, 333
Proverbs 8:33-34	333
Proverbs 8:33-36	273
Proverbs 8:35-36	363
Proverbs 8:4-6	59
Proverbs 8:7.....	88
Proverbs 8:7-8	88
Proverbs 8:9-10	119
Proverbs 9:10.....	24, 34, 59, 108, 211
Proverbs 9:11.....	242

Daily Devotions from the Book of Proverbs

Proverbs 9:12.....	273
Proverbs 9:1-2	29, 60
Proverbs 9:13.....	303
Proverbs 9:14-17	334
Proverbs 9:18.....	364
Proverbs 9:3-5	60
Proverbs 9:6.....	89
Proverbs 9:7.....	120, 150, 181
Proverbs 9:7-8	181
Proverbs 9:8.....	150
Proverbs 9:9.....	181
Psalms 1:1	115, 133
Psalms 1:1-2.....	115
Psalms 10:3-4.....	122
Psalms 10:4	72, 309
Psalms 111:10	25, 59, 60, 70, 90, 140, 148, 149, 168, 180, 191, 203, 219, 224, 278, 280, 307, 308, 342, 384
Psalms 119:1	338
Psalms 119:11	338
Psalms 119:111	338
Psalms 119:2	171
Psalms 119:29-30.....	171
Psalms 12:5	316
Psalms 139:23-24.....	68
Psalms 14:1	281
Psalms 18:30	82
Psalms 19:7	55, 115
Psalms 25:9	358
Psalms 26:1	68
Psalms 26:1-3.....	68
Psalms 27:1	284
Psalms 27:14	284
Psalms 32:9-10.....	75, 187
Psalms 34:15	122
Psalms 35:11	189
Psalms 35:11-14.....	189
Psalms 37:1-2.....	328

Psalm 37:3	55, 115
Psalm 37:31	55, 115
Psalm 40:4	218
Psalm 40:8	55, 115
Psalm 49:20	137
Psalm 49:3	71
Psalm 5:12	122
Psalm 55:22	236
Psalm 57:2-3.....	247
Psalm 61:2-3.....	159
Psalm 66:18-19	139
Psalm 7:16	381
Psalm 7:17	47
Psalm 78:41-49	158
Psalm 86:11	171
Psalm 89:11	29
Psalm 9:17	381
Psalm 90:12	149
Revelation 12:5.....	105
Revelation 21:1.....	125
Revelation 21:1-2	125
Revelation 21:1-27	125
Revelation 22:13.....	376
Revelation 22:13-14	376
Revelation 22:18-19	141
Revelation 3:20.....	88, 89
Revelation 5:5.....	355
Romans 1:20.....	116
Romans 1:20-21.....	116
Romans 10:1	27, 89, 111, 116, 268, 296
Romans 10:12-13.....	268
Romans 10:13.....	27, 89, 111, 116, 296
Romans 12:17-18.....	136, 226
Romans 12:17-19.....	284
Romans 12:17-21.....	297
Romans 12:18-21.....	319
Romans 13:8.....	26, 102

Daily Devotions from the Book of Proverbs

Romans 3:10-11.....	44, 58, 135, 168, 226, 309
Romans 3:10-12.....	376
Romans 3:10-26.....	202
Romans 3:23.....	58, 72, 79, 108, 135, 156, 296
Romans 3:23-26.....	58, 72, 79, 108, 135, 156
Romans 5:12.....	100
Romans 5:12-18.....	100
Romans 5:19.....	232
Romans 6:23.....	62, 114, 135, 296
Romans 7:19.....	139
Big Bang Theory, The.....	161, 175
Book of Life.....	46, 66, 120, 124, 125, 141
Cain.....	44
Calvary.....	42, 72, 94, 100, 113, 140, 149, 151, 155, 157, 158, 249, 261, 276, 287, 296, 297, 310, 321, 330, 350, 362, 364
Children of Israel.....	50, 80, 127, 191, 241, 282
Christ..	23, 54, 58, 62, 66, 72, 73, 79, 81, 85, 88, 89, 106, 108, 113, 114, 119, 125, 126, 128, 133, 135, 136, 137, 139, 142, 147, 151, 165, 185, 196, 220, 237, 267, 268, 271, 274, 295, 296, 297, 298, 306, 310, 311, 321, 324, 326, 328, 333, 350, 355, 363, 367
Coming to the Lord by Faith..	22, 31, 32, 33, 38, 40, 44, 46, 49, 52, 54, 56, 58, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 66, 69, 70, 74, 76, 77, 79, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 97, 100, 101, 106, 108, 111, 113, 115, 118, 119, 120, 122, 123, 125, 126, 128, 131, 132, 134, 135, 136, 137, 139, 142, 147, 148, 153, 156, 162, 165, 169, 170, 174, 181, 182, 184, 185, 186, 188, 193, 195, 204, 206, 207, 209, 212, 214, 215, 216, 218, 219, 220, 221, 228, 235, 236, 244, 245, 249, 250, 259, 261, 266, 267, 268, 270, 271, 273, 276, 277, 278, 279, 281, 283, 284, 287, 288, 291, 292, 293, 295, 296, 297, 299, 300, 301, 303, 304, 306, 307, 309, 311, 312, 313, 315, 321, 323, 326, 327, 328, 329, 332, 333, 335, 339, 340, 342, 344, 348, 349, 351, 353, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 362, 365, 366, 368, 369, 370, 372, 376, 377, 379, 381, 382, 385
Creation....	25, 27, 29, 55, 58, 60, 67, 110, 115, 116, 144, 158, 168, 175, 185, 204, 205, 210, 244, 251, 255, 272, 360, 421
Creator.....	24, 25, 27, 29, 55, 58, 60, 110, 113, 126, 161, 165, 168, 175, 186, 201, 205, 212, 241, 244, 251, 273, 285, 309, 314, 339, 342, 356
Devil.....	29, 125, 263, 266
Distraction.....	56

