

Proverbs 23-25 • Growing in wisdom and discernment

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As we get into chapter 23, and once again, we're not going to be dealing with every single verse here because many of the verses that we encounter along the way in Proverbs are repetitious. But, as we hit the highlights here, if you look with me in the 23rd chapter and verse 1, Solomon writes this.

He says, *“When you sit down to eat with a ruler, observe carefully what is before you,² and put a knife to your throat if you are given to appetite.³ Do not desire his delicacies, for they are deceptive food.” (ESV)*

Now you and I might read a couple of verses like this or actually 3 verses and wonder, man, what is this all about? Because we don't really know what it's like to live under a king, under a monarch, under an absolute ruler, who could very well be a tyrant. But for those people who did understand and people who were reading this in Solomon's time certainly did understand what that was like.

He basically writes and he warns about getting too close to leaders. This is really interesting, and he's one of them. He's a king and the very kind of a person that he's saying, don't get too close to necessarily. Because he talks about his delicacies.

Notice that in the text there, Solomon writes, and he says, his delicacies are deceptive food. And what he means by that is, he's speaking of the fact that the atmosphere of a ruler, and the power that goes along with it, and the luxury that you're going to see when you're in his presence can be a very intoxicating thing. And what Solomon is saying here is, don't get intoxicated by power, and wealth, and all the incredible things that show up.

If the king invites you in, he's going to parade his wealth in front of you and he's going to put all kinds of incredible delicacies in front of you as it relates to the banquet or the feast that's laid before you. But he says, don't be intoxicated by that stuff and what he's basically doing is he's giving a warning. And this is where the wisdom of God comes into play. But he's giving a warning for you and I to understand what's often below the surface with people.

And God's Word is not encouraging you and I to be skeptical or to be constantly negative about people. But what he is simply doing is trying to help you and I to understand that the human heart is deceitfully wicked. (Jeremiah 17:9) That's what the Bible tells us. We forget that or we believe it about other people, but not about ourselves.

But it's the same truth for all people, for all situations. And Solomon wants you to understand that when you're around someone who seems to have it all together in the sense of having worldly goods and the power that perhaps even goes along with that, to be very, very careful and to walk with understanding. And to be very circumspect about the way you give yourself to that sort of a person.

And he uses this reference to, put a knife to your throat if you're given to gluttony or appetite or something like that. In other words, and that's kind of a gross, I don't know, a crude euphemism to speak of. You and I would say bite your tongue to describe not speaking.

This is a term that means be careful how you act if you're going to lay hold of these things that he lays before you, because essentially there's always ulterior motives. Especially with people of power and wisdom would tell you to be careful. And that's what Solomon is doing here is he's passing along wisdom. Be careful, that's simply what he's saying.

And then when it comes to all of that incredible wealth, look what he goes on to say in verse 4. He says, "*Do not toil to acquire wealth; ...*" I love how the NIV actually puts this. It says, "*don't wear yourself out to get rich.*" I've always liked it because that seems like it's a little more street level sort of language. But he says, "*...be discerning enough to desist.*"

Because "*5 When your eyes light on it, (or when you look at it) it is gone, for suddenly it sprouts wings, flying like an eagle toward heaven.*" And that idea, that symbolism of a bird flying off was used in ancient language to describe how fleeting wealth can be.

And so he says, "*don't toil to acquire wealth.*" And here in America, we'd say, well, why else would I toil? I mean, we're so conditioned to toil to make money just so we can have things, that when we read a verse like this, we're not really sure what to do with it. It's like, how do I plug this into my life? "*Don't toil to acquire wealth.*" Essentially, what God's Word lays out for us through the picture of it, a picture of wealth