

# Proverbs

## Proverbs 26

1. Like snow in summer and like rain in harvest, So honor is not fitting for a fool.
  - a. Snow in summer is unnatural, and it damages the crops. Rain in harvest makes it difficult, if not impossible to harvest the crops. Therefore, both are against what ought to be, or what makes life as it should be.
  - b. In the same way, honoring a fool is unnatural, further damaging his character, and making him more difficult, if not impossible to deal with.
  
2. Like a sparrow in its flitting (*wandering*), like a swallow in its flying (*fast, long distance, for hours*), So a curse without cause (*unwarranted*) does not alight (*come to pass*).
  - a. **Principle:** An undeserved, unjust, unwarranted curse will not have its intended effect on the one cursed, because God will not support such a curse.
  - b. Example:
    - i. Balaam said to Balak, king of Moab, “How shall I curse whom God has not cursed? And how can I denounce whom the LORD has not denounced?” (**Numbers 23:8**)
    - ii. Moses explaining why Balaam’s curses did not work: **Deuteronomy 23:5**, Yet the LORD your God would not listen to Balaam, but He turned the curse into a blessing for you because the LORD your God loves you.
  - c. New Testament way: **Romans 12:14**, Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.
  
3. A whip is for the horse, a bridle for the donkey, And a rod for the back of fools.
  - a. To get a fool’s attention and guide him into wise living requires the use of a rod for beating him. Unless a fool is made to pay a great price (*suffer*) for his foolishness, he is not likely to forsake it and choose a life of wisdom.
  - b. **Unintended Lesson:** Better to gain wisdom without the rod than have to have the rod be your motivation for choosing wisdom.
  - c. **Psalm 32:8-9**, I (*God*) will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you. [9] [Therefore],

do not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding, whose trappings include bit and bridle to hold them in check, otherwise they will not come near to you.

### Verses 4 & 5 go together

4. **Do not answer** a fool according to his folly, Or you will also be like him.
  - a. To treat a foolish question, a taunt, or a sneer from a known fool as if it deserved a foolish response, taunt, or sneer in return is to be foolish yourself.
  - b. In the same way, to treat a foolish question, taunt, or sneer from a known fool as if it were worthy of a gracious, wise response, is to be foolish yourself.
5. **Answer** a fool as his folly deserves, That he not be wise in his own eyes.
  - a. When possible (*i.e., when the fool is willing to listen*) answer in a way that convicts him of his foolishness. Overwhelm his foolishness (*his idea, argument, or statement*) with truth and/or evidence so there is nothing more he can say in defense or justification of his foolish position.
  - b. Two examples from Jesus.
    - i. **Matthew 26:62-64**, The high priest stood up and said to Him, “Do You not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?” [63] But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to Him, “I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God.” [64] Jesus said to him, “You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see the son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.”
    - ii. **John 19:8-11**, Therefore when Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid; [9] and he entered into the Praetorium again and said to Jesus, “Where are You from?” But Jesus gave him no answer. [10] So Pilate said to Him, “You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?” [11] Jesus answered, “You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me to you has the greater sin.”
  - c. **Principle – vs 4,5: Do not answer** a fool when your answer (*choice of words, tone of voice*) will make you as foolish as the fool. **Answer** a fool (*guarding your choice of words, tone of voice to remain respectful*) when your silence will allow him to think more highly of himself than he ought.

6. He cuts off his own feet and drinks violence Who sends a message by the hand of a fool.
  - a. **Principle:** To depend on a fool to do a job well, especially when your well-being and the well-being of those depending on you are at stake, is equal to crippling yourself and bringing severe suffering into your life and the lives of those depending on you.
  - b. **Proverbs 13:17,** A wicked messenger falls into adversity, But a faithful envoy brings healing.
  
7. Like the legs which are useless to the lame, So is a proverb in the mouth of fools.
  - a. **Principle:** Knowing the words of wisdom is useless unless you know the why and how to apply those words in practical, realistic ways.
  - b. A fool can speak words of truth and wisdom eloquently, and in so doing sound exceedingly wise, but because he does not live accordingly himself, they are useless to him and he is useless to his hearers, for he cannot show them how to live accordingly.
  
8. Like one who binds a stone in a sling, So is he who gives honor to a fool.
  - a. To bind a stone in a sling is senseless because it makes the stone useless for its intended use – to be slung out at some object.
  - b. To give honor to a fool is senseless because it makes the honor useless for its intended use – to show the fool worthy to be trusted to do the thing for which he was honored.
  - c. In addition, giving honor to a fool only serves to reinforce the value of being foolish in the mind of the fool.
  
9. Like a thorn which falls (*goes into*) into the hand of a drunkard, So is a proverb in the mouth of fools.
  - a. **Alternate Translation (NLT):** A proverb in the mouth of a fool is like a thorny branch brandished by a drunk.
  - b. The message of the NASB: The drunkard is unable to properly deal with a thorn lodged in his hand because he is drunk, and a fool is unable to properly deal with a proverb (*make sense of, teach, apply*) because he is foolish.
  - c. The message of the NLT: The drunkard waving around a thorny branch will harm anyone near enough to get hit, and a fool speaking proverbs will harm anyone listening because of his pride in thinking he is worthy of proclaiming the proverb, his inability to understand the proverb, and his inability to teach others how to apply it.