Dumb Fool, The . 38, 39, 46, 98, 106, 129, 134, 137, 140, 158, 160, 167, 170, 173, 189, 243, 259, 281, 293, 307, 321, 342, 358, 369, 383

Entering into a Personal Relationship with the Lord . 22, 25, 27, 28, 32, 33, 38, 44, 46, 52, 54, 58, 60, 69, 72, 77, 91, 92, 93, 113, 115, 121, 122, 126, 128, 130, 135, 137, 140, 156, 168, 181, 190, 193, 198, 202, 203, 206, 211, 215, 217, 228, 244, 261, 270, 271, 276, 279, 281, 283, 287, 291, 295, 298, 300, 306, 307, 316, 323, 328, 331, 333, 340, 344, 345, 351, 374, 376

Eve 56, 200

Evil Fool, The .. 38, 46, 47, 106, 134, 137, 140, 170, 173, 189, 259, 274, 281, 321, 342

Existence of God..... 83

Felix 311

First Death..... 135

Garden of Eden, The 147, 151, 200, 207, 232, 299, 358, 364, 368

Genesis 25, 29, 44, 56, 87, 130, 133, 201, 239, 264, 272, 303

Godhead, The 116

Great Flood 44, 259

Great Flood, The 44, 259

Greek Words

 gehenna (hell) 39

 hades (hell) 144, 279, 291, 310, 357, 362, 364

Haman 223

Hebrew Words

 belial (naughty)..... 147

 sheol (hell) 85

Holy Spirit, The ... 27, 30, 33, 34, 40, 49, 51, 62, 66, 67, 88, 90, 91, 105, 106, 110, 120, 121, 122, 128, 134, 137, 141, 144, 148, 168, 170, 181, 185, 195, 203, 204, 237, 241, 242, 245, 248, 249, 251, 256, 265, 267, 272, 287, 292, 298, 311, 321, 330, 334, 338, 347, 356, 357, 362, 365, 370, 376

Isaac 87

Ishmael..... 87

Israel..... 21, 55, 71, 75, 222, 259, 331, 361

Jacob 21, 130

Jesus ... 18, 21, 23, 25, 27, 29, 35, 36, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 47, 53, 62, 66, 70, 72, 73, 74, 83, 99, 100, 105, 107, 110, 114, 116, 124, 130, 133, 136, 140, 144, 149, 150, 151, 156, 157, 158, 160, 161, 162, 166, 170, 184, 185, 190, 191, 202, 204, 220, 221, 232, 234, 239, 241, 245, 248, 249, 254, 259, 261, 265, 268, 269,

275, 280, 282, 286, 287, 293, 296, 297, 300, 303, 305, 306, 310, 312, 315, 318,
321, 324, 327, 330, 341, 343, 350, 355, 356, 362, 364, 365, 371, 373, 374, 378,
380, 384, 421, 422

