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Proverbs 23

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Teach
**Children
the Bible**

Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Proverbs 23.

Topics.

- This chapter is full of a variety of various Proverbs.

FOR INFORMATION: concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

INTRODUCTION

Proverbs is a collection of Israelite wisdom literature, that has multiple authors, but most of it is attributed to King Solomon. Chapter one to nine gives readers a framework for understanding the rest of the book. The central concern of the book of Proverbs is practical wisdom for living. We are told that the beginning and essence of wisdom is the fear of the LORD (Prov. 1:7) (Prov. 9:10). It contrasts the benefits of seeking wisdom and the pitfalls of living a foolish life. While the wicked stumble in deep darkness (Prov. 4:19), the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day ((Prov. 4:18). Individual proverbs date from between the tenth and sixth centuries B.C.

KINGS AND ANGELS

The title king is often used throughout the book of Proverbs, it comes from the Hebrew word (*malak*) which can refer to the following four things:

1. A royal king ascending to the throne of royalty and reigning from it.
2. A male sovereign (i.e., a man or boy who rules as a monarch over an independent state.
3. The chief, or the principal leader or ruler of a group (secular or religious).
4. A messenger or ambassador, especially of God, (i.e. an angel, a king, a prophet, a priest or a teacher).
5. The best, the strongest and the wisest of all.

It is interesting to notice in the first verse of proverbs (Prov. 1:1) the word king comes from the Hebrew word (*malak*) and the first mention of an angel in the Bible also comes from the Hebrew word (*malak*) (Gen. 16:7). This means when the title king is used in the book of Proverbs it carries the idea of a wise king that does good unless the context implies otherwise.

For further information concerning angels see the title:

Angels (ON WEBSITE MENU).

PROVERBS 23:1-3

- **Proverbs 23:1-3:** When you sit down to eat with a ruler, observe carefully what is before you, ²and put a knife to your throat if you are given to appetite. ³Do not desire his delicacies, for they are deceptive food.

When you are at a ruler's or king's place to eat, be conscious of who it is sitting with you. Remember customs, practices and what is considered correct and acceptable social behaviour (don't pig in!). The expression, "Do not desire his delicacies, for they are deceptive food," means do not envy the ruler's wealth because riches and abundant possessions entice away from God.

PROVERBS 23:4-5

- **Proverbs 23:4-5:** Do not toil to acquire wealth; be discerning enough to desist. ⁵When your eyes light on it, it is gone, for suddenly it sprouts wings, flying like an eagle toward heaven.

Do not spend all your life working to gain riches and wealth, be wise enough to take some leisure time off to enjoy it and know that your life could be cut short at any time.

PROVERBS 23:6-8

- **Proverbs 23:6-8:** Do not eat the bread of a man who is stingy; do not desire his delicacies, ⁷for he is like one who is inwardly calculating. "Eat and drink!" he says to you, but his heart is not with you. ⁸You will vomit up the morsels that you have eaten, and waste your pleasant words.

A stingy person will offer you more, but inwardly they will be calculating what it is costing them. They will pretend to be listening to your conversation, but mentally they will be wishing you would stop eating. This principle is not limited to food only, but to everything a stingy person might offer or lend.

PROVERBS 23:9

- **Proverbs 23:9:** Do not speak in the hearing of a fool, for he will despise the good sense of your words.

Fools in this context refers to those who lack good sense, when someone speaks to them with words of wisdom their attitude is likely to suddenly change and they will regard the one speaking to them with a feeling of disdain and dislike. This change in attitude could be likened to secular men and women being perfectly friendly talking to a Christian until the Christian starts to talk about the Lord Jesus Christ, in most cases when this happens their attitude almost instantly changes.

PROVERBS 23:10-11

- **Proverbs 23:10-11:** Do not move an ancient landmark or enter the fields of the fatherless, ¹¹for their Redeemer is strong; he will plead their cause against you.

The ancient landmark refers to the boundaries of a man's land. The children's father has died so they inherit the land, but once the wicked see that the father has died, they deceptively take advantage of his helpless widow and his children by secretly shifting the boundaries of the land the children have inherited. To take advantage of a helpless widow and her children in such a deceptive and corrupt way is a gross abomination before God and those who do such a thing will be judged and condemned accordingly.

PROVERBS 23:12

- **Proverbs 23:12:** Apply your heart to instruction and your ear to words of knowledge.

