

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

PROVERBS 10-13

Proverbs are short, pithy statements designed to catch your attention and make you think. They speak the truth in skillful and catchy ways.

To correctly understand the proverbs, realize a proverb is not a promise. We mistakenly think of the proverbs as guarantees.

A proverb is more a *probability* than an iron-clad *promise*.

It's an observation about life. "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.*" Usually that's true.

Generally speaking, godliness makes for a better and longer life - but there're cases where evil people grow old, and good people die young.

Here's another example, "Train up a child in the way he *should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.*" More often than not that's true, but we all know exceptions where a child trained properly went astray.

To accurately interpret a proverb place one of these prefixes to the proverb, "*The odds are...*" "*In most cases...*" "*More often than not...*"

Sadly, there are few guarantees in a fallen world... but if you keep the proverbs you'll definitely raise the likelihood of a

healthy and happy life.

The first nine chapters of Proverbs are organized around two ladies...

Solomon warns his son about the immoral woman – her intentions and how to avoid her. Instead, he tries to fix his son up with Lady Wisdom.

But the next 20 chapters are not quite as structured – King Solomon seems to string together a random collection of individual proverbs.

I like what commentator Robert Allen says of this book, “Proverbs is a collection of sayings with no arrangement, outline, order, or progression.

When you think about it, however, life is like that. We try to bring order to life, but opportunities, crises, and unexpected intrusions come... Perhaps that is why Proverbs comes to us in the form it does.”

Chapter 10 begins with the words, “The Proverbs of Solomon: A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son is the grief of his mother.

Treasures of wickedness profit nothing, but righteousness delivers from death.” Money can buy a lot in this life, but it’s useless in the life to come. Righteousness is the medium of exchange that counts in eternity.

Verse 3 “The LORD will not allow the righteous soul to famish, but He casts away the desire of the wicked. He who has a slack hand becomes poor, but the hand of the diligent

makes rich.”

“A slack hand” belongs to “a lazy man.” The opposite of “slack” is “diligent.” He stays at it - works hard - doesn’t give up or give out.

I’ve taught my kids if you’re *on time* and *work hard* and *care about what you do* – you’ve just distinguished yourself from 90% of the workforce. And we’re not yet talking about talent or education – that’s a resume bonus.

Golfer Gary Player once said, “The harder I work, the luckier I get.”

“He who gathers in summer is a wise son, but he who sleeps in harvest is a son who causes shame.” Some jobs are seasonal. You’ve got to work while the work is available. Try to pace yourself and you’ll miss out on the opportunity. Gather now... there’ll be plenty of time to sleep later.

“Blessings are on the head of the righteous, but violence covers the mouth of the wicked. The memory of the righteous (his reputation) is blessed, but the name of the wicked will rot.” A righteous man will be remembered fondly. When the wicked dies - we’re glad he’s gone.

“The wise in heart will receive commands, but a prating fool will fall.”

"Prating" means "idle chatter" – this is the guy or gal who talks, and never listens. God gave us two ears and one mouth. He wants us to listen twice as much as we talk. The wise man listens and “receives commands.”

Verse 9, “He who walks with integrity walks securely, but he who perverts his ways will become known.” Speak the truth

and you don't have to remember what you said. A liar better have a good memory or he'll get caught in his lie. Honesty and integrity provides a sense of security.

“He who winks with the eye causes trouble, but a prating fool will fall.”

A man who *winks* – casts doubt on what he *thinks*. Does he mean what he's says? Or does he have an ulterior motive – a hidden agenda?

“The mouth of the righteous is a well of life, but violence covers the mouth of the wicked. Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all sins.”

Words come from one of two sources – life or death. A righteous heart speaks words that promote life. A wicked heart stirs up strife and division.

Here Solomon acknowledges there is such a thing as *verbal abuse*. A wicked man can do violence not only with his hands, but with his words.

With words *friendships can be severed - marriages broken up - kids wounded - churches split*. A wicked person can do violence with words.

Hatred fractures. Love covers sin which prevents division. Love is the oil of relationships. It's the grease the keeps the relational gears turning.

Love forgives, it refuses to hold a grudge, it allows for fresh starts.

1Corinthians 13:7-8 says it best, **“(Love) bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love**

never fails.”