John the Baptist..... 362

Joseph..... 133, 421

Mary 421

Message Titles

About Sudden Fear and the Desolation of the Wicked (03 August) 236

Adulterous Wife Analyzed and Unseemly Things (30 September) 294

Against Laziness, Wickedness, and the Untruthful (21 November) 346

All Good Things in Life Begin with Fearing the Lord (09 July) 211

All Shall Eat the Fruit of their Ways and Devices (01 October)..... 295

Angry Kings, Foolish Sons, and Prudent Wives (19 June) 191

Answer Not a Fool But Answer a Fool (26 February) 77

Ant is Not a Sluggard, The (06 March)..... 86

Apostasy Taught in the Old and New Testaments (01 November)..... 326

Attend to and Depart not from Words of Wisdom (04 September) 268

Attend unto Wisdom and Understanding (05 January) 25

Avoid Angry People and Be Ready for the Lord (21 August) 254

Avoid Angry, Furious People and Be Not a Surety (22 November)..... 347

Avoid Immorality by Drinking from One's own Cistern (05 July) 207

Avoid Wrong Relationships and Marry a Godly Person (05 May)..... 146

Avoid Wrongful Pride and How to Have Lasting Wealth (13 May)..... 154

Backslider Will Be Filled with his own Ways, The (14 May) 155

Bad Instruction, Ungodly Witnesses, and Scorners (19 December) 374

Bad Outcomes of Physical and Spiritual Adultery (06 December)..... 361

Be a Faithful Messenger But Not a Proud Boaster (25 June)..... 197

Be a Person of Mercy and Truth (03 February)..... 54

Be Careful about Surety, Strife, and the Tongue (17 August) 250

Be Careful around Foolish and Bloodthirsty People (29 April)..... 140

Be Not among Winebibbers or Riotous Eaters of Flesh (23 July) 225

Be Not Desirous of Deceitful Meat (23 January) 43

Be Not Too Wise in One's Own Eyes and Be Not Lazy (26 June) 198

Be One with Understanding and Honor Parents (19 November) 344

Be Slow to Fight and Quick to Get Along (25 April) 136

Be Wise, Be Prudent, Be Not Simple (27 May)..... 168

Being Cleansed from a Filthy Heart and Being Honest (20 April) 131

Being in Christ Helps Resolve and Avoid Offenses (18 October) 312

Being Quiet is Better than Being Boastful (30 December) 385

Being Rich in the Lord and Seeing Him as Friend (18 December)..... 373

Being Saved Means to Seek, Commit, and Trust (12 December) 367

Being Slothful or Righteous, Being Wise or Foolish (15 August)..... 248

Better a Dry Morsel than Strife and Good to be Wise (17 January) 37

Beware the Lips of a Strange Woman (05 February)..... 56

Biblical Inerrancy and Being neither Rich nor Poor (30 April) 141

Biblical Salvation is Not Based upon One's Wealth (18 June) 190

Blessed is the Person that Chooses Godly Wisdom (08 November)..... 333

Blessings of Poverty versus the Curses of Riches, The (19 January)..... 39

Boast Not Thyself of Tomorrow (27 January) 47

Borrower is Servant to the Lender, The (22 March) 102

Brawling Spouse, Good News, and Judgment, A (25 November) 350

Care for Flocks and Herds and Riches Soon Gone (27 November)..... 352

Caring for One's Enemies and Handling the Tongue (25 October)..... 319

Cast out the Scorn and the Contentious (22 April)..... 133

Chastening Children, Great Wrath, and Instruction (19 August) 252

Choose the Lord rather than the Way of Evil People (04 July)..... 206

Choosing the Lord's Plans and Being Ethical (19 September)..... 283