Accept correction, advice and get knowledge. This is the path to becoming wise, mature and a prudent person who can wisely lead and give good counsel and advice to others.

PROVERBS 23:13-14

- **Proverbs 23:13-14:** Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you strike him with a rod, he will not die. ¹⁴If you strike him with the rod, you will save his soul from Sheol.

Those who discipline their children will save them from trouble. This is because without loving discipline a child is robbed from learning self-control and the right way to go. Permitting a child to indulge in whatever they wish to do and as they please will allow sinful habits to gather and strength which will bring sorrow and misery to them and their parents later in life.

Rod: comes from the Hebrew word (*shebet*) in this context it refers to a stick for punishing and correcting. (Proverbs 13:24).

Discipline: comes from the Hebrew word (*muwcar*) it means to chastise, punish, reproof, restrain, warn, instruct correct, reform and teach it carries the idea of instructing and correcting so as to warn and prevent a person from harm in the future.

If you strike him with a rod, he will not die: the reason Solomon says this so strongly is because he knows that a child without discipline will grow into a teenager that will fall into all sorts of trouble because they have not learned self-control, or to rule over their own emotions. The expression, "they hate their child," carries the idea that a parent does not care about their child's wellbeing or their future, because if they did they would take the time to discipline in love (not anger) and make the effort to correct and train their child in the right way and what, is good, proper and acceptable behaviour.

The rod: is not about cruelly beating a child, even God is against that. Sparing the rod carries the idea of making the child aware that what they are doing is wrong. It only takes a gentle smack on the backside for a child to get the message and learn that whatever behaviour they were doing will bring them harm in the future. Obviously, a gentle smack is not the only form of discipline that is effective. Many people have great success with other types of discipline. It is the principal that is important, not the method or what is used to carry it out. Today it is almost certain if a child was given the choice of a smack given in love (in contrast to anger) or have their iPad, computer or mobile phone taken off them for two days they would choose the smack.

To deny a child of some form of effective discipline is to ruin their lives, that is why Solomon says the parent who will not disciple their child hates their child, because love will always do what is best for another person, even if it is something we may not find easy to do. No parent likes to discipline their children, but they know that it is going to protect their child in the future and without correction the child is not going to learn self-control or what good and acceptable behaviour is.

PROVERBS 23:15-16

- **Proverbs 23:15-16:** My son, if your heart is wise, my heart too will be glad. ¹⁶My inmost being will exult when your lips speak what is right.

Solomon is speaking to his son, but the principle also applies to God and His children, when a son shows good sense and is able to make sensible decisions and judgments and speaks what is right the earthly father and God are cheerfully delighted happy and pleased with him. The thing God

loves the most is for all people (especially those who belong to His Kingdom) to do-good to others and speak graciously and encouragingly with words of comfort and wisdom. Jesus said the Ten Commandments concerning mankind can be summed up in the words, "Love your neighbour as yourself," meaning do-good to others and not harm and speak will of them in contrast to speaking malicious gossip. No sane person deliberately does things to inflict pain on themselves, loving others as you love yourself is not about feeling some warm and fuzzy emotion towards others, it is about not hurting others as you would not hurt yourself. The thing God hates the most is when we do harm to another person, physically, verbally financially, sexually, emotionally or spiritually and the thing God loves the most is when we do good to others. It is interesting to notice that the major crime that God points out in Noah's time and one of the main reasons for the flood was because of all the violence in the land. Next to loving God with all our heart, mind and strength the command to love your neighbours as yourself is not only the greatest commandment in the entire Bible and under sun, the moon, the stars and all the heavenly hosts, but also the greatest commandment before God and the Lord Jesus Christ. When a godly father sees his children upholding these two commandments, he is a very happy father, likewise the heart of the heavenly Father delights when He sees his children making these two commandments the love of their heart and the guide to their lives, their speech and their behaviour.

PROVERBS 23:17-18

- **Proverbs 23:17:** Let not your heart envy sinners, but continue in the fear of the LORD all the day. ¹⁸Surely there is a future, and your hope will not be cut off.

Having a fear of the LORD in this context means having a fear of doing something wrong, because it will result in God's judgment of condemnation, a healthy fear of the LORD will protect and guard those who have such fear from being enticed to join in with those who are committing a crime that is benefiting and prospering them. An example of this is a twelve-year-old friend I knew when I was the same age. He was a good guy and friend, but was led astray by two others to enter shops with them and steal toys. Eventually he was caught and was deeply crushed that he had hurt his parents and let them down. Without the influence of these two other boys he would never have done such a thing. This is why having a fear of the LORD is a healthy thing, it protects from temptation and wrong-doing.

