

Proverbs 12-13

The point of a proverb is that it contains the point. We take the time to expand upon a few of them for the sake of exploring the continuity of God's word, however in reality the principle contained in a proverb is pretty clear. It's "cause & effect" kind of stuff, bite size bits of wisdom that we can take in & immediately incorporate into our lives.

Vs 1

Don't hold anything back Solomon; tell us how you really feel☺! I've mentioned this 2-3 times already throughout our study in the book of Proverbs, but you might just keep mental note of how much the value of a teachable spirit is emphasized.

Some people don't really want to be instructed. They feel like it's an insult to their intelligence; or perhaps they think you're trying to tell them how to live life & so they reject your encouragement & are the kind of person that has to learn life on their own terms. Therefore inevitably & almost invariably they learn things the hard way.

Listen, God is committed to bringing us into maturity spiritually. But as we spoke Sunday morning that doesn't always happen because we respond to the gentle nudging of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Therefore God will ramp things up a bit to get us to the place we need to be. He'd prefer to instruct us through His word, underscored by the conviction of the His Spirit. But if we won't be corrected by instruction, then we can anticipate tough times ahead. It's that whole adage, "God loves us just as we are, but He loves us *too much* to leave us as we are." We could all do ourselves a favor & learn from the word of God; it will save us untold heartache. It's a huge advantage to be the type of person who will listen to instruction...

But check it out, as difficult as it can be to convince people to *listen* to it, it's an altogether different issue to convince people to *live* by it! To hear it is one thing, but we need to *do it*. It's one of the great frustrations of ministry (I suspect ever since the fall); seeing people agree w/the need or nod at the importance of it principally, but then not engage in any way practically. Jesus ran into this; talked about this over & over again. He spoke about being a hearer Vs a doer of the word & which one is the wise course of action. He had people say, "Oh, I'll follow you but 1st..." & excuse after excuse would ensue. He spoke parables of people who make excuses not to invest that which their lord had entrusted to them & just do nothing instead.

It's becoming an increasing prayer of mine for this fellowship. That we would be burdened for the lost, be doers of God's word, have the spirit of evangelism at work in our midst. People on fire for J.C. & getting involved in kingdom business; coming to church is great, but that's not the end, it's the beginning.

So when we're talking about loving instruction; the way that's proved out in our lives isn't by simply sitting under the waterfall of God's word as the scripture is taught, it's putting those things that we learn into action in our lives.

Vs 2

The proverbs use all kinds of different words to bring to light the kind of character that's found in the righteous/wise. We find descriptive words such as, "upright", "blameless", a man of "understanding", "trustworthy", "kind", "generous", "prudent", "truthful" ... Here's another one in Vs 2, "good". It speaks of being pleasant, or agreeable; valuable in estimation. Of course we realize that in us, that is, in our flesh no "good" thing dwells. What's good *about* me is Christ *in* me. That's it.

But a good man obtains favor (or acceptance) from the Lord. But the man of wicked intent finds no commendation only condemnation. The 5th Vs of the 1st Psalm tells us, *"...the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous."*¹ They just won't make the cut; it doesn't matter how rich they were, how famous they may've been or how highly esteemed they found themselves in the eyes of this world. The ungodly man will come to a sad & sorry ending. It's all about where we're at w/Jesus. If Christ be *in* me I'll be *accepted* by God (I'll find favor). If I'm *not* in Christ I'll be *rejected* by God. It's really that simple.

Vs 3-4

A witty poet (Ogden Nash) once gave great advice on creating & keeping a successful marriage. He said, "To keep your marriage brimming With love in the loving cup, Whenever you're wrong, admit it; Whenever you're right, shut up."

Solomon is talking here about a wife of noble character; that is, her strength of character actually adds to her husband's honor & makes him proud. However she who causes shame, she's neither disgraceful nor discreet, she's not a woman of nobility nor is she strong morally, is like rottenness to his bones. It's like a deep unrelenting pain in his soul. Solomon had a whole heap of wives so he could speak from experience on both ends of the spectrum. I on the other hand can only speak from the side of affirming the honor of an excellent wife 😊.

Vs 5-10

God loves His creation; even so there will be a sense of compassion even upon the animal kingdom by those who love God.

¹ The New King James Version. (1982). (Ps 1:5). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² The New King James Version. (1982). (Hab 4:19). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Doesn't mean some don't like dogs more than cats & vice/versa but generally speaking you're going to be kind, not cruel to God's creation. (God notes each sparrow that falls)

Vs 11-16

The way of a fool is right in his own eyes. The word "fool" speaks of being thick headed, hardheaded & quarrelsome. Here we learn why he refuses to receive instruction. It's because he thinks he's right all the time. & When he's challenged or feels annoyed his wrath is made known at once, he spouts off, or challenges or insults the person seeking to aid him through instruction.

The wise & prudent (by contrast) is open to advice. When it says that he "covers shame" it's speaking of the shameful actions of the fool. It's not that he just ignores it, but that he controls his response to it &/or forgives man who's acting foolish.

