

Proverbs 14-15

Being complete little snapshots of wisdom; the proverbs don't really behave like the rest of the bible. Meaning that w/God's word, as a general rule it's critical to let the text develop the context. You'll hear me say from time & again that when it comes to understanding God's word there are 3 rules that you can never cease to follow. 3 things that you have to understand if you're to truly understand your bible & they are #1 Context, #2 Context, & #3 (any guesses?) Context.

In that I suppose the proverbs don't really vary, the only thing to understand is that each individual proverb is it's own text & the context is bound up w/in that snapshot of scripture. Oh there are a couple of exceptions along the way where it may be 2 Vs that complete the thought. I think (for example) of Proverbs 3:5-6, *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths."*¹ There you have 2 Vs of text that form the context which develops his point, the principle (to realize that God's ways aren't our ways & that God is much wiser than we are, so don't feel like you have to figure everything out, just realize that you do well to trust in the Lord & you can rest assured that [as His child] He's leading your life).

So there are a few exceptions along the way, but for the most part each proverb is a complete thought unto itself therefore we can pick & choose (according to those areas that seem to stand out) which Vs we stop & expound on for awhile & which ones we simply let soak in as they are.

Vs 1

As we've come to expect w/in the proverbs; since they're all about receiving wisdom, the benefit of walking in it & the detriment of ignoring it; here we're seeing one way that wisdom evidences itself in a wife &/or mother's life.

The truth of the matter is that it's simply another arena in which we see much of the same thing as displayed throughout the proverbs. Wisdom is beneficial on every level. Foolishness is detrimental & destructive on every level. Even (& perhaps especially) in the home.

Here we see one of the things that the Lord commends in a woman's life. He commends you ladies to walk in wisdom (as does He the men, however the focus of this Vs is for the women).

The basic principle of this Vs being what is your influence in your own home?

¹ The New King James Version. (1982). (Pr 3:5-6). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

I think that today one of the tragedies of our culture is that we've somehow placed a high premium on a career-minded woman & have somehow simplified or downplayed/belittled the mother who has given her life to insuring a godly upbringing of her children. If you've got a career path you're esteemed, if you're a "housewife" or "stay home mom" it almost (w/out a word) is sort of looked over or not recognized as a valid pursuit.

But one thing we discover about the Lord as we study His word is that kingdom rationale is 180 degrees away from the way the world thinks. The world says, "Promote yourself" the word says, "Humble yourself". The world says, "You've got to save your life, live for self" the word says, "you have to lose yourself for Christ sake, place others before you." The world says, "Ladies, don't let those men lead the way, take charge, get a career, do something of meaning." The word says, "Focus on providing a godly atmosphere for your family, realize that your priority, your ministry is to build your house."

As a wife, as a woman, do you build your home up, or tear it down? If your words were recorded, would they be mostly positive & edifying, or negative & critical? Does your husband see you as his biggest fan or primary critic? Do you *encourage* your kids or *discourage* them? Wives, moms have the opportunity, daily to have a truly dynamic ministry that can literally change the world. It's the foolish woman who doesn't take the time to realize that, doesn't invest any energy into that. However the wise woman realizes the position of influence & impact that God has given her, how she has the platform to disciple her children, pray for, love & encourage her family.

There's probably not a lot of people that could give you the name of Moses' mom (Jochebed), but she watched over her son, taught him about the Lord, His promises to Israel, she built her house & God used her to change the course of human history in calling Moses to lead Israel out of Egypt & right up to the borders of the Promised Land.

However Athaliah (the mother of king Ahaziah) was quite the opposite. You discover in 2 Chron 22:2-3 that king Ahaziah did evil in the sight of the Lord, why? We read, **"...for his mother advised him to do wickedly." 2 Chron 22:3** The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish pulls it down w/her hands... Ladies never underestimate the power of your influence w/in your home, & never forget that we will all stand accountable for how it is we wielded the influence we had.