Choosing to Come to the Lord and to Live for Him (17 November) 342

Coming to the Lord is the Best Choice for any Person (19 April) 130

Commandments Lead and Reproofs Instruct (06 July) 208

Confessing and Forsaking One's Sins (28 June)..... 200

Consider the Poor and Turn away Wrath (29 March) 109

Contempt and Reproach versus Deep Waters (18 February) 69

Contentious People and Talebearers Kindle Strife (26 October) 320

Continual Dropping and a Contentious Woman, A (27 July) 229

Correcting a Wayward Child and Having a Vision (29 August)..... 262

Correcting One's Children and Being Moderate (13 December) 368

Correcting, Stealing, and Trusting in the Lord (28 November) 353

Correction and Destruction are before the Lord (15 April)..... 126

Creation by Wisdom, Understanding, and Knowledge (03 June) 175

Creditworthiness, Boundaries, and Being Diligent (22 December) 377

Crown of Glory and Being Slow to Anger, A (16 December) 371

Crown of the Wise, Faithful Witness, and Fear (14 September)..... 278

Cursing one's Parents and a Squandered Inheritance (20 August) 253

Danger in Slothfulness, Keeping one's Soul, and Sharing (19 July)	221
Death, Life, the Tongue, and a Good Wife (18 November)	343
Deceiving one's Neighbor and Betraying Secrets (26 September)	290
Deliver thyself from being a Surety (06 February)	57
Depart Not from the Words of Wisdom (05 April)	116
Do Not Accuse a Servant and Honor Thy Parents (30 May)	171
Do Not Be a Respector of Persons but Love the Lord (28 October)	322
Do Not Believe a Wicked Heart or Hating Lips (26 November)	351
Do Not Desire to be with Evil People (24 January)	44
Do Not Envy Successful People or Evil People (03 November)	328
Do Not Go Along with the Evil Crowd (01 April)	112
Do Not Honor Fools or Give them Parables (26 April)	137
Do Not Rejoice When thy Enemy Falls (24 July)	226
Do Not Rob the Poor or Oppress the Afflicted (22 October)	316
Do Not Tell Everything but Be Honest (29 May)	170
Do Not Use a Fool to Deliver an Important Message (26 March)	106
Do Not Withhold Good When It Is Due (03 September)	267
Dying Lost because of Laziness and being a Meddler (26 August)	259
Eat Not the Bread of an Evil, Greedy Person (23 March)	103
Effective Ministry Requires Faith and Commitment (16 January)	36
Enemies, Being Righteous, and Being Led (16 March)	96
Envy, Helping the Poor, and Righteous Hope (14 November)	339
Establish Thy Ways and Turn Not From It (04 December)	359
Eternal Condemnation and the Harlot's House (07 December)	362
Every Wise Woman Builds her House (14 January)	34
Every Word of the Lord is Pure (30 March)	110
Everyone is a <i>Belial</i> 'Adam at Birth (06 May)	147
Evil Men Understand <u>NOT</u> Judgment (28 February)	79
Excellent Speech, Lying Lips, and Spiritual Gifts (17 April)	128
Execute Judgment but Avoid Certain People (29 February)	80
False Balance is an Abomination to the Lord, A (11 January)	31
False Pride, Dirty Oxen, and Faithful Witnesses (14 February)	65
False Witness, the Delight to a Fool, and Discretion, A (19 May)	160
False Witnesses and the Chief Giver of Gifts (19 March)	99
Fear of the Lord is the Beginning of Knowledge (01 February)	52
Fear the Lord and be Slow to Get Angry (14 October)	308
Fearing the Lord is Good but Being Slothful is Bad (19 October)	313