PROVERBS 23:19

- **Proverbs 23:19:** Hear, my son, and be wise, and direct your heart in the way.

Direct your heart in the way carries the following two ideas:

1. Set the mind and heart to always choose to do the good and right thing.
2. Set the mind and heart to always follow God and His way of salvation and to always live in a manner that honours Him and brings a good testimony to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Christian faith.

PROVERBS 23:20-21

- **Proverbs 23:20-21:** Be not among drunkards or among gluttonous eaters of meat, ²¹for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and slumber will clothe them with rags.

The King James Bible says:

- **Proverbs 23:20-21:** Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: ²¹For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags.

The words, drunkards, gluttonous, winebibbers and riotous clearly show that the people in focus here are not those who have a drink of alcohol in moderation or those who enjoy eating a meal and drinking a couple of beers or wines on special occasions now and again, but those who not only love riotous and wild parties and pig out at them, but also live for them, their joy in life is to be drunk and reveling in wild parties, they work to party. These are the types of men and women Solomon and by extension all of us, is telling his son not to mingle with. The reason for this advice is obvious their only end is poverty and ruin.

PROVERBS 23:22

- **Proverbs 23:22:** Listen to your father who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old.

It is supposed here that the father and mother have raised their children in love and not an abusive environment, since no teenager would be expected to listen to the advice of an abusive father or mother. Wisdom would tell them instead to seek out someone of maturity who they trust and listen to them. This verse is saying, respect and give honour to your father and mother, because they have sacrificed their lives to raise you, give you food, shelter, education and cared for you when you were sick, don't take all their caring love, work, sacrifice and care for granted and even worse despise them.

Do not despise your mother when she is old: during the ancient era (especially amongst the nation of Israel) it was expected by society and by God that the children would take care of their parents in their old age. This is no doubt one of the reasons Solomon tells his son not to despise his mother when she is old. This of course would embrace the father, but since it is the father who is speaking, he is not going to mention himself.

PROVERBS 23:23

- **Proverbs 23:23:** Buy truth, and do not sell it; buy wisdom, instruction, and understanding.

The expression, "buy truth, wisdom, instruction and understanding," does not necessarily mean that a person has to pay money for it (though sometime they may (i.e., buying books and attending teaching seminars), it primarily carries the idea of seeking after wisdom, instruction, and understanding regardless of the sacrifices that have to be made in life to gain them (i.e., miss a movie, watch less TV, miss a party or social function and instead spend the time reading and learning wisdom etc.). It also means, lay pride and ego down and be humble enough to listen to the teaching, wisdom, advice and counsel of others. In our modern Western world most feel life is rushed and that they have no time to search out wisdom and good knowledge, but imagine for a moment if all technology collapsed, no TV, no mobiles, no play stations, no computers and no movie theatres all of a sudden we would all have loads of time. It is not that we don't have time to increase in knowledge and wisdom, but that we give the time we do have to other things.

Do not sell truth, wisdom, instruction and understanding: embraces to the following five things:

1. Do not speak foolishly or gossip or speak words that are dishonest and not seemly.
2. Do not act or behave in a manner that is wrong, corrupt and wicked

3. Do not speak words that are contrary to wisdom, justice and what is true.
4. Do not act or behave in a manner that dishonours God and brings a bad testimony to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Christian faith.
5. Do not forsake your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ

The expression, "Do not sell truth, wisdom, instruction and understanding," could be simply summed up by saying do not say or do anything that is against God, against the Lord Jesus Christ, and is opposed to what is true.

PROVERBS 23:24-25

- **Proverbs 23:24-25:** The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice; he who fathers a wise son will be glad in him. ²⁵Let your father and mother be glad; let her who bore you rejoice.

A son who remains faithful to God and does what is good and right and treats others with kindness, decency and respect and shows good sense, good judgment and make sensible choices and decisions will make his father and mother enormously happy.

PROVERBS 23:26

- **Proverbs 23:26:** My son, give me your heart, and let your eyes observe my ways.