Vs 17-19

Something else that the proverbs will emphasize over & over again is both the danger & the dynamics of the words we use. Words can be used to bring healing, or they can be used to bring harm.

Now there is a sense in which painful words (though they stick us initially) can be good for us ultimately. Like a surgeons scalpel. The bible declares, "*For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*"² In the book of Eph (Ch 6) Paul spoke of the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

However what Solomon is speaking of here is not a reference to the "truth hurts" kind of words whereby the intent is good but the pain is inevitable. He's speaking here of those words that tear down, criticize & speak ill of a person. The bible says, "*Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.*"³

Listen, there are those who build up & there are those who tear down. However the truth is that there is probably just as much to commend in each of us as there is to condemn in each of us, so why focus on the negative rather than highlight the positive?

² The New King James Version. (1982). [Heb 4:12]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

³ The New King James Version. (1982). [Eph 4:29-32]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Why not be complimentary toward one another as opposed to criticizing one another? ... When you're looking for a friend are you looking for someone who's complimentary or critical, encouraging or cynical? There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, but the tongue of the wise promotes health.

The truthful lip shall be established forever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment. Or more literally a "blinking of the eyes", in the span of eternity it's nothing... Truth, however, will be established forever. Thus, *"The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever."*⁴ Of course Jesus said that like this, *"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away."*⁵

Vs 20-22

Again words come to the forefront of our attention. "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord." We've seen dishonest business dealings, perversity in the heart & now lying lips as an abomination to the Lord. It's interesting that the Word of God has more to say about the tongue, & judgment upon the abuse of the tongue than it does the use & abuse of alcohol but the lying tongue & gossip seems to get by in the Christian circle as to where the drunkard would be rejected.

Now I'm not saying that we should tolerate drunkenness, the bible condemns it & so should we. What I'm saying is that we should be careful to use our tongue for purpose God intended it to be used. To build up others, point people to Jesus, discipleship, getting out the gospel & giving God glory. *Of course common communication is the given in the equation but there's 2 other forces that fight for control of our tongue & they are the flesh & the devil. Think of the devastation & destruction that's been done to lives, homes & churches by the unruly use of the tongue. People use it for character assassination, smear campaigns & causing trouble when it should be used for praying, witnessing & praising God.* James spoke of the tongue being a little member but containing a world of iniquity. We use it to deceive, to cover up sin in our lives & deflect attention from ourselves so as to focus it negatively upon others.

In the next Ch we read that truth will deliver souls (14:25), but lies lead to bondage & shame. God hates the lie & we read in the book of Rev that the one who loves & practices a lie shall have their part in the lake which burns w/fire & brimstone, which is the 2nd death. Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who deal truthfully are His delight.

⁴ The New King James Version. (1982). [Is 40:8]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁵ The New King James Version. (1982). [Mt 24:35]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Vs 23-25

Sunday we spoke about dealing w/guilt. Rather than stuffing it down we're to get it out, we're to confess our sin to the Lord & find freedom in His forgiveness.

Here we're seeing 2 more things that can overwhelm a person emotionally if not dealt with appropriately. #1 Anxiety, #2 Depression, one leads to the other.

How is it that the bible encourages us to deal w/these things? We already learned that as it pertains to guilt in our lives we need to *confess* our sins to the Lord, turn from them in repentance & receive His forgiveness. Pertaining to anxiety the bible exhorts us to make known our *cares*, our *concerns* to the Lord as well. In writing to the Philippians Paul said, *"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."*⁶ You see, if we truly believe that God is in control, & we've given our concerns to Him, than what is there to worry about? Why are we anxious? Peter spoke of casting our cares upon the Lord, because He cares for us; we can trust Him for the details of our lives. Jesus exhorted us not to worry about the necessities of life (what shall we eat, drink, or wear). He said that those are the concerns of the unbelievers. He said you just focus on making the kingdom of God your top priority & God will tend to your needs (Matt 6:25-34).

So anxiety in the heart brings on depression. Anxiety can be resolved through a proper understanding of heart of God & a resolve to trust fully in the Lord. If (however) you're already at the point of depression, we're told that it comes back to how we use our words. We're to help that brother or sister out by lifting their spirit through a word spoken in due season. *Being kind, uplifting, encouraging; help them see the silver lining is the situation, remembering that God is in control.* Job said, "How forceful are right words!" (6:25) A right word can really bring comfort, & encourage one who may be grieving or struggling w/bitterness of spirit. Don't kick a person when they're down, give them a good word.

Vs 26

In NT Vernacular we read that like this, *"Do not be deceived: 'Evil company corrupts good habits.'"*⁷ Be cautious concerning who you bring into the inner circle of your life. It just takes a little leaven to leaven the whole lump.

⁶ The New King James Version. (1982). (Php 4:6-7). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁷ The New King James Version. (1982). (1 Co 15:33). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

There are some people who you just gotta move on from, you won't lift them up, they'll drag you down. The way of the wicked will lead you astray.