Foolishness Perverts and Wealth Separates (19 February) 70

Fools Joke about their Sins (14 April)..... 125

Fool's Mouth and a Talebearer's Words, A (18 April) 129

Forming Good Marriages and Being Kind to Others (11 July)..... 213

Forsake the Foolish and Pursue Understanding (09 March) 89

Four Beings of Strength that show God's Work (30 November) 355

General Principles about Training Children (29 July)..... 231

Get Wisdom and Do Not Forget Understanding (04 March) 84

Getting Saved, Receiving Correction, and Honor (15 December) 370

Giving the Lord one's Heart and Living for Him (23 September) 287

Glory of God Conceals a Thing, The (25 January) 45

God Covers Sin, Reproves, and Deals with Rebellion (17 May) 158

God Does Not Make People Wicked or Prideful (16 February) 67

God Gives Knowledge and Spiritual Gifts for His Use (18 August) 251

God Gives Sound Wisdom to the Righteous (02 March)..... 82

God Guides Upright, Overcomes, and Gives Safety (21 December)..... 376

God Receives Scorners and the Wicked on His Terms (09 June)..... 181

Godliness Must Be Bred into Young Children (02 August) 235

Godly Leading, Making Vows, and Divine Discipline (20 October)..... 314

Godly People and Godly Words Go Together (10 April) 121

Godly People Can Do Much to Eliminate Thievery (06 October) 300

Godly People Speak Better than Ungodly People (13 January)..... 33

Godly Truths are Forever but Lies are Soon Gone (12 September)..... 276

Godly Understanding and Sweet Pleasant Words (16 September) 280

Godly Wisdom and Understanding Lead to the Lord (08 March) 88

Godly Wisdom and Understanding Make One Happy (03 May)..... 144

Godly Wisdom Benefits but Scorners Are Alone (09 September)..... 273

Godly Wisdom Does Not Wait Forever (01 September) 265

Godly Wisdom Gives Eternal Life and Favor (08 December)..... 363

Godly Wisdom Has Built Her House (09 January) 29

Godly Wisdom Has More Value than Rubies and Things (08 May) 149

Godly Wisdom is Eternal with no Beginning or End (08 August)..... 241

Godly Wisdom is the only Way to the Good Life (02 May)..... 143

Godly Wisdom Leads to Good, Right, and Life (02 October) 296

Godly Wisdom Will Be Eternally Sweet to the Soul (24 June) 196

God's Love Covers the Sin of Those that Come to Him (10 May) 151

Good Name is Better than Riches, A (22 January)..... 42

Greedy of Gain Wait for their own Blood, The (01 May).....	142
Hand of the Diligent Usually Prospers, The (10 February).....	61
Handling the Word Wisely and Speaking Favorably (16 August).....	249
Harlot Tempts those Void of Understanding, The (07 May)	148
Hating Lips, Wickedness, Digging a Pit, and Lying (26 December)	381
Hating Some Things and Seeking Godly Wisdom (08 June).....	180
Having a Foolish Child or Having a Merry Heart (17 September)	281
Having a Servant and Lacking Bread (12 April).....	123
Having the Right Kind of Pride and Seeking the Lord (16 July)	218
Hay, Grass, Herbs, Lambs, and Serving the Lord (27 December).....	382
He is more Brutish than any Man (30 January).....	50
He that Being often Reproved (29 January)	49
Hear Instruction and Forsake Not the Law (01 March).....	81
Hear the Instruction of a Father (04 January).....	24
Hear the Law and Do Not Cause Others to Stray (28 April).....	139
Hearing the Whole Matter and the Weak Spirit of Man (18 July)	220
Heart of Kings is Unsearchable, The (25 February).....	76
Helping Others and Giving Only the Right Kind of Gifts (21 May).....	162
Her Husband is Known in the Gates (31 October).....	325
Hiring Godly People is A Good Business Practice (26 May)	167
Honor is Not a Pretty Thing for a Fool (26 January).....	46
Honor one's Parents, Come to the Lord, and Be Wise (23 August)	256
Honoring with Substance and Enduring Chastening (03 April).....	114
House is Built by Wisdom and Understanding, A (24 February)	75
How the Godly Can Deal with Evil, Ungodly Thoughts (05 June).....	177
How the Righteous Answer and Answered Prayers (15 November)	340
How to have Plenty and How to be Blessed (28 September).....	292
How to Live Right and How to Prepare for Death (16 June).....	188
How to Receive Praise and Removing Foolishness (27 October).....	321
Humility and Fear of the Lord Lead to Riches (22 February).....	73
Hungering after Righteousness and Not Wandering (27 March).....	107
If Thou Faint in the Day of Adversity (24 May)	165
Ignoring Correction and Speaking Hastily (29 September)	293
Immoral People Lead Astray but God Leads Straight (07 August)	240
Immorality and Ungodliness are Contagious (02 September).....	266
In the Multitude of Counselors is Safety (24 March).....	104
Instruction over Silver and Knowledge over Gold (08 April).....	119