Vs 2-4

I'm a fan of Vs 4, but before we look at it lets consider quickly Vs 2-3.

Vs 2 is pretty plain, a person's attitude toward the Lord shows up in his/her behavior. His conduct is integrity or perversity; upright or crooked. (You'll know them by their fruits; good tree, good fruit. Bad tree, bad fruit.)

John said it like this, *"He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked."*² Our walk & our talk should balance out; if we obey God's word from the heart than it'll show in our lives. If not, whatever you may say is one thing, the truth is that you despise Him, if not you'd honor Him w/your life.

Vs 3, "In the mouth of the fool is a rod of pride," boasting, wounding others w/words. We're reminded of the words Goliath used to defame David when he presented himself on the battlefield. "What am I, a dog that you have come to me w/sticks? I'll give your flesh to the birds of the air & to beasts of the field." Boasting, arrogant, trying to tear down & do damage w/his arrogant attitude.

However David didn't respond in like manner did he? He gave glory to God & told him that he could say what he wanted, but he was coming to him in the name of the Lord of hosts & that God was going to do a work that day & bring a great deliverance for the glory of His name. (The lips of the wise preserve them) Choose your words carefully.

Vs 4 isn't justifying making a mess, however it does display the value of having people who are willing/ready to labor in the kingdom of God. Sometimes people can get upset when things are in disarray (& I get that, we want to take care of things) however progress can make a mess. You can play it safe & stay clean, you just won't get anything done, but meaningful results require work & work means that things get moved around, put out of place. Sometimes it takes awhile to clean everything up after our end of summer family day outreach, or the Harvest or whatever, but a lot is getting done for the kingdom (at least in our little area of the globe). So do you want neat & clean, or increase & progress? We'd love both (& we strive for both), but ultimately we're willing to let things get a little messy from time to time if it brings increase to the kingdom of God.

Vs 5-8

Solomon says that a faithful witness does not lie. I love that because what's one of the titles of J.C.? "The faithful witness" Rev 1:5, "The Faithful & True Witness" Rev 3:14. Every word of God is true, He is the Faithful Witness, one of the fingerprints of a faithful witness is that he won't lie.

² The New King James Version. (1982). (1 Jn 2:6). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Not only in the sense of outright blatant lies. But also in the sense of “right information, wrong implication”; a false witness will utter lies. This comes back to context. Remember the false witnesses who testified against Jesus at His trial? “He said, ‘destroy this temple & in 3 days I will build it up’”. Well technically that was the right *information*, but the *implication* was that Jesus was an anarchist, one who sought to insight rebellion against the temple. **The fact of the matter is that Jesus was speaking of the temple of His own body, (a reference to His resurrection). So a false witness doesn’t mean that you’re just a straight & obvious liar, you might give technically right information, you just give it over w/the wrong *implication*.**

Vs 7, when you perceive someone is just an idiot, ranting or whatever, not exercising wisdom in a situation; don’t feel like you need to reason w/the fella, just leave. Don’t let him rub off on you.

Vs 8 is basically encouraging us to consider the consequences of our actions, we’re to look ahead & consider the end. Many people live in the moment, they don’t think about what their actions will cause, yet God says, “But what will you do in the end?” The wisdom of the prudent is to understand the outcome, think it through, but fools just live for the moment.

Vs 9-12

There may be all kinds of things that seem “right” to us; that we don’t see why they’re wrong. But that doesn’t make them right. Be it some sinful course, or even a quest for spiritual enlightenment, various cults & “isms” that appeal to your flesh, sound so nice & reasonable. **They tell you that if you “do” this & “don’t do” that you’ll find nirvana or become a god, go to heaven or whatever. It sounds good, seems right, but it’s end is the way of death.**

You see, it doesn’t matter what I think, what matters is what the scriptures say. The way that seems right to a man is a very broad way, all roads lead to God... That’s true, but they don’t all lead to heaven! Everyone will see God, but not everyone will make it through the gates. Jesus said, **“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”**³ There is a way that seems right to a man; however Jesus said, **“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”**⁴ Any other way is the way of death; separation from God.