10. Like an archer who wounds everyone, So is he who hires a fool or who hires those who pass by (*without considering their skill/training/ability*).
  - a. An archer whose archery skills are so poor that his arrows fly in unintended directions does great harm to anyone who gets in the way. In the same way, those responsible for hiring do great harm to the project by hiring fools and/or those ill-prepared and ill-equipped to do the work.
  - b. **Alternate Translation – only KJV:** The great God that formed all things both rewardeth the fool, and rewardeth transgressors.
  
11. Like a dog that returns to its vomit Is a fool who repeats his folly.
  - a. It is common for dogs to lick up their vomit, and it is common for fools to repeat their folly – thus verifying how foolish they are.
  - b. A sick dog will vomit to get the sickness out of itself, and then lick up its vomit – thus licking up the thing that made it sick in the first place. The NT applies this truth to believers and/or would-be believers.
  - c. **2 Peter 2:20-22**, For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. [21] For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them. [22] It has happened to them according to the true proverb, “A dog returns to its own vomit,” and, “A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire.”
  
12. Do you see a man wise in his own eyes (*proud, conceited, opinionated*)? There is more hope for a fool than for him.
  - a. **Principle:** It is harder to teach or correct a know-it-all than a fool.
    - i. Knowing how hard it is to teach or correct a fool, we can reasonably conclude it is almost impossible to teach or correct a know-it-all.
    - ii. The reality is, the one who is wise in his own eyes is more foolish than a fool because his high opinion of himself removes any reason he might have to seek advice, or honestly question his opinions, or humbly accept correction.
  - b. The one who is wise in his own eyes not only hurts himself, he hurts others by causing division, damaging relationships, and leading the naive and immature astray.
  
13. The **sluggard** (*lazy*) says, "There is a lion in the road! A lion is in the open square!"

- a. This proverb describes the ingenuity of the lazy or fearful when trying to avoid doing what needs to be done. In this case, the lazy/fearful person predicts doom in order to avoid what he doesn't want to do.
- b. **Proverbs 22:13**, The sluggard (*lazy*) says, "There is a lion outside; I will be killed in the streets!"

### Verses 14 & 15 go together

14. As the door turns on its hinges, So does the **sluggard** (*lazy*) on his bed.
15. The **sluggard** (*lazy*) buries his hand in the dish; He is weary of bringing it to his mouth again. (**Note: Proverbs 19:24**)
  - a. This proverb describes the extent of a sluggard's laziness. The following proverb provides the solution.
  - b. **Proverbs 6:6-11**, Go to the ant, O sluggard, observe her ways and be wise, [7] which, having no chief, officer or ruler, [8] prepares her food in the summer and gathers her provision in the harvest. [9] How long will you lie down, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep? [10] "A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to rest" – [11] Your poverty will come in like a vagabond and your need like an armed man.
16. The **sluggard** (*lazy*) is wiser in his own eyes (*proud, conceited, opinionated*) Than seven men who can give a discreet (*perceptive, discerning*) answer.
  - a. The **sluggard** (*lazy*) thinks his own reasoning is wiser than the wisdom of the wise, and he uses it to justify and defend his laziness.
  - b. The proud, conceited, opinionated **know-it-all** deceives himself into believing his ignorance is wisdom and so refuses to listen to true wisdom.
17. Like one who takes a dog by the ears Is he who passes by and meddles with strife (*conflict, quarrel, argument*) not belonging to him.
  - a. To meddle in someone else's strife is to insert yourself into the strife as if you have a right to do so – when you have neither the right nor the invitation.
  - b. **Principle:** It is arrogant, foolish, and even dangerous to meddle in other people's affairs unless you are invited by them to do so.
  - c. A dog lifted by the ears is likely to bite the one lifting it, and meddling in an argument or quarrel or conflict between two people you don't know is likely to turn one or both of them against you.
  - d. There is pride and arrogance in thinking you have the skills and are therefore needed to calm a dispute or settle an argument – when you know nothing about those involved or what is driving the dispute.