Intoxicating Beverages Have Two Extreme Sides (23 October)..... 317

Iron Sharpens Iron and Being Faithful and Diligent (27 August) 260

It is Important to be Honest with the Wicked (24 September)..... 288

It is Not for Kings to Drink Alcoholic Beverages (31 March)..... 111

Jesus is the Way and the Hope for all Creation (28 August)..... 261

Judging Wicked and Righteous and Guarding Words (18 March) 98

Just Enjoy Doing Right and God Receives Sinners, The (21 June) 193

Just Man Walks in His Integrity, The (20 March)..... 100

Just, the Wise, and the Upright Benefit in Life, The (10 March)..... 90

Justifying the Evil, Condemning the Just, and Friends (17 July) 219

Keep His Commandments and Live (07 January)..... 27

Keep the Commandments for Length of Days (03 January)..... 23

Keep the Law and Be Not Greedy for Gain (28 March) 108

Keeping One's Tongue, the Proud, and the Slothful (21 October)..... 315

Kind Words Can Be Very Powerful (25 May) 166

Kinds of People that Cause Trouble for Others (16 November) 341

King's Heart is in the Lord's Hand, The (21 January) 41

Knowing to go Home and How to Treat a Neighbor (25 August) 258

Knowing when to Speak and when to be Quiet (12 November)..... 337

Knowledge is from the Lord (22 May)..... 163

Labor Not to be Rich (23 February) 74

Labor of the Righteous and Ownership by Chastening (10 July)..... 212

Lasting Blessings for the Right and the Mature (02 November)..... 327

Law of the Wise Leads to Life and from Death, The (13 July)..... 215

Lazy People do not get Laziness from the Lord (24 December)..... 379

Leaving a Godly Inheritance and Working Hard (13 November)..... 338

Let Not thy Heart envy Sinners because There is an End (23 June) 195

Let thy Heart Keep the Commandments (04 February) 55

Like People Draw to Like People and Act Likewise (09 November)..... 334

Little Good for the Godly in Intoxicating Wine (23 November) 348

Live by the Golden Rule and the Field of the Lazy (24 November)..... 349

Living for the Lord beats Intoxicating Beverages (23 December)..... 378

Lord Gives Wisdom and Knowledge, The (02 February)..... 53

Lord Keeps the Way of His Saints, The (02 April)..... 113

Making Good Judgments and Being Honest (16 April)..... 127

Making Right Choices and Living for the Lord (20 November)..... 345

Many People are Destroyed by Sexual Immorality (07 November) 332

Many Young People Foolishly Choose Immorality (07 September)	271
Meeting an angry Animal, Evil for Good, and Strife (17 June)	189
Meeting of the Poor and the Deceitful, A (29 June).....	201
Mentoring and the Paths of the Just and the Wicked (04 August)	237
Mingling with All Wisdom and Having No Delight (18 January)	38
Mocking One's Parents and Four Things Not Known (30 August).....	263
Mocking the Problems of Others and Grandchildren (17 March).....	97
Multitude of Counselors and the Way of Life, A (15 September)	279
Naïve Men need Godly Wisdom and Understanding (07 July).....	209
Negative Pride and Ungodly Friends Bring Down (29 November)	354
No Evil for the Just but Mischief for the Wicked (12 October)	306
No False Witnesses will be at the Final Judgment (12 August).....	245
None of the Reasons for Turning from God is Good (08 October).....	302
Not Despising, Not Devising, and Not Talking (14 August)	247
Not Servant to Child and People that Cause Trouble (29 October)	323
On Being Surety for a Friend (06 January)	26
One can Learn from Four Tiny but Wise Creatures (30 October).....	324
One Man for One Woman for One Lifetime is Bible (06 August)	239
Open Rebuke is Better than Secret Love (27 February).....	78
Open thy Mouth and Judge Righteously (31 May)	172
Oppressing the Poor and Listening to the Wise (22 July)	224
People Cannot Do the Impossible by Resisting Sin (06 September)	270
People Live Longer by Wisdom and Understanding (09 August)	242
People Should Not Boast but Control their Spirit (25 December)	380
Person of Understanding Speaks from a Good Heart, A (11 May).....	152
Physical and Spiritual Adultery are close Kin (06 November)	331
Pleasure Leads to Poverty and the Wicked End Badly (21 July)	223
Plowing of the Wicked is Sin, The (21 February).....	72
Poor Do Not Hear any Rebuke, The (13 April).....	124
Poor Outdo the Rich and Joy in the Righteous, The (28 May)	169
Poverty and Shame for Refusing Correction (13 September)	277
Poverty to the Lazy and Froward Mouth to the Wicked (06 April)	117
Prepare before Building and only Cautiously Tattle (24 October).....	318
Presenters of the Gospel will be Abundantly Blessed (11 October)	305
Prolonging Days, Eternal Hope, and Way to Life (10 November)	335
Proud, the Wicked, the Pure, and the Greedy, The (15 October).....	309
Prudent and Foolish Talk, Wicked and Faithful Life (13 August).....	246

