

# UNDERSTANDING PROVERBS

There are different ways to teach a lesson... *tell a story, share a parable, recite a poem, offer an explanation...* or you can distill the wisdom from all four, and pack it into a capsule. That condensed wisdom is called a "*proverb*".

A proverb is a maxim. It's a pithy saying, a terse statement - phrased in a clever way to communicate a vital truth. Here are a few familiar English proverbs, "All that glitters isn't gold. A penny saved, is a penny earned. Out of sight, out of mind. Different strokes for different folks. A picture is worth a thousand words."

I also found a few new Internet Proverbs, "Home is where you hang your @. The E-mail of the species is more deadly than the mail. You can't teach a new mouse old clicks. The geek shall inherit the earth. A chat has nine lives. Don't byte off more than you can view. Fax is stranger than fiction. What boots up must come down. Oh, what a tangled website we weave... Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day - teach him to use the Net and he won't

bother you for weeks."

To understand Proverbs... you should take a proverb, not as a *promise*, as much as a *probability*. A proverb is an observation, "*This is how life usually turns out...*" And the key word is "*usually*". Exceptions can be found to most proverbs...

For example, Proverbs 10:27 states, "The fear of the LORD prolongs days, but the years of the wicked will be shortened." In most cases that's true. Godliness makes for a healthier, and thus, longer life - but we could also point to cases where evil people have grown old, and good people have died young.

To accurately interpret the proverbs begin them with the phrase, "*The odds are...*" or "*In most cases...*". It would be erroneous to say, "*Obey the proverbs, and it'll guarantee you a prosperous life.*" There're few guarantees in a fallen world... but if you keep the proverbs you do raise the likelihood of a happy life.

## DON'T BE LAZY

### Proverbs 13:4

"The soul of a lazy man desires, and has nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made rich." A lazy person *desires*, but won't *perspire*. They think a paycheck should be *no sweat*. Guys, no one should be guaranteed a paycheck. If you don't make a contribution... you shouldn't expect a contribution.

It's said, "The reason a lot of people do not recognize an opportunity when they meet it, is that it usually goes around wearing overalls and looking like hard work." Diligence, stick-to-it-ness, and hard work are the keys to realizing your dreams.

The great inventor, Thomas Edison, was quoted as saying, "I am wondering what would have happened to me if... some fluent talker had converted me to the theory of the eight-hour work day... If my life had been made up of mere eight-hour days I do not believe I could have accomplished a great deal..."

### Proverbs 14:23

"In all labor there is profit..."

I got an email recently entitled, "*The Ten Rules For Teens.*" Rule # 5 states, "Flipping burgers is not beneath your dignity. Your grandparents had a different word for burger flipping. They called it "opportunity"." In all labor... whether it be flipping burgers, sweeping floors, or digging ditches there is profit. A job is a job.

### Proverbs 22:13

Here's a verse that paints another picture of the lazy person and his silly excuses. "The lazy man says, "There is a lion outside! I shall be slain in the streets!"

There's no *lion*. He's just *lying*. He'll use any reason to lay out of work.

# PROVERBS FOR PARENTS

## PROVERBS 13:24

If you've got kids Proverbs 13:24 is crucial, "He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly." The word "promptly" means "early". Wait until a kid is 15 years old to exercise discipline and it's too late.

It's been said, "The best time to tackle a minor problem is before he grows up."

Pediatricians tell us most of what a parent can do to shape a child's character has to be done by age 5. Children are *wet cement*. You've got to shape 'em before they harden. Healthy, constructive discipline needs to occur early in a child's life.

This is the first of several proverbs that address corporal punishment. Here're the others... Proverbs 22:15, "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of correction will drive it far from him." Proverbs 23:13-14, "Do not withhold correction from a child, for if you beat him with a rod, he will not die. You shall beat him with a rod, and deliver his soul from hell." Proverbs 29:15, "The rod and rebuke give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother."

I can hear some of you ask, "*Sandy, do you really believe God wants us to spank our kids?*" And my answer is a qualified "Yes". Here are the qualifications:

*First*, never spank a child in anger. Cool off before you apply the heat. *Second*, make sure you're spanking for the right reasons. Never spank a child for being a child - for being clumsy and spilling a glass of milk, or being scatter-brained, and forgetting a task. Spank only when your child is defiant or rebellious.

*Third*, Never spank on the face, or arms, or head, or ears. God equipped your child's fanny with extra padding, and in so doing, identified the place to spank. *Fourth*, try to avoid spanking your child with a hand. Whenever the Bible speaks of corporal punishment it refers to the "rod". Use a paddle, or belt, or wooden spoon. You want your child to fear the rod, but welcome your hands.

*Fifth*, make sure your child understands why they're being spanked. The word "discipline" means "to learn". When a child is *struck* it should be to *instruct*. And *sixth*, make sure the punishment fits the crime. In my house, not every disobedient act necessitates a spanking. If I can make my point another way, I will.

But having said all that, "*Am I afraid to spank my kids?*" "*Absolutely, not!*" A parent who loves his kids will *apply the board of education to the seat of learning*.

A child needs to realize disobedience brings about painful consequences, and an excellent way to teach that truth to a child is to spank them.