“Wisdom is found on the lips of him who has understanding, but a rod is for the back of him who is devoid of understanding.” A fool could use a good beating from time to time – something to wake him up.

“Wise people store up knowledge, but the mouth of the foolish is near destruction.” Are you storing up knowledge? Do you read your Bible? Do you study it, and memorize it, and apply it to your heart. It’s to be stored.

“The rich man's wealth is his strong city; the destruction of the poor is their poverty.” Remember, it's not *money* that's the root of all evil, but *the love of money*. Actually, money is a tool to be used for good or evil.

Here, when a rich man uses his wealth wisely it protects and provides for him and his family like a “strong city.” Because of his money he's not scavenging around to find his next meal, or a place to sleep. Money can bring a degree of security that allows you to engage in other pursuits.

“The labor of the righteous leads to life, the wages of the wicked to sin...” How a person spends his money – whether it leads to life or sin – depends on what's in the person's heart – is it righteous or wicked.

“He who keeps instruction is in the way of life, but he who refuses correction goes astray. Whoever hides hatred has lying lips, and whoever spreads slander is a fool. In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his

lips is wise.” I’ve discovered the longer I keep my mouth open the more opportunity I have to put my foot in my mouth.

The Greek philosopher Plato once said, **“Wise men talk because they have something to say; fools, because they have to say something.”** Talk a lot and you get in trouble. There’s wisdom in being a man of few words.

When Pastor Chuck visited us for the pastors’ conference, we acted as his chauffeur. And it was awkward. He never said much. Chuck Smith isn’t a talker. He’s a man of few words. Verse 19 says it’s a mark of wisdom.

“A wise old owl sat in an oak - the more he saw the less he spoke - the less he spoke the more he heard - let's try to imitate this wise old bird.”

“The tongue of the righteous is choice silver; the heart of the wicked is worth little. The lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for lack of wisdom. The blessing of the LORD makes one rich, and He adds no sorrow with it.” Often, money can bring complications and sorrow.

Worldly blessings come with baggage. A new car has higher insurance premiums. But God’s gifts have no downside. They’re hassle free.

Verse 23 **“To do evil is like sport to a fool, but a man of understanding has wisdom.”** Evil to a fool is like a game. Can he win and not get caught?

“The fear of the wicked will come upon him...” He won’t be able to escape what he fears. **“The desire of the righteous will be granted.”**

“When the whirlwind passes by, the wicked is no more

(sinners get blown away), but the righteous has an everlasting foundation.”

“As vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, so is the lazy man to those who send him.” Vinegar is sour to the taste buds – and smoke irritates the eyes – likewise, a lazy man frustrates his employer.

Colossians 3:17 reads, “Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”

There’s no excuse for a Christian not to be the hardest worker in the office. You won’t be a witness and an irritation at the same time.

“The fear of the LORD prolongs days, but the years of the wicked will be shortened.” Fear God and chances are you’ll live longer and better.

“The hope of the righteous will be gladness, but the expectation of the wicked will perish.” The righteous have a reason to be optimistic – God is in his life. But the wicked person can be as positive as he wants – he can be a Tony Robbins disciple – but without God he’ll eventually perish.

“The way of the LORD is strength for the upright, but destruction will come to the workers of iniquity. The righteous will never be removed, but the wicked will not inhabit the earth.” Here the end of the age is in view.

“The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom, but the perverse tongue will be cut out. The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable, but the mouth of the wicked what is

perverse.”

Don't speak a word of slander – then shrug and say you didn't realize its impact. We all can differentiate *helpful words* from *harmful words*.

Proverbs 11:1 mandates honest business practices - as well as, truth in advertising. “Dishonest scales are an abomination to the LORD, but a just weight is His delight.” An ancient crook would tinker with the scales.

He had two sets of scales. On the distribution scales *his ounce* was a half-ounce. On the payment scales *his ounce* was an ounce-and-a-half.

Here's the point, be honest. Don't cheat – no hidden charges. Deliver exactly what you promise. What buyer sees is what the buyer gets.

“When pride comes, then comes shame; but with the humble is wisdom.” Pride and wisdom are strangers. They don't hang out.

“The integrity of the upright will guide them, but the perversity of the unfaithful will destroy them.” Integrity is a great guide. Decisions and direction are usually clear for a person committed to integrity.

Verse 4, “Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death.” All the world's money won't help you one bit on Judgment Day! A right relationship with God is all that'll matter.