Punishment for Wicked and Deliverance for Just (11 September)	275
Put Away a Filthy Mouth or Risk Being Chastised (04 November)	329
Receive Godly Wisdom for Help against Sexual Sins (07 October).....	301
Receiving Collateral and Loudly Blessing a Friend (27 June).....	199
Rejoice with One's Wife and Be a Godly Parent (05 August)	238
Reproving a Scorner and Rebuking a Wise Person (09 May).....	150
Reproving a Scorner and Rebuking the Wicked (09 April)	120
Riches Fail in the Day of Wrath (11 February)	62
Righteous Kings Please and the Lord Pacifies Anger (16 May)	157
Righteous Leaders are Preferred over the Wicked (11 April)	122
Righteous Lips Feed and the Lord Makes Rich (10 September).....	274
Righteous People Remain and Speak Wisely (10 December).....	365
Righteous Rule and Taking Too Much upon Oneself (25 March)	105
Righteous Think Right but the Wicked Do Not, The (12 February).....	63
Righteousness Keeps in the Way but Wickedness Fails (13 March)	93
Righteousness to Life and Wickedness to Death (11 August)	244
Root of the Righteous Yields Fruit, The (12 May)	153
Salvation Leads to Godly Wisdom and Understanding (03 July)	205
Scorner Does Not Love the One that Reproves, The (15 May)	156
Scorners and Fools Do Not Find Wisdom (14 March).....	94
Seek God, Live for Him, and Trust in His Wisdom (21 September)	285
Seek Godly Advice Only and Stay from Flatterers (20 July).....	222
Seek Godly Wisdom and Understanding over Worldly (07 June)	179
Seek Wisdom and Understanding as Silver (02 January)	22
Serving Others rather than Devising Evil (03 October)	297
Settle Disputes by Witnesses or by Casting Lots (18 September)	282
Seven Ungodly Traits that the Lord Hates in His People (06 June).....	178
Sexually Impure People are Rejecting the Lord (05 December).....	360
She Looks after Her Family and They Do Well (31 December).....	386
Simple Men are Easily Fooled by a Harlot (07 April)	118
Simple Pleasures and Not Burdening Others (27 April)	138
Simple, Fool, and Wicked or the Prudent and Wise, The (14 June)	186
Simple, Prudent, Evil, Wicked, Poor, and Rich, The (14 July).....	216
Sin Separates One from the Lord but Jesus Saves (09 December)	364
Slothful People are Unproductive and They Die Lost (26 July)	228
Slothfulness and Wasting and a Strong Tower (18 May).....	159
Sluggard Will Not Plow in the Cold, The (20 February)	71

Smoothing out Anger and the Risks of Overeating (25 July).....	227
Soft Answer Turns Away Wrath, A (15 January)	35
Soul of the Diligent Shall Be Made Fat, The (13 February)	64
Soul Winners are Wise and the Just are Rewarded (11 December)	366
Sparing One's Words and Having a Good Spirit (17 December).....	372
Strange Woman and the Rod of Correction, The (22 June)	194
Strength, Beauty, and the Chastening of the Godly (20 December)	375
Sudden Calamity and being a Respector of Persons (24 August)	257
Take fast hold of Instruction instead of Things (04 June).....	176
There is a Way that Seems Right to Man but it is Not (16 October).....	310
Things Better Compared to Things not Better (15 July)	217
Those that have Messed Up should come to the Lord (09 October)	303
Those that Have Refused Godly Wisdom (01 August)	234
Those that Love Instruction Love Knowledge (12 January)	32
Thought of Foolishness is Sin, The (24 April)	135
Three Misuses and Two Wise Uses of the Tongue (10 August)	243
True Lasting Value, Collateral, and Ill-Gotten Gains (20 June)	192
Trust the Lord Even before Trusting Oneself (03 March).....	83
Trusting in the Lord rather than Financial Wealth (11 November).....	336
Trusting the Lord Makes Safe but Unjust Disgusts (29 December).....	384
Trusting the Lord, Giving to the Poor, and Rulers (28 December)	383
Trying the Heart and the Ways of Wicked People (17 February)	68
Turn when Reproved and Receive a Godly Spirit (01 July).....	203
Unclean Generation that Sees itself as Pure, The (30 June).....	202
Understand Wisdom and Have a Wise Heart (08 February)	59
Understanding seeks Knowledge but Fools are Foolish (15 June).....	187
Understanding the Value of Eternal Truth (22 September).....	286
Ungodly People are Very Different than the Godly (27 September)	291
Unique Generation and the Cries of the Horse Leach, A (30 July).....	232
Value of Wise Counsel and of Being a Surety, The (11 June).....	183
Virtuous Woman Buys a Field and Takes Care, The (31 August)	264
Virtuous Woman Takes Care of her Family, The (31 July)	233
Wait on the Lord, Do Not Repay Evil, Be Honest (20 September)	284
Walk with the Lord is by Hope but Not only by Hope, A (13 June).....	185
Walking with the Wise versus walking with Fools (13 October)	307
Ways of a Fool and the Ways of a Wise Person, The (12 July)	214
Ways of a Person are Always before the Lord, The (05 October)	299