³ The New King James Version. (1982). [Mt 7:13-14]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴ The New King James Version. (1982). [Jn 14:6]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Vs 13-23

Back in Vs 13, I know that this can be true of any of us a various times but I couldn't help but think that this is simply the story of all mankind apart from Christ. Putting on a front of having a good time, masking the pain that's in their heart, but the bottom line is one of a miserable experience & seeking to fill that gaping void that's in the heart of every man. Even in laughter the heart may sorrow... & at the end of mirth (means pleasure, amusement) @ the end of the night, the party is over, everyone goes home, is grief.

Vs 14 tells us what's happening in the heart of the backslider; his own ways. Not submitting to God's ways, God's word, busy about his own ways.

Vs 15, don't believe it just because someone says it; it's not true just because it's on the internet 😊. We're to do our research; search the scriptures, put what we're told to the test.

Look at Vs 17; "A quick tempered man acts foolishly". I read somewhere that when your temper boils over, you usually end up in hot water. It never pays to lose your temper does it? We inevitably, almost invariably say something, or do something that we wish we wouldn't have.

Vs 23 sorta connects w/Vs 4. "In all labor there is profit, but idle chatter leads only to poverty." We can stand around & talk about getting it done, or we can get it done. People that talk about getting it done, don't generally get it done. We want to be doers.

Vs 24-25

Again Jesus being the "true witness". A true witness delivers souls; the truth will set you free, the truth of the gospel, the truth of God's word will deliver your soul. We're to be witnesses unto the Lord. He wants to use our lives to see others saved. (Vs 26).

Vs 26-29

James tells us to be swift to hear, slow to speak, & slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God. The impulsive man, the one w/the short fuse, will do & say things they come to regret.

Vs 30-35

Vs 32, "The wicked is banished in his wickedness, but the righteous has a refuge in his death." To be absent from the body is to be present w/the Lord. The wicked will be cast into outer darkness; the righteous will forever be w/the Lord.

"Wisdom rests in the heart of him who has understanding" the wise will keep their mouth shut 😊. But a fool is always spouting off.

Finally Vs 34 is what we want placed in every federal building in America, amen? What is it that exalts a nation? It's not its political system, it's economic philosophy, it's brilliant constitution or the might of it's military. It's righteousness *singularly* that exalts a nation. But sin is a reproach (a shame & a disgrace) to any people. America being no exception...

Ch 15

Vs 1-2

Question, does it matter the words we use & how we choose to use them? Absolutely. By the words we choose we can douse the fire of someone's anger like water or stoke the fire like gasoline.

People can be in a rage, but it's amazing what a soft/gentle word will do to calm a person down. A soft answer can dissolve a person's wrath, but a harsh word can arouse anger as quickly as a soft word can turn it away.

Now that doesn't mean that there's never a time for a harsh word, or a clear rebuke. When Jesus was speaking to the Pharisees, from time to time He'd pour it on (read Matt 23). Jesus knew when to turn it on. **But to those who weren't all self righteous, who had a genuine need & they knew it, He was full of grace & mercy... "Neither do I condemn you, go your way & sin no more."** So there can be a time for a strong answer, equally it's important to recognize when a gracious, soft answer is needed. "The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly..."

Vs 3-4

Vs 3 is a good one to etch on our heart. "The eyes of the Lord are in everyplace". You cannot escape the all-seeing omnipresent eye of the Lord. You might look to the left or to the right & think that no one is watch, God is always watching. The psalmist said, **"Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?"**⁵ It's a rhetorical question, the answer implied by the way the question is framed. The answer is "nowhere". He went on to say that even the night shall be light about me; darkness does not hide from You, but the night shines as the day; the darkness & light are both alike to You.