Verse 5 “The righteousness of the blameless will direct his

way aright, but the wicked will fall by his own wickedness. The righteousness of the upright will deliver them, but the unfaithful will be caught by their lust.”

Oscar Wilde was a brilliant wit and writer. He won many literary awards. Wilde had everything going for him, but he was a slave to his own lusts.

Listen to Oscar Wilde’s sad confession, “I had almost everything. But I let myself be lured into long spells of senseless and sensual ease...

Tired of being on the heights I deliberately went to the depths in search of new sensation. What the paradox was to me in the sphere of thought, perversity became to me in the sphere of passion. I grew careless of the lives of others. I took pleasure where it pleased me, and passed on.

I forgot that every little action of the common day makes or unmakes character, and that therefore what one has done in the secret chamber, one has some day to cry aloud from the house-top. I ceased to be lord over myself. I was no longer the captain of my soul, and did not know it.

I allowed pleasure to dominate me. I ended in horrible disgrace.” And this is what Solomon predicts, “The unfaithful will be caught by their lust.”

“When a wicked man dies, his expectation will perish, and the hope of the unjust perishes. The righteous is delivered from trouble, and it comes to the wicked instead.” Read the story of Esther. The wicked, Haman, ended up swinging from the gallows he built for righteous Mordecai.

“The hypocrite with his mouth destroys his neighbor, but through knowledge the righteous will be delivered. When it goes well with the righteous, the city rejoices; and when the wicked perish, there is jubilation.” Everybody likes to see the good guy win in the end.

Verse 11 “By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted, but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked. He who is devoid of wisdom despises his neighbor, but a man of understanding holds his peace.”

A wise man knows how to hold his tongue. Just because he thinks a thought, doesn't mean he has to say it. He can hold his peace.

Chapter 11:13, “A talebearer reveals secrets, but he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter.” The Hebrew word translated “talebearer” means “blabber mouth, tattle tale.” Just because a statement is true, doesn't mean it's appropriate to tell. It could be none of your business.

Some people just like to talk about other people.

I've heard it stated, “Great minds talk about ideas - mediocre minds talk about things - inferior minds talk about people.”

But be careful. I learned a long ago, “If a person is willing to talk to you about someone else, they're willing to talk to someone else about you.”

Verse 14 “Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety.”

Often, the best way to get a good idea is to get a lot of ideas. Various counselors eliminate blind spots and force you to look at all the angles.

The idea in verse 15 appears over and over in Proverbs. We saw it at the beginning of chapter 6, and it appears again in 17:18 and 22:26.

“He who is surety for a stranger will suffer, but one who hates being surety is secure.” Don’t co-sign for a loan. If a person can’t secure a loan on their own, don’t you get involved... there’s a reason they can’t qualify.

If you co-sign you’re setting both them and you up for financial failure.

Over the years folks have asked me to co-sign, but I always refused. If I can afford it, I might give you the money, but the Bible says don’t co-sign.

“A gracious woman retains honor, but ruthless men retain riches.

The merciful man does good for his own soul, but he who is cruel troubles his own flesh. The wicked man does deceptive work, but he who sows righteousness will have a sure reward. As righteousness leads to life, so he who pursues evil pursues it to his own death.

“Those who are of a perverse heart are an abomination to the LORD, but the blameless in their ways are His delight. Though they join forces, the wicked will not go unpunished (they can’t team up against God); but the posterity of the righteous will be delivered. As a ring of gold in a swine's

snout, so is a lovely woman who lacks discretion.”

What a vivid picture. All the gold in the world doesn't make a pig less ugly - and smoking-hot good looks doesn't make living with a foolish woman any less of an aggravation and pain in the neck.

Physical attractiveness may be high on the list when you're looking for a spouse, but wisdom and a winsome personality are of far greater value when it's about living with a spouse.

“Beauty is only skin deep.”

“The desire of the righteous is only good, but the expectation of the wicked is wrath.” *The content of the heart colors the outlook of the life.*

Verses 24-25 teach us to be *givers to God and gracious to people...*

“There is one who scatters, yet increases more; and there is one who withholds more than is right, but it leads to poverty. The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself.