Vs 27-28

The righteous just pass from life to life. The bible tells us that to be absent from the body is to be present w/the Lord. This mortal must put on immortality, this corruptible must put on incorruptibility so that death is swallowed up in victory. When this body fails we don't die, (not in the biblical sense), we move out of this ratty old tent into a mansion not made w/hands, eternal in the heavens. Jesus said, *"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"*⁸ In the way of righteousness there is life & in its pathway there is no death..

Ch 13

Vs 1-3

I'm sensing more emphasis upon the importance of using our words wisely... Did you sense the familiarity of the 1st Vs of this Ch w/the 1st Vs of the previous Ch? It's so important to remain pliable, open to instruction, available to take a greater degree of insight than what we thought we may've had. *As for me, I've never been one for reinventing the wheel. I'd rather learn from what others have experienced & build upon that. I could spend yrs living life & coming to a conclusion someone could teach me in about 10 minutes if I'd just take the time to listen & apply.*

Wise is the son who heeds his father's instruction. Jesus (the wisest of any Son ever born) said, "I always do those things that please My Father." Heed your heavenly Father, don't be reluctant to receive His rebuke but rather be open & attentive to His word.

Vs4

Listen, I'm all for benevolent programs for those who are truly in need. Yet we also have a responsibility not to enable the individual who simply refuses to work. Paul to the Thessalonians that if a man won't work, than neither should he eat (2 Thess 3:10). If you're trying to make ends meet but are on the down & out, that's one thing, but if you just feel entitled to a hand out that's another thing altogether.

Vs 5

It doesn't say that a righteous man will never lie, but that he hates lying. We'll be perfect when we see Jesus face to face. But our heart is too long for truth.

To deal in truth, to do what's right; a righteous man hates sin, but that doesn't mean he'll be perfectly mature and have complete victory in his life all the time. Positionally we're perfect, practically we have a long way to go...

Vs 6-7

How is this so? Because true riches aren't measured in material things; true riches are eternal. There are plenty of people who have all kinds of wealth on this planet but the second they die they'll have nothing. Even so there are all kinds of people who have nothing as far as this world is concerned yet the moment they move out of this body to be present w/the Lord they'll have vast wealth beyond their wildest dreams.

Write it down, look it up. Luke 12:16-21. True riches are laid up in heaven. Where your treasure is, there your heart will be. Write these down, look them up. Rev 3:14-22, Matt 6:19-21

Vs 8-10

Interesting isn't it. How true it is. Underline the 1st half of Vs 10. Whenever contention arises someone's pride is behind it. This is why we need so desperately to come to the cross, to learn what it means to crucify the flesh. It's the only way in which we can truly deal *with* & be rid of pride. Pride is the basis/root of all contention.

Vs 11-14

Vs 13 isn't the threat of an angry God, it's the warning of a loving Father. God's word doesn't merely teach us what *to* do, but warns us what we're *not* to do. To despise the word will lead to your own destruction. Think of Noah's warning that was despised, think of Moses' warning to Pharaoh that was despised...

Of course J.C. is the Word made flesh; to despise Him is to invite destruction into/upon your life.

Conversely, to receive & walk in the word is a fountain of life; it turns us away from the snares of death.

Vs 15-20

Vs 15 is a good one for us to instill into our children. Good understanding gains favor, but the way of the unfaithful (of the transgressor) is hard; it invites unnecessary hardship into our lives.

Now in Vs 26 of Ch 12 we received the warning to choose our friends carefully. Here in Vs 20 we're told again that people tend to become like the people w/whom they associate.

If it's your heart to become wise, to grow in godliness. Then find someone whom you believe to be wise, who exudes godly characteristics & attach yourself to them. If we spend time with people who love the Lord, they'll rub off on us in way that's helpful for us spiritually (& practically).

However if you pick a bunch of dummies to hang out w/all the time, don't blame God for the way your life winds up ☺.

Vs 21-22

Hey if you're able to leave a material inheritance that extends even to your grandchildren; God bless you, that's wonderful. But more than that you can leave a godly legacy, a spiritual heritage, an example of what it means to lead a life set apart to Christ. That's worth more than anything else you could do for them, believe me.

Vs 24

The bible is clear that God disciplines His children. Even so better for our children to receive discipline by our hand (a heart that loves them & wants to see Christ in them) than let the courts do it later. The parent who loves their child, brings correction to their child.

Vs 25

In other words, the one who isn't walking w/the Lord will always want just a little bit more. The flesh is never satisfied. As to where in the Lord there is inner contentment & satisfaction. Great gain doesn't bring contentment; it's godliness w/contentment that brings great gain. Amen? Amen.

Prayer Points:

Father we thank You for the wisdom of Your word. Awaken us to be those who not only nod to the need but meet the need we see. Stir our hearts to serve You more. Help us to use our tongue in a manner that edifies others, & glorifies You. Thank You for Your grace & for Your mercy...