

## Proverbs 23-25

Good evening and thank you so much for joining us! Would you please turn in your Bibles to proverbs chapter 23? We are getting close to finishing proverbs, and when we do, we'll go to the NT book of Titus.

Tonight we're gonna study chapters 23-25.

Remember in this section the format changes a bit. Last week proverbs 22 began a new section of the collection. We move away from the two-phrase wisdom sayings with very little arrangement according to theme or context, and we move towards a structure of the wisdom sayings through chapter 24.

Let's pray as we begin our study

1-3

1 When you sit down to eat with a ruler,

Consider carefully what is before you;

2 And put a knife to your throat

If you are a man given to appetite.

3 Do not desire his delicacies,

For they are deceptive food. Here's the warning... don't let the wealth of others breed discontent in you. It can happen! You're content with hamburger until your neighbors invite you over for steaks. Your car was just fine, until you rode in their new SUV.

4-5

4 Do not overwork to be rich;

Because of your own understanding, cease!  
5 Will you set your eyes on that which is not?  
For riches certainly make themselves wings;  
They fly away like an eagle toward heaven. When someone's confidence is in money, there's never enough to feel secure! And one of two tragedies will occur in life when this happens

Either they'll become a workaholic and work themselves into the ground, or the money they obtain will take wings and fly away. All it takes is one major illness – or an economic collapse - to wipe out a nest egg.

6-7

6 Do not eat the bread of a miser,[fn]  
Nor desire his delicacies;  
7 For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.  
“Eat and drink!” he says to you,  
But his heart is not with you. This is like the lunch appointment who offers to pick up the check, only because they know you always do. They're going through the motions, they're heart isn't with you.

8 The morsel you have eaten, you will vomit up,  
And waste your pleasant words. This kind of generosity backfires.  
9-11

9 Do not speak in the hearing of a fool,  
For he will despise the wisdom of your words.

10 Do not remove the ancient landmark,

Nor enter the fields of the fatherless;  
11 For their Redeemer is mighty;  
He will plead their cause against you. God Himself protects those  
who need protection.

12-14

12 Apply your heart to instruction,  
And your ears to words of knowledge.

13 Do not withhold correction from a child,  
For if you beat him with a rod, he will not die.

14 You shall beat him with a rod,  
And deliver his soul from hell.[fn] Solomon is certainly not  
suggesting child abuse! The Hebrew word translated "beat"  
means "strike." A better translated is "spank." The goal of all  
discipline is to correct behavior, but it must never be done in a  
way that breaks the child's spirit.

15-18

15 My son, if your heart is wise,  
My heart will rejoice—indeed, I myself;

16 Yes, my inmost being will rejoice  
When your lips speak right things.

17 Do not let your heart envy sinners,  
But be zealous for the fear of the LORD all the day;

18 For surely there is a hereafter,

**And your hope will not be cut off.** In this life – in this fallen world - we're forced to deal with ironies and inconsistencies. Good is not always rewarded and evil isn't always punished.

But pay day doesn't always come in this life. Solomon says,  
"Surely there is a hereafter..." This life is not all there is.  
19-21

**19 Hear, my son, and be wise;  
And guide your heart in the way.  
20 Do not mix with winebibbers,  
Or with gluttonous eaters of meat;  
21 For the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty,  
And drowsiness will clothe a man with rags.** Notice, an addiction to Bud Light or Jack Daniels is in the same category as an addiction to BBQ ribs and strawberry shortcake. Drunkenness, and gluttony will rob a person of joy.

From v22-28 you hear a dad's plea to his son as Solomon pours out his heart...

**22 Listen to your father who begot you,  
And do not despise your mother when she is old.**

**23 Buy the truth, and do not sell it,  
Also wisdom and instruction and understanding.**

**24 The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice,  
And he who begets a wise child will delight in him.  
25 Let your father and your mother be glad,**

And let her who bore you rejoice.

26 My son, give me your heart,  
And let your eyes observe my ways.

27 For a harlot is a deep pit,  
And a seductress is a narrow well.

28 She also lies in wait as for a victim,  
And increases the unfaithful among men.

All forms of lust – pornography, adultery, prostitution - is like a pit.  
It's easy to fall in, but difficult to get out!