- e. When I read this proverb, I think of President Lyndon Johnson lifting his beagle by his ears (04/64) in front of the press core. It made the headlines and hurt his image with dog-lovers.
18. Like a madman who throws Firebrands, arrows and death,
19. So is the man who deceives (*deals treacherously with*) his neighbor, And says, "Was I not joking?"
- a. It is all too common for people to excuse, justify, and try to escape taking responsibility for their bad behavior by claiming they meant no harm, or their intentions were good, or they were just joking.
  - b. To do this not only makes you look dishonest, unloving, and insensitive to the effects of your behavior on others, it cheapens and damages your relationship with those to whom you do this, while shutting down any opportunity to correct or improve the relationship.
  - c. The reality is, a deceptive, harmful, relationship damaging outcome, even from supposedly good intentions is still a deceptive, harmful, relationship damaging outcome. And when you repeat the behavior again and again while continuing to claim good intentions, the damage is that much greater. To fail to take responsibility for such supposedly good intentions is a failure of honest self-judgment, a failure of love, and the failure of valuing self-interest over valuing loving relationships.
20. For lack of wood the fire goes out, And where there is no whisperer (*talebearer*), contention (*strife, conflict, disputes, quarreling*) quiets down.
21. [**However**], Like charcoal to hot embers and wood to fire, So is a contentious man to kindle strife.
- a. The whisperer feeds contention, the contentious person stirs up.
  - b. The whisperer spreads information that may or may not be true, or may or may not be accurate (1) to those who have a legitimate right to know, (2) and to those who ought not to know, (3) and to those who have no need to know.
  - c. Remove whispering/the whisperer and contention/the contentious person and the atmosphere calms so that if there is an issue or conflict needing resolution, it can be done in a reasonably peaceful, relationship protective, and mutually beneficial way for both parties.
22. The words of a whisperer are like dainty morsels (*which we like to hear and gladly swallow*), And they go down into the innermost parts of the body (*effecting our views, assumptions, attitudes, beliefs, and communication with others*). (**Note: Proverbs 18:8**)

- a. The whisperer does serious damage to his character, mindset, and values by thinking there is something good about spreading personal information about others.
  - b. **Vs 20-21** add the fact that the whisperer not only damages his own character, he also harms those who listen to him.
23. Like an earthen vessel overlaid with silver dross Are burning lips and a wicked heart.
- a. Historically, when silver was heated and the dross came to the top, it was scooped off. However, because some silver came with it, the resulting product was used to coat clay vessels so they looked like silver. However, the coating of silver dross did not change the fact that the vessel was made of cheap clay.
  - b. **Principle:** Though kind, gracious, loving, affirming words sound sincere, they cannot change the insincerity with which they are spoken any more than a silver dross coating can change a clay vessel into a silver vessel.
  - c. Therefore, we must look at the heart, as revealed through repetitive behaviors, forms of communication, and accompanying character traits, to see if the words spoken are sincere, or a covering intended to lead the listener in the direction intended by the speaker.
  - d. **Amplified Bible:** Burning lips [uttering insincere words of love] and a wicked heart are like an earthen vessel covered with the scum thrown off from molten silver [making it appear to be solid silver].
  - e. **NOTE: vs 24-26** for further examples.
24. He who hates disguises it with his lips, But he lays up deceit in his heart.
25. When he speaks graciously, do not believe him, For there are seven abominations in his heart.
26. Though his hatred covers itself with guile (*deceitful cunning, duplicity*), His wickedness will be revealed before the assembly.
- a. If we hate someone we ought to love, we may hide our hatred with words and some of our actions, but the hatred is still within us.
  - b. In the same way, if someone hates us, we ought to be wary of his words, for though they may sound conciliatory, or even loving, they are hypocritical at best. Therefore, only believe the words if they are supported by kind and loving behavior, or open repentance and remorse for bad behavior.
  - c. **Vs 26:** Try as we might, we cannot hide what is in our heart forever. Some time, some where, we will encounter circumstances that will bring out our true selves.

27. He who digs a pit will fall into it, And he who rolls a stone, it will come back on him.
- a. If our beliefs, values, mindset, and desires (*life-style*) are such that we intentionally and regularly harm (*take advantage of, deceive, con*) others for our own gain, then we can be sure our evil will bring retribution – if not from those harmed, then from the Law and from God.
  - b. **Galatians 6:7-8**, Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. [8] For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.
  - c. **Proverbs 12:13**, An evil man is ensnared by the transgression of his lips, but the righteous will escape from trouble.
28. A lying tongue hates those it crushes (*oppresses, makes a victim*), And a flattering mouth works ruin.
- a. When you lie to take advantage of another person or a situation, do you see yourself as hating those you hurt?
  - b. It is my finding that most are willing to talk about their choices and behaviors that show they love those near and dear, but few are willing to talk about, and even less willing to consider, that their hurtful, unloving, self-serving choices and behaviors are expressions of hate toward those they are treating that way.
  - c. **Logically**, if love is doing good to those around us, and if the opposite of love is hate, then doing the opposite of what is loving to those around us means we hate them – at least we hate them in those moments or in that area of repeated selfishness.
  - d. Sadly, we are prone to ignore or treat as not applicable the strong, condemning words that God's Word uses to describe our selfish, sinful, unkind, and hurtful behavior – such as **hating** those these kinds of behaviors effect, or committing **adultery** against God and making ourselves God's **enemy** when we love the world in place of loving God, or trampling Jesus under the foot, treating His shed blood as if it were worthless, and insulting the Spirit of grace when we willfully continue in the practice of what we know is sin.