In Luke 6:38 Jesus said, **“Give and it will be given to you.”** Paul echoes His Lord in 2 Corinthians 9:6, **“He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.”**

Solomon says the guy who holds back from God has it slip from his hands. Give it to God for safe-keeping, and He'll return it with interest.

“The people will curse him who withholds grain, but blessing will be on the head of him who sells it.” Nobody likes a stingy person.

Once, the owner of a successful company, a man with the trappings of affluence, was called on by a charity, requesting a sizeable donation.

He told them, **“There’re facts you don’t know. Did you realize my mom is in an expensive nursing home?”** *“No, I didn’t.”*
“Did you know my brother died, and left his family of five with no insurance?” *“No.”* **“Did you hear that my son is on the mission field and needs my support?”** *“No, I didn’t.”*

The fellow concluded, **“Well, if I don’t give any money to them what makes you think I’d make a donation to you?”**
Don’t be a tightwad!

Verse 27 **“He who earnestly seeks good finds favor, but trouble will come to him who seeks evil. He who trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like foliage. He who troubles his own house will inherit the wind, and the fool will be servant to the wise of heart.”**

A dad troubles his house when he’s never home, or drinks too much...

A mom troubles her house when her family has to play second fiddle to a career - or she’s always nagging at her husband and her kids...

A teenager troubles his house with disrespect and a rebellious attitude.

Verse 30, **“The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise.”** Here’s why we’re taking up space on

planet Earth. God has us here to **“win souls.”** *When was the last time you led a person to Jesus?*

Tragically, too many Christians are like the Arctic River - frozen over at the mouth. Jesus has called us to go into all the world (*which includes our neighborhood and schools and office and ballpark*) and share the Gospel.

“If the righteous will be recompensed on the earth, how much more the ungodly and the sinner.” The wages of sin is due even before you die!

Chapter 12 begins **“Whoever loves instruction loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid. A good man obtains favor from the LORD, but a man of wicked intentions He will condemn. A man is not established by wickedness, but the root of the righteous cannot be moved.”**

“An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, but she who causes shame is like rottenness in his bones.” Here’s your choice, ladies...

You can be a crown or a cancer – his greatest blessing or his curse.

An **“excellent wife”** believes in her husband. She understands a man’s needs - how to support him and prop him up. She pleases him sexually.

Whereas, **“a wife who causes shame”** is never pleased... she doubts him at every turn. She makes cutting comments. She thinks only of her own happiness. She manipulates him by withholding sex and support.

Every wife here tonight is either a crown or a cancer – an ornament on your husband’s head or rottenness in his bones. A wife holds incredible sway over her husband. She can shape him *for better* or *for worse*.

Through her wise influence a husband can soar off the launching pad and conquer the moon. Or the same wife can sabotage the mission.

Verse 5 “The thoughts of the righteous are right, but the counsels of the wicked are deceitful. The words of the wicked are, "Lie in wait for blood," but the mouth of the upright will deliver them. The wicked are overthrown and are no more, but the house of the righteous will stand.

A man will be commended according to his wisdom, but he who is of a perverse heart will be despised. Better is the one who is slighted but has a servant, than he who honors himself but lacks bread.” Public *perception* can be a *deception*. The press releases don’t tell the whole story.

It’s far better to be overlooked by the public, yet have the respect of the folks who know you best – and be honored by the man who works for you.

Here’s a verse for animal lovers. Verse 10 “A righteous man regards the life of his animal, but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.”

A wise man cares about his dog. Animals are also God’s creation, so he keeps his dog from barking so his neighbor doesn’t kill it. The wicked man is a pit bull owner who spends his time beating and torturing dogs.

We should all live in such a way that if dogs could talk we wouldn't be embarrassed about what they'd say about us...

Once, a man strolls into a restaurant with his dog. The Maitre'De stops him, "Wait, dogs are not allowed." The guy says, "But this is a talking dog. Tell you what... I'll ask my dog three questions. If he answers correctly how about letting us both eat free tonight." The Maitre'De agrees.

The man asks the dog, "Spot, the opposite of smooth is...?"
"Rr-r-ruff!"

"Spot, what's on top of a house?" "Rr-r-ruff!"

He looks at the Maitre'De, "Two out of two! Now for the grand finale'... Spot, who's the best baseball player of all-time?" "Rr-r-ruff..." With that the Maitre'De tosses both the man and his dog outside on the street.