29-30 are an interesting description of wine

29 Who has woe?

Who has sorrow?

Who has contentions?

Who has complaints?

Who has wounds without cause?

Who has redness of eyes?

30 Those who linger long at the wine,

Those who go in search of mixed wine. Notice, the role alcohol plays in the sin of adultery. It's easier to forget wedding vows and ignore people you're hurting and the reputation you're ruining when you get a little tipsy. Solomon warns his son,

31 Do not look on the wine when it is red,

When it sparkles in the cup,

When it swirls around smoothly; The expression, "the wine when it is red..." is another way to say, "fermented wine."

And notice Solomon even warns about the alcohol's appearance. It "sparkles in the cup" – "it swirls around smoothly."

Read these verses; then think of the beer commercials on TV. It's all so deceptive. A camera zooms in on the mug. The beer dances, and splashes, and cascades from the bottle. It's like a refreshing waterfall. Everyone is smiling and laughing, it all looks fun, exciting, and innocent. The ticket to happiness.

**32 At the last it bites like a serpent,  
And stings like a viper.** The camera doesn't show the hangover the next day - or the guy's head in the toilet as he heaves up his dinner. Or the injured wife once she discovers his infidelity. Or the angry kids who once trusted their dad, but now feel betrayed.

Or the child support payments, and financial ruin. It all looks so innocent and victimless on TV. It's a deception.

Verse 33-35 continues to describe the effects of alcohol.

**33 Your eyes will see strange things,  
And your heart will utter perverse things.**  
**34 Yes, you will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea,  
Or like one who lies at the top of the mast, saying:**  
**35 "They have struck me, but I was not hurt;  
They have beaten me, but I did not feel it.**  
**When shall I awake, that I may seek another drink?"** He's describing a man in a drunken stupor who doesn't realize the trouble he's in. All he cares about is seeking another drink.

The NT may set the Christian free to drink in moderation, but our freedom doesn't change the potency and danger of the alcohol.

## Chapter 24

1-4

1 Do not be envious of evil men,  
Nor desire to be with them;  
2 For their heart devises violence,  
And their lips talk of troublemaking.

3 Through wisdom a house is built,  
And by understanding it is established;  
4 By knowledge the rooms are filled  
With all precious and pleasant riches. Rather than a big mansion,  
it's better to live a life guided by God's wisdom, because then the  
rooms are filled with things the Lord blesses.

5 A wise man is strong,  
Yes, a man of knowledge increases strength; It's important to go  
to the gym, but even more important to spend time with God and  
get His wisdom

6 For by wise counsel you will wage your own war,  
And in a multitude of counselors there is safety. It's important to  
get other perspectives when making big decisions.

7 Wisdom is too lofty for a fool;

He does not open his mouth in the gate. The city gate was the ancient equivalent of a town hall or courthouse steps. It's where the leaders discussed problems and made decisions.

The fool is quick to speak when no one's around, but keeps his mouth shut in public.

8-10

8 He who plots to do evil

Will be called a schemer.

9 The devising of foolishness is sin,

And the scoffer is an abomination to men.

10 If you faint in the day of adversity,

Your strength is small. Tough times don't make us strong - they reveal the strength that was in us all along.

I like the old adage, **SHOW PIC** "Christians are like tea bags. You don't know what's in them until they get put into hot water."

**CLOSE PIC**

11 Deliver those who are drawn toward death,

And hold back those stumbling to the slaughter. There are people all around who are being drawn to death. The devil is luring them deeper into trouble.

In the little book of Jude we're told that with some folks we need to show compassion, but other people require desperation evangelism. **Jude 23 but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire,[fn] hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.**



12 If you say, "Surely we did not know this,"  
Does not He who weighs the hearts consider it?  
He who keeps your soul, does He not know it?  
And will He not render to each man according to his deeds? We  
can't excuse our sin by claiming ignorance. God holds every one  
accountable because God knows our heart.

13-16

13 My son, eat honey because it is good,  
And the honeycomb which is sweet to your taste;  
14 So shall the knowledge of wisdom be to your soul;  
If you have found it, there is a prospect,  
And your hope will not be cut off.