It is a great testimony of a father who can tell his son to set his eyes upon him and observe his ways. This statement carries the idea of learning from those who's outward behaviour and actions is in line with what they say. This does not mean that they are perfect or without sin, but that, they honestly love God and desire to faithfully follow Him and their outward behaviour and speech though flawed evidences their love for God and His commandments. There is a danger for Christian parents to put on a holy façade in front of their children and live before them as though they are without sin. Because they feel (or fear) if they appeared flawed (or sinful) in front of their children they would be a bad example, this type of thinking is grossly flawed for the following reasons:

- No parent no matter how much they love God is ever sin-free and to pretend they are is a lie and will only, give their children a false concept of God and His grace.
- Children are not stupid they perceive what is in their parents' hearts and minds.
- No parent can hide their flaws on a daily basis before their children who are living with them seven days a week.
- Parents who live in such a deceitful manner are live a living a life of hypocrisy and this will do far more damage to their children than living a life of honesty before them and confessing when they have acted wrongly, repented and said sorry.

PROVERBS 23:27-28

- **Proverbs 23:27-28:** For a prostitute is a deep pit; an adulteress is a narrow well. ²⁸She lies in wait like a robber and increases the traitors among mankind.

The King James Bible says:

- **Proverbs 23:27-28:** For a whore is a deep ditch; and a strange woman is a narrow pit.

The expression, "a prostitute and an adulteress wait like a robber," means they take a man's money and ultimately ruin his marriage, his family and his life. The expression, "a prostitute and an adulteress increase the traitors," means they cause men to betray their wives and lie to them. A forbidden woman or strange woman refers to a married woman who is an adulteress she is also called an evil woman, a whorish woman and a prostitute. During the Old Testament era it seems that even though a prostitute woman lives a lifestyle outside of God's moral laws she was accepted at some level as concubines were, but if a prostitute enticed married men into her bed she was seen as an evil woman and spoke of in the harshest of expressions (i.e., whorish, harlot and forbidden woman). This of course would be because by her sensual enticements she is destroying a marriage and a family.

(Prov. 2:16-18) (Prov. 5:3-20) (Prov. 6:24-32)
(Prov. 7:5-19) (Prov. 23:27-28).

FOLLOWING ARE THE SCRIPTURES CONCERNING PROSTITUTES AND FORBIDDEN WOMAN

A Forbidden Woman, Strange Woman and Adulteress.

- So you will be delivered from the forbidden woman (strange woman in KJV) from the adulteress (the stranger in KJV) with her smooth words (flatters in KJV), ¹⁷who forsakes the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God; ¹⁸for her house sinks down to death, and her paths to the departed. (Proverbs 2:16-18).

The focus of these verses is a woman who has forsaken the husband of her youth to commit adultery.

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A Forbidden Woman, Strange Woman and Adulteress.

- The lips of a forbidden woman (strange woman in KJV) drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil, ⁴but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. ⁵Her feet go down to death; her steps follow the path to Sheol; ⁶she does not ponder the path of life; her ways wander, and she does not know it --- NOW GO TO VERSE EIGHTEEN --- ¹⁸Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth, ¹⁹a lovely deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight; be intoxicated always in her love. ²⁰Why should you be intoxicated, my son, with a forbidden woman (strange woman in KJV) and embrace the bosom of an adulteress? (Proverbs 5:3-20).

The focus of these verses is a married man having sex with another woman

An Evil Woman, Adulteress, Prostitute, Married Woman and Neighbour's Wife.

- Preserve yourself from the evil woman, from the smooth tongue of the adulteress. ²⁵Do not desire her beauty in your heart, and do not let her capture you with her eyelashes; ²⁶for the price of a prostitute is only a loaf of bread, but a married woman hunts down a precious life. ²⁷Can a man carry fire next to his chest and his clothes not be burned? ²⁸Or can one walk on hot coals and his feet not be scorched? ²⁹So is he who goes in to his neighbor's wife --- NOW GO TO VERSE THIRTY-TWO --- ³²He who commits adultery lacks sense; he who does it destroys himself. (Proverbs 6:24-32).

The focus of these verses is a man having sex with another man's wife.

Married and Forbidden Woman, Adulteresses and Prostitutes.