Ways of a Strange Woman cannot be Known, The (05 March)..... 85
 When Wisdom Enters and Knowledge is Pleasant (02 June)..... 174
 Where to Turn in Trouble or with a Heavy Heart (25 September)..... 289
 Wholesome Tongue is a Tree of Life, A (15 February) 66
 Why One Should Study the Book of Proverbs (01 January)..... 21
 Why People Pursue Inappropriate Sex (05 September) 269
 Wicked and the Transgressors are Prevented, The (02 December)..... 357
 Wicked are Cursed but the Just are Blessed, The (03 December)..... 358
 Wicked are Destroyed but Everyone is Wicked, The (21 March)..... 101
 Wicked are Forgotten and the Right Delivered, The (11 March)..... 91
 Wicked are Nevermore but the Righteous Last, The (10 October) 304
 Wicked are Overthrown and the Right Stand, The (12 March)..... 92
 Wicked are Snared and the Just are Delivered, The (12 June) 184
 Wicked Flee when No Man Pursues, The (28 January) 48
 Wicked People Bribe but Godly Wisdom brings Joy (17 October) 311
 Wicked People will be Brought down by their Sins (05 November) 330
 Wicked Regard No One and Will Be Destroyed, The (21 April)..... 132
 Wicked Ruler and the Oppressive Prince, A (28 July)..... 230
 Wine is a Mocker and Strong Drink is Raging (20 January)..... 40
 Wisdom and Knowledge are Pleasant Things (22 August)..... 255
 Wisdom and Knowledge Deliver from Eternal Death (02 July) 204
 Wisdom and Understanding are Better than Gold (08 July) 210
 Wisdom and Understanding to Avoid Wrong Women (07 March) 87
 Wisdom Calls to the Simple, the Scorned, and the Fool (01 June)..... 173
 Wisdom Calls to Those that Want Understanding (09 February) 60
 Wisdom Cries Out at the Gate (08 January)..... 28
 Wisdom is the Principle Thing (04 April)..... 115
 Wisdom Leads One in Right Paths (04 May)..... 145
 Wisdom Produces Safety and Freedom from Fear (01 December)..... 356
 Wisdom Proves Scientists Wrong about Creation (08 September)..... 272
 Wisdom, Exalting a Nation, and the King's Favor (14 December) 369
 Wise People Use Knowledge Well and are Rich in God (10 June) 182
 Wise Son Makes a Glad Father, A (10 January) 30
 Wise Teach and the Upright Please, The (15 March)..... 95
 Withhold not Correction from one's Child (23 May) 164
 Withhold Words of Wisdom and Honor old Boundaries (23 April) 134
 Words of Lemuel about Female Relationships, The (31 January) 51

Daily Devotions from the Book of Proverbs

Words of Wisdom are for this Life and the Next (04 October).....	298
Works of Creation, Laziness, and Complaining, The (20 May).....	161
Write the Commandments upon thy Heart (07 February).....	58
Nebuchadnezzar.....	127, 191
Noah.....	44
Old Testament.....	23, 79, 117, 147, 183, 201, 326, 331, 355, 421
Persecution.....	357
Promised Land, The.....	282
Prophets, The	
Elijah.....	260
Isaiah.....	45
Jeremiah.....	25, 204, 205, 210, 265, 383
Jonah.....	67
Moses.....	175, 241, 272, 329
Rabshakeh.....	45
Rebekah.....	87
Satan.....	421
Second Death.....	62, 135
Seth.....	44
Theory of Evolution, The.....	175
Universe.....	29, 175, 241

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IV. Other Writings

That Ye May Know the Truth (12/1/1995)

Finding My Way Home (12/14/1996)

The Truth about Right Living (12/25/1996)

A Commentary on the Epistle of JAMES, Chapter One (6/11/1998)

A Commentary on the Epistle of JAMES, Chapter Two (11/3/1998)

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General Topic Daily Devotions for A 366-day Calendar (11/3/2002)

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God's Works of Creation (5/18/2011)

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God Was in Complete Control of Job's Circumstances (9/9/2013)

God Was in Complete Control of Abraham's Circumstances (9/18/2013)

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A Commentary on the Gospel of JOHN, Chapter Three (11/19/2013)
A Guide for Life Is God for Life (11/22/2013)
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Understanding How To Truly Be Saved (1/31/2014)
A Commentary on the Epistle of EPHESIANS, Chapter Five (2/24/2014)
The Seven Letters to the Seven Churches in Revelation (4/15/2014)
From, Before, or Since the Foundation of the World (5/21/2014)
And God Said To Be Not Afraid (6/14/2014)
Bible Stories about the Heroes of the Faith (7/18/2014)
Daily Devotions from the Book of Proverbs (10/10/2014)