They're lying there, when the dog turns to his owner and says, "I guess I should've said, "Aaron"." Here's the moral... be kind to your animals.

Verse 11 "He who tills his land will be satisfied with bread, but he who follows frivolity is devoid of understanding." In other words, playing video games doesn't get the grass mowed. A son needs to till the land.

"The wicked covet the catch of evil men, but the root of the righteous yields fruit. The wicked is ensnared by the transgression of his lips (he gets caught in his lie), but the righteous will come through trouble.

"A man will be satisfied with good by the fruit of his mouth, and the recompense of a man's hands will be rendered to him."

“The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise.” A fool thinks he’s right. He doesn’t need an objective opinion.

Yet everyone else sees his folly. Verse 16, “A fool's wrath is known at once, but a prudent man covers shame.” Foolishness is apparent to all.

“He who speaks truth declares righteousness, but a false witness, deceit. There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, but the tongue of the wise promotes health.” Words can cut deep. Some people have a knife for a tongue. They speak sharp words.

“The truthful lip shall be established forever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment.” Keep lying long enough and people will stop listening to you.

“Deceit is in the heart of those who devise evil, but counselors of peace have joy. No grave trouble will overtake the righteous, but the wicked shall be filled with evil. Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD, but those who deal truthfully are His delight. A prudent man conceals knowledge (he doesn’t need to tell everything he knows), but the heart of fools proclaims foolishness.” He spews out non-stop foolishness.

Verse 24 “The hand of the diligent will rule, but the lazy man will be put to forced labor. Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression (chronic worry leads to depression), but a good word makes it glad.”

The power of a good word lifts a person’s demeanor and

brings them gladness. Here's a poem by Helen Allison, "One little raindrop may think itself too small; yet, somewhere, a thirsty flower awaits its fall. One little word, unspoken, may seem too small to say; but, somewhere, for that one word, a heart may hope and pray." It's sobering to think an encouraging word can provide someone the lift they need.

Job 6:25, "How forceful are right words." Solomon agrees.

Every teenager should pay close attention to verse 26, "The righteous should choose his friends carefully, for the way of the wicked leads them astray." Since peer pressure is a reality for every age, make sure you set yourself up for positive peer pressure. Get with the right people, who are headed in the right direction. Their example will help you get it right.

The Philistines would've never captured Samson had he not let his hair down with Delilah. Choose your friends wisely... *just ask Samson.*

Verse 27 starts with a funny picture - "The lazy man does not roast what he took in hunting..." He's got food. His freezer is full of meat.

He's just too lazy to get up and cook what he killed

The verse ends, "But diligence is man's precious possession." Think of a lumberjack chopping a tree over and over along the same cutline until finally - "Timber" - the tree topples. His work is boring – it's mundane – it's tiring, yet he keeps laying the ax to the same spot again and again.

This is how you get up and go to work every morning... It's like falling a tree. It's not always fun - and thrills and chills. At times it's boring. You'd rather sleep in... **“But diligence is man's precious possession.”**

Chapter 12 ends, **“In the way of righteousness is life, and in its pathway there is no death.”** That's a probability not a guarantee. There have been cases in history where a man's righteous life led to his martyrdom.

Chapter 13 begins, **“A wise son heeds his father's instruction, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke. A man shall eat well by the fruit of his mouth, but the soul of the unfaithful feeds on violence.”**

He who guards his mouth preserves his life, but he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction.” It takes a man about 18 months to learn how to talk – then the rest of his life to learn how to keep his mouth shut.

“The soul of a lazy man desires, and has nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made rich.” A lazy man *desires*, but won't *perspire*. He thinks wages should be *no sweat*. No one is guaranteed a paycheck.

It's said, **“The reason some people don't recognize an opportunity when they meet it, is it usually goes around wearing overalls and looking like hard work.”** Hard work, endurance is the key to realizing your dreams.

The great inventor, Thomas Edison, once said, **“I am wondering what would've happened to me if...some fluent talker had converted me to the theory of an eight-hour work**

day... If my life had been made up of mere eight-hour days I do not believe I could've accomplished a great deal..."

Verse 5 "A righteous man hates lying, but a wicked man is loathsome and comes to shame. Righteousness keeps him whose way is blameless, but wickedness overthrows the sinner. There is one who makes himself rich, yet has nothing; and one who makes himself poor, yet has great riches."