15 Do not lie in wait, O wicked man, against the dwelling of the  
righteous;

Do not plunder his resting place;

16 For a righteous man may fall seven times  
And rise again,

But the wicked shall fall by calamity. It's not how many times you  
fall that matters as long as you keep getting up and don't stay  
down.

Our God is the God of the second chance, and third chance, and  
multiple chances. Our God is an amazing God of grace!

**SHOW PIC** In the 1975 Sugar Bowl, Alabama beat Penn State  
13-6, but the Nittany Lions might've won the game if they hadn't  
had a touchdown called back.

On a crucial play they were penalized for having 12 men on the field. After the game, Coach Joe Paterno, was asked by a reporter to identify the guilty player, he refused. Paterno answered, "It's only a game. And I have no intention of ever identifying the boy. He just made a mistake." **CLOSE PIC**

Sin is serious and we shouldn't minimize them in our lives. But we have a gracious God.

And speaking of falling down...

17-18

17 Do not rejoice when your enemy falls,  
And do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles;  
18 Lest the LORD see it, and it displease Him,  
And He turn away His wrath from him. Rejoice at your enemy's calamity and God might help him back up just to triumph over you!

19-20

19 Do not fret because of evildoers,  
Nor be envious of the wicked;  
20 For there will be no prospect for the evil man;  
The lamp of the wicked will be put out. Again we don't always see justice on this side of eternity. But the day is coming when every wrong will be righted.

21-22

21 My son, fear the LORD and the king;  
Do not associate with those given to change;

22 For their calamity will rise suddenly,  
And who knows the ruin those two can bring? Every politician  
promises change. But change just for change's sake can cause  
alot of ruin.

23-25

23 These things also belong to the wise:  
It is not good to show partiality in judgment.

24 He who says to the wicked, "You are righteous,"  
Him the people will curse;  
Nations will abhor him.

25 But those who rebuke the wicked will have delight,  
And a good blessing will come upon them. Here the instruction is  
to not gloss over the sins of the wicked.

26 He who gives a right answer kisses the lips. Have you ever  
tried to call a company and you end up been put on hold for 4  
hours? Finally someone talks to you and gives you the right  
answers-it's like a big old kiss!

27 Prepare your outside work,  
Make it fit for yourself in the field;  
And afterward build your house. Solomon is saying to his son, get  
established before you start a family.

And this is still good counsel. First, rather than vague promises, it  
gives your future wife an idea of the life she can expect. And  
number two, starting out in a career requires long hours and hard  
work – a lifestyle that may not be compatible with newlywed life.

28-29

28 Do not be a witness against your neighbor without cause,  
For would you deceive[fn] with your lips?

29 Do not say, "I will do to him just as he has done to me;  
I will render to the man according to his work." Romans 12:19 is  
the NT echo, Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give  
place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will  
repay,"[fn] says the Lord.

30-34 is an important life lesson...

30 I went by the field of the lazy man,  
And by the vineyard of the man devoid of understanding;  
31 And there it was, all overgrown with thorns;  
Its surface was covered with nettles;  
Its stone wall was broken down.  
32 When I saw it, I considered it well;  
I looked on it and received instruction:  
33 A little sleep, a little slumber,  
A little folding of the hands to rest;  
34 So shall your poverty come like a prowler,  
And your need like an armed man. A short season of laziness can  
put a person dangerously behind.

It was Charlie McCarthy who quipped, "Hard work never killed  
anybody, but why take a chance?" It's a funny line, unless you  
think it's true. Christians should be known as hard workers.

Chapter 25

1 These also are proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied: Chapter 25 begins with an editorial comment added to the Proverbs 250 years after Solomon wrote them.

Two-and-a-half centuries after Solomon's death, his wisdom had not diminished or become old-fashioned. Young men were still seeking his insights and writing down his pearls of wisdom. Solomon's wisdom was God's wisdom – and God's wisdom is always in demand!

2 It is the glory of God to conceal a matter,  
But the glory of kings is to search out a matter. God can never be fully comprehended by our minds. It's the infinity and mystery of God that add to His glory

Yet there're truths about God He has made known. And it's the glory of man to seek and understand God's revelation.

A relationship with God is a mixture of the known and unknowable.