Before I spank my kids I send 'em to their rooms, and let 'em sweat it out. I might even take off my belt, and lay it over the door, while I stall for time. I want them to think. I'm producing pain before I spank. By the time I apply the spanking it doesn't have to be forceful. They've already experienced plenty of pain.

I heard of mother who spanked her kids with a board. Her paddle hung on the kitchen wall next to a plaque that read, "I Need Thee Every Hour". Her kids grew up not knowing if the plaque meant *the Lord* or *the board*?

When they became parents themselves they realized it meant both. Here's a quote: "Don't set sail on the sea of parenthood without taking along a paddle."

## PROVERBS 22:6

Verse 6 is another verse for parents, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." Usually, when this verse is read the emphasis is on the word "way", but in the Hebrew the stress is on the word "he".

The implication is, you should fit your training to the personality of the child. A one-size-fits-all approach won't work. The training needs to be tailored to the child.

If your child is an artist don't force 'em to be athlete - if an athlete don't force them to be an artist. If they're strong willed, use a strong hand. If they're more compliant, extra encouragement may be necessary. Cookie-cutter approaches to parenting seldom work. What worked on the firstborn may not be right for the youngest. A parent has to learn their child, then train 'em in the way "*their child*" should go!

T  
O

S  
P  
A  
N  
K

O  
R

N  
O  
T

T  
O

S  
P  
A  
N  
K

T  
R  
A  
I  
N  
  
U  
P  
  
A  
  
C  
H  
I  
L  
D

# PROVERBS TO LIVE BY

## Proverbs 14:4

"Where no oxen are, the trough is clean; but much increase comes by the strength of an ox." This is how I justify a cluttered desk. A messy trough – or desk - is the sign an ox is in the stable, and the field is ploughed.

If you want to live an uncomplicated life... never risk upsetting people – never risk making a mistake... you'll stay squeaky clean, but you'll never accomplish anything either. The only person who never errs is the person who never tries.

Imagine baking a cake from scratch, without making a mess in your kitchen. It's impossible. If you want a delicious cake, you've got to live with the mess. Likewise effective ministry is never tidy and neat. There're messes along the way. To work with people you've got to be willing to roll up your sleeves and get a little messy.

## Proverbs 14:12

"There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death." It reminds me of Roy Riegals, the man who made the 1929 Rose Bowl the most famous game in that Bowl's storied history. Roy played for the University of California, and in the first half of the game against Georgia Tech, Roy picked up a fumble, and raced for the goal line. He ran 65 yards until he was finally tackled by his own teammate. You see, Roy Riegals ran down the field the wrong way.

For 65 yards Roy thought he was going to score a touchdown, and be a hero – instead those 65 yards were the worse mistake of his football career. Georgia Tech ended up beating Riegals' California Bears to win the Rose Bowl.

Tonight, you may be like Roy Riegals. It seems to you that the path you're on will lead to victory, but you could be headed in the wrong direction. Guys, if *your path* is not in harmony with *God's Word*... beware.

## Proverbs 15:1

"A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." Once we had an old cat who kept sleepin' on the hood of my neighbor's new truck. One day he saw the paw prints, and yelled at Kathy and the kids.

That night I went to talk to him - and as mad as he was - I knew if I approached him with stern words and an angry tone we'd end up in a fisticuffs. Instead I tried to be as nice and polite as possible. I was amazed at his reaction. He ended the conversation by saying, "Man, it's ok. I need to buy a tarp for my truck anyway."

In 1 Samuel 26 when Nabal infuriated David, his wife, Abigail, diffused David's anger, and saved her husband's life by approaching David with soft words.

It's been said, "Diplomacy is the art of telling your friend he has an 'open mind' instead of 'a hole in his head'." *How you say, what you say*, is so important.

## Proverbs 16:27-28

"An ungodly man digs up evil, and it is on his lips like a burning fire. A perverse man sows strife, and a whisperer separates the best of friends." Guys, it's been said, "Superior minds talk about ideas. Average minds talk about things. Puny minds talk about people." Which one are you? Some people just love to dig up gossip on other people.

Charles Swindoll says when a person calls him, and makes the comment, "Did you hear about so and so..." He immediately asks, "Can I quote you on this?" If the answer is "no" he refuses to listen. I think that's a tactic we should try!

## Proverbs 18:1

"A man who isolates himself seeks his own desire; he rages against all wise judgment." In ancient warfare when an army besieged a city the first step the general took was to cut off the city's supply lines. He isolated the city, and dried up its resources. Once isolated, it's defeat was only a matter of time.

Likewise, when the devil tries to bring down a Christian, he isolates them from other believers - cuts off supply lines. He estranges them from friends. Distracts them from church. If he can isolate them, their downfall is only a matter of time.

Griffith Thomas writes, "If we forsake our fellow Christians, it may easily lead to our forsaking Christ." We need to fight to stay connected to the body of Christ.

## Proverbs 18:22, 24

"He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the LORD." What it doesn't say is, "*She who finds a husband finds a good thing*". We're just assuming the other side of the coin is also true.