Happiness comes with love, not necessarily lots of money.

I believe if you have to work, do so for as much money as possible, with a few exceptions... *don't forfeit your family – don't step outside God's will – don't compromise your integrity – and don't be miserable (find a good fit).*

"The ransom of a man's life is his riches, but the poor does not hear rebuke." A rich man can be kidnapped and held for ransom. A poor man has no such worries. "The light of the righteous rejoices, but the lamp of the wicked will be put out. By pride comes nothing but strife, but with the well-advised is wisdom. Wealth gained by dishonesty will be diminished, but he who gathers by labor will increase." How you obtain your money is more important than the money you obtain. Honest gain will increase.

"Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but when the desire comes, it is a tree of life." It's been said, "Man can survive 40 days without food, 3 days without water, 12 minutes without air... but not one second without hope."

And broken promises defer hope. Promise the kids, then go back on your word and it poisons their heart. Animosity and

cynicism builds.

Promise an employee a raise and not deliver... and you suddenly have a grumbling employee on your hands. I believe our cynical society is the result of promises we've believed, but have never been fulfilled.

Verse 13, **“He who despises the word will be destroyed, but he who fears the commandment will be rewarded.”** In the long run, your attitude toward the Bible, God's Word, is the greatest determiner of your life.

“The law of the wise is a fountain of life, to turn one away from the snares of death. Good understanding gains favor, but the way of the unfaithful is hard.” Sin is a cruel taskmaster. Sin makes life hard.

God created life to be lived with Him. Life goes better with God!

“Every prudent man acts with knowledge, but a fool lays open his folly.

A wicked messenger falls into trouble, but a faithful ambassador brings health. Poverty and shame will come to him who disdains correction, but he who regards a rebuke will be honored.” Can you receive correction?

“A desire accomplished is sweet to the soul (a job well done is a great feeling), but it is an abomination to fools to depart from evil. He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed.”

Once again choose your friends wisely. Don't hang out with fools.

“Evil pursues sinners, but to the righteous, good shall be repaid. A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children, but the wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous.” A good man stores up – not just for his kids, but grandkids. *He’s got a college fund for his grandkids!*

“Much food is in the fallow ground of the poor...” Here’s the poor man’s plight. He lacks the investment capital to take advantage of opportunities available to other men. If he could plow his land he could profit, but he can’t afford a tractor. Verse 23, “And for lack of justice there is waste.”

“He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly.” The Hebrew word translated “promptly” means “early.”

Wait until a kid is 15 years old to exercise discipline and it’s too late. It’s said, “The best time to tackle a minor problem is before he grows up.”

Pediatricians tell us 50% of what a parent can do to shape a child’s character has to be done by age five. Children are *wet cement*. You have got to shape them before they harden permanently.

Child development researchers speak of “the phoneme contraction.”

The larynx of a baby is soft and pliable. But as he learns words, and mimics his parent’s language, it hardens around common sounds. In fact, once the larynx forms around certain pronunciations it’s hard to train it to make other sounds. This is why a person’s accent is hard to alter.

Place a baby from France in your home, and he’ll end up

speaking English *with a Southern accent*. It's hard to develop a French accent.

This is not just true with language, but with other types of behavior.

This is why firm but loving discipline needs to occur early in a child's life. If you allow a child's attitude to harden around wrong assumptions, or responses early in life, it'll be more difficult for him to change later.

You can't reason with a young child. They don't see the negative consequences of wrong behaviors. That's why at times you have to manufacture pain – and associate it with the dangerous behavior you don't want repeated. This is called a spanking. It's biblical.

If you love your kids you'll get a rod and you'll spank them!

Note, it doesn't say "hand," but "rod." You find a neutral object – a belt, or a paddle. My grandma used a switch. In our family, we had a wooden spoon. You want your kids to welcome your hands, but fear the rod.

We'll talk more about how, and when, and why to spank, but for now know if you love your kids you'll spank them and you'll do it early in life.

Spankings are more effective on 5 year-olds than 15 year-olds. By the time a kid lives 15 years he's gotten hard at the ends – head and rump.

Tonight's last proverb, "The righteous eats to the satisfying of his soul, but the stomach of the wicked shall be in want." He always wants more.

And I hope you'll want more of the Proverbs... be here next week...