- Keep you from the forbidden woman (strange woman in KJV), from the adulteress with her smooth words (flattering words in KJV).⁶For at the window of my house I have looked out through my lattice,⁷and I have seen among the simple, I have perceived among the youths, a young man lacking sense --- NOW GO TO VERSE TEN ---¹⁰And behold, the woman meets him, dressed as a prostitute, (the attire of an harlot in KJV) wily of heart (subtil of heart in KJV).¹¹She is loud and wayward; her feet do not stay at home --- NOW GO TO VERSE EIGHTEEN ---¹⁸Come, let us take our fill of love till morning; let us delight ourselves with love.¹⁹For my husband (goodman in KJV) is not at home; he has gone on a long journey. (Proverbs 7:5-19).

The focus of these verses is a married woman having sex with another man.

A Prostitute a Whore an Adulteress and a Strange Woman.

- For a prostitute (a whore in KJV) is a deep pit; an adulteress (strange woman in KJV) is a narrow well.²⁸She lies in wait like a robber (for a prey in KJV) and increases the traitors among mankind (meaning she causes married men to betray their wives and lie to them).

The focus of these verses is a woman having sex with a married man.

Conclusion of a prostitute woman: in all these verses a prostitute is spoken of as an evil woman when she has sex with a married man or she is a married woman herself having sex with other men. It should be mentioned here that a married man who has sex with another woman and a single man who has sex with a married woman is equally as guilty as the woman and both are an offence before God.

NOTE: for those who have fallen into adulteries there is forgiveness in Christ, everyone is a sinner before God. Even the woman at the well who had five husbands the Lord Jesus Christ forgave because of her honesty toward him and no-doubt her broken spirit when she saw such a caring man without sin protecting her from her enemies and able to show her kind compassion and forgiveness (John 8:3-11). (Proverbs 23:27-28).

PROVERBS 23:29-35

- **Proverbs 23:29-35:** Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaining? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes?³⁰Those who tarry long over wine; those who go to try mixed wine.³¹Do not look at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup and goes down smoothly.³²In the end it bites like a serpent and stings like an adder.³³Your eyes will see strange things, and your heart utter perverse things.³⁴You will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, like one who lies on the top of a mast.³⁵They struck me," you will say, "but I was not hurt; they beat me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake? I must have another drink."

Excessive wine will bring sorrow, strife wounds, trouble and ultimately addiction and ruin. Based on verses like this many churches (especially in the past) have taught that drinking alcohol is a sin before God, but these verses are not teaching that it is a sin to drink wine, the focus is excessive alcohol, drinking until you are drunk and even then it is a warning not a commandment. David wrote:

- You O LORD caused the grass to grow for the livestock and plants for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth¹⁵and wine to gladden the heart of man, oil to make his face shine and bread to strengthen man's heart. (Psalm 104:14-15).

Here David clearly shows that drinking alcohol is not forbidden, in fact according to David God made it for man to enjoy.

The apostle Paul wrote:

- Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit¹⁹ addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart. (Ephes. 5:18-19).

Debauchery carries the idea of self-indulgence, immorality and shamelessness. Paul is not saying, "Do not drink at all, but do not drink to excess to be merry, but rather be merry in the Lord." The Bible does not teach total abstinence, nor does it teach that drinking alcohol is a sin, but it does warn against drinking an excess of alcohol many times for the following reasons:

- It weakens the will and can lead to a lack of moral fortitude.
- It can be dangerous since it often leads to violence and drunken driving.
- It has the potential to lead to alcoholic addiction and destroy marriages and lives.
- It results in behavior that is often regretted when the drunken state of the mind sobers up and returns to normality.

Clearly excessive amounts of alcohol can lead to many sins, even the secular world understands this truth and that drunkenness can result in behavior that is often regretted the next day. For this reason, it is obviously better to abstain altogether, nevertheless those who do drink in moderation cannot be accused of committing any sin.

WISDOM EMBRACES THE FOLLOWING NINE ASPECTS

1. Having a clear thoughtful, rational, discerning, discriminating, sharp, and discreet mind.
2. Being cautious in character as opposed to being impulsive.
3. Being sensible and practical with the skills and talents that a person has.
4. Making choices that considers others and that will be fair and just.
5. Studying, reading and learning to acquire mental knowledge that helps in making right decisions for the present moment and for the future.
6. Being able to see the future danger of a decision, choice or action.
7. Having the ability to make good choices and decisions in the present moment that will end in the best result and a good outcome in the future.
8. Being able to perceive the end result or ramifications (good or bad) of the underlying message a speaker is teaching.
9. Wisdom will protect a person from making decisions and choices in the present moment that will lead to hurt or calamity in the future for themselves and for others.

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.