You're also blessed if you have friends. Proverbs 18:24 tells us, "A man who has friends must himself be friendly..." It reminds me of the poem, "I went out to find a friend, and could not find one there. I went out to be a friend, and friends were everywhere." You build strong friendships by being a good friend!

## Proverbs 20:1

"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise."

Many a man has lost it all to the bottle.

The worse death I ever witnessed was that of an alcoholic who died of cirrhosis of the liver. It was hideous. If you'd seen him racked with pain - his shriveled-up body wasting away before your eyes - you'd never drink another drop.

The Bible warns of the dangers of alcohol, while stopping short of a blanket prohibition. Alcohol is a mocker – it will embarrass you. A brawler – it will batter you. I can't tell you it's wrong to ever drink a glass of wine, or an occasional beer, but I can tell you if you never drink an alcoholic beverage you'll never become an alcoholic. And that's enough for me. I don't touch the stuff. Why risk it?

## Proverbs 22:7

"The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender." If there's one financial strategy I'd recommend it would be *get out of debt, and stay out of debt*. You don't need new furniture, or a new SUV, or a vacation condo. If you can't pay cash, then don't buy it.

Debt sucks the joy out of life. It's a bondage. "The borrower is servant to the lender." When you're mortgaged to the hilt you can't change jobs, take a vacation, buy a home, give to the Lord as you'd like. What if God called you on a missions trip? You're stuck. You can't go. There's no margin in your finances. Every dollar you make goes to the Credit Union. When you're heavily in debt you're enslaved. Guys, the cure... *is to deny your wants, and live at the level of your needs*. "If your *outgo* exceeds your *income*, then your *upkeep* will be your *downfall*."

## Proverbs 25:11

"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver." The right word spoken at the right time can be powerful!

If you have questions on tonight's study email Pastor Sandy - [sandyadams@calvarychapel.org](mailto:sandyadams@calvarychapel.org)

Calvary Chapel Announcements - October 8, 2000

10/31 Hallelujah Fest - New early service, Sunday mornings 8:15-9:15. Pastor Sandy's study is the same, but we sing hymns. - October's schedule of Calvary Connection Groups is in today's Announcement sheet. Pick one near you and get involved. For back issues of Bible Scan study guides: [www.calvarychapel.org/stonemountain/biblescan.htm](http://www.calvarychapel.org/stonemountain/biblescan.htm)

Next Bible Scan - October 15 - Ecclesiastes 1-12

"There is one who makes himself rich, yet has nothing; and one who makes himself poor, yet has great riches." - Proverbs 13:7

Bible Scan  
Memory Verse

### HEBREW POETRY

Before we move on, let me say a word about the structure of Hebrew poetry and proverb. English poetry is often based on meter and rhyme, whereas Hebrew poetry is based on parallelism... the coupling together of different thoughts.

There are three types of parallelisms.

First is the *antithetical parallel* which brings together contrasting thoughts... *the wise man versus the foolish man*. A *synonymous parallel* is when the first thought is repeated in the second - the same thought in different words.

While the third type, or *synthetic parallel*, is when the first thought is elaborated on in the second.

Chapters 1-15 are full of antithetical parallelisms. Whereas, the remaining chapters primarily contain synonymous and synthetic parallels. A good example of a synthetic parallelism, *and a great proverb*, is 16:20, "He who heeds the word wisely will find good, and whoever trusts in the LORD, happy is he."

### THE CONTENTIOUS WOMAN

Proverbs 19:13 says, "And the contentions of a wife are a continual dripping..." In other words, *a nagging wife is like a leaky faucet*. Ladies let me say it once. All husbands - tall, short, fat, skinny, black, white, rich, poor - it don't matter - all husbands hate to be nagged. You're not causing your husband to love you more by nagging him. You're driving him away, and making him bitter. Ladies, be wise.

Of course, let me say a word to you guys. It's been said, "If you treat your wife like a thoroughbred she won't be a nag!"

If a faucet continually drips, I need to make a repair! Maybe I'm not loving my wife as I should? Regardless though, it's wrong for a wife to nag. It's possible we both have a problem that needs to be addressed.

Proverbs 21:9 tells us, "Better to dwell in a corner of a house-top, than in a house shared with a contentious woman." Here's the same point made another way.

Ladies, burn his meals, run up the credit cards, ask your mother to move in... do anything... just don't nag him. Your hubby puts up with the world's negativity all day long, don't subject him to more of the same, pessimistic drone at night.

And I know your husband has problems, but nagging is not the way to get them solved. Negativity only muddies the water, and further alienates him. Nagging your husband will backfire on you.

### THE VIRTUOUS WOMAN

Verses 10-31 is the portrait of the virtuous woman. In the original Hebrew text these last 22 verses form an acrostic which aided in memorization.

As a single man I was told if I ever found the woman described in Proverbs 31, I should marry her immediately. When I found her, I did exactly that.

Her description is summed up in verses 29-30,

"Many daughters have done well, but you excel them all." Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, but a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised." Her complexion will weather, her skin will sag, her hands will wrinkle, but she'll never lose her beauty. Here is a woman who is attractive on the inside. She will be gorgeous for all eternity.