& The bible teaches us that God's knowledge is a personal knowledge & that He takes a personal interest in you & in me. He even discerns the motives & intent in our heart. We might think we get away w/things because man may not see... God sees.

⁵ The New King James Version. (1982). [Ps 139:7]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

“A wholesome tongue is a tree of life” again, our words can bring healing or hurting; perverseness in it (subversive or deceitful language) can crush a man’s spirit. Might check out the 1st 12 Vs of James 3.

Vs 8-9

We’ve noted along the way various things that are an abomination to the Lord. Here we find a couple more, the sacrifice of the wicked, the way of the wicked. People who don’t know the Lord but try to do some moral goodness in order to make things right w/the Lord... God hates that. Because it’s hypocritical. It’s not from genuine repentance; it’s almost like penance for an indulgence. In other words, an external act can never be a substitute for inward righteousness from the heart.

It doesn’t appease God when perhaps someone who’s living a wicked life, tries to give a lot to the church thinking that somehow makes up for it. Man may look to the outward appearance, but God searches the heart. If you’re wrong on the inside; than it doesn’t matter what you do on the outside; God’s not interesting in our exterior until He’s 1st done some remodeling on our interior.

Vs 10-13

You see, Vs 11 makes it clear that God is looking to the heart. Hebrews teaches us that God is the discerner of the thoughts & intents of our heart. So, long before we’re looking for a conforming to a certain set of standards outwardly, we’re looking for a transforming of the heart inwardly.

Vs 13 touches on some things we’ve mentioned before. Happiness/depression they’re issues of the heart. What a person is, who a person is inwardly has a more lasting impact on his emotional state than does his/her circumstances. If our heart has the joy of the Lord, than even if our circumstances are crumbling we’ll maintain the course. But a broken spirit can shipwreck us if we’re not careful to stay our focus on the Lord.

Vs 14-15

You see, this is along the same vein as Vs 13. It’s not that if you’re afflicted that your days are necessarily evil, it’s that this is your perception; that’s the mentality we can take on. We can start viewing life through a jaded lens. However if we have a healthy heart, if the joy of the Lord is serving as our strength, circumstances are irrelevant (I didn’t say unimportant) but they don’t dictate my emotional state.

Joseph kept his eyes on the Lord, He trusted God despite his circumstances.

Jacob thought everything was working against him, even when they were working very much for him. Because he was being afflicted his perspective was jaded.

Vs 16-23

Timely words (be they words of love, encouragement, even rebuke, or bringing peace) are beneficial & to say the right thing at the right time delights both the hearer & the one who says them. It's not just *what* is said, but *when* it's said. Right word at the right time can change the whole course of our lives.

Vs 22 just says, be smart, seek advise ☺.

Vs 24-26

Basically everything about the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, his sacrifices, his ways, & even his thoughts. Because all of these things are reflective of what's in his heart & his heart is in *rebellion* to God, rather than drawing near in *repentance* to God.

Vs 27-33

Underline Vs 28a. This Vs has probably done more for me regarding helping me to grow in tact & considerate words than any other (of course the exhortation to speak w/grace, words seasoned w/salt & all) but I used to be a guy who spoke 1st & thought about it later & I issued a lot of unintentional hurt & made a lot of people mad that way.

But when I ran across this Vs as a new believer, it changed the course of my life as it pertained to the way I addressed people. Just because it comes into your mind, that doesn't mean it has to come out of your mouth, consider what you say before you say it. Make sure that your shots (so to speak) are fired intentionally, w/accuracy & in love by the grace of God & to the best of your ability. Think before you speak, it will save you miles of heartache & regret...

Prayer points:

Father, thanks again for Your word, for Your wisdom & Your practical instruction. May we take it to heart, & be changed by the power of Your Spirit. Lead us in the way that we should go & may You be glorified in us...