3-5

3 As the heavens for height and the earth for depth,  
So the heart of kings is unsearchable.

4 Take away the dross from silver,  
And it will go to the silversmith for jewelry.

5 Take away the wicked from before the king,

And his throne will be established in righteousness. Just as impurities will ruin the value of a piece of silver, an evil counselor or assistant will bring down a leader.

6-7

6 Do not exalt yourself in the presence of the king,

And do not stand in the place of the great;

7 For it is better that he say to you,

“Come up here,”

Than that you should be put lower in the presence of the prince,

Whom your eyes have seen. Jesus spoke of this in Luke 14, about willingly taking the lower place. That’s exactly what Jesus did for us, as He left heaven for us!

8 Do not go hastily to court;

For what will you do in the end,

When your neighbor has put you to shame? What if you rush to court and lose? Make sure you if you go to court, it’s a last resort

9-10

9 Debate your case with your neighbor,

And do not disclose the secret to another;

10 Lest he who hears it expose your shame,

And your reputation be ruined. It’s always best to come to an agreement and settle out of court.

11 A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold

In settings of silver. The right word said the right way at the right time has an incredible impact. Words are powerful.

12 Like an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold  
Is a wise rebuker to an obedient ear. A rebuke that's received is like a beautiful piece of jewelry. The one who rebukes shows the courage to love, and the one who receives the rebuke demonstrates the courage to listen. It's a thing of beauty, and sadly, just like fine jewelry, it's rare!

13 Like the cold of snow in time of harvest  
Is a faithful messenger to those who send him,  
For he refreshes the soul of his masters.” A faithful messenger is like a blast of cold on a sweltering hot day. He refreshes the sender and the recipients.

14 Whoever falsely boasts of giving  
Is like clouds and wind without rain. In light of all that God has done for us, any bragging about what we've done for God is nothing but hot air – it's like clouds without rain!

15 By long forbearance a ruler is persuaded,  
And a gentle tongue breaks a bone.” In so many arenas of life a polite perseverance is the key.

The next several verses are all rapid fire truths dripping with applicability for us.

16 Have you found honey?  
Eat only as much as you need,  
Lest you be filled with it and vomit. Moderation matters

17 Seldom set foot in your neighbor's house,

Lest he become weary of you and hate you. Don't wear out your welcome.

18 A man who bears false witness against his neighbor  
Is like a club, a sword, and a sharp arrow. Each description of a lie here is painful and cause serious, lasting harm

19 Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble  
Is like a bad tooth and a foot out of joint. You can't function the way you should with a bad tooth or a dislocated foot-so don't put confidence in unfaithful men.

20 Like one who takes away a garment in cold weather,  
And like vinegar on soda,  
Is one who sings songs to a heavy heart. Don't try to sugarcoat someone's sorrow. We should weep with those who weep  
21-22

21 If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat;  
And if he is thirsty, give him water to drink;  
22 For so you will heap coals of fire on his head,  
And the LORD will reward you. Be nice to an enemy while he's trying to be hostile to you and it's like heaping hot coals on his head. You torture your enemy, and gain God's favor, simultaneously

23 The north wind brings forth rain,  
And a backbiting tongue an angry countenance. This is simple cause and effect. Speak ill of others, and it will make them mad.



24 It is better to dwell in a corner of a housetop,  
Than in a house shared with a contentious woman. Instead of the  
housetop some men choose to escape a contentious wife in their  
garage, or shop, or office, or bowling alley, or ballpark, or lake.  
They find a way to escape the sour environment of their home.

25 As cold water to a weary soul,  
So is good news from a far country. The word “Gospel” means  
“good news”. Yet so often when we think of sharing Jesus with  
friends, or strangers, we assume we’ll be rejected. What thirsty  
person is going to turn down a glass of cold water?

26 A righteous man who falters before the wicked  
Is like a murky spring and a polluted well. When we stumble and  
compromise our faith we muddy the water for the non-Christians  
looking at our lives. Hypocrisy becomes a huge hindrance to an  
unbelieving world.

27 It is not good to eat much honey;  
So to seek one’s own glory is not glory. We should seek God’s  
glory and not worry about our own glory.

28 Whoever has no rule over his own spirit  
Is like a city broken down, without walls. This is scary. An  
undisciplined man has no protection against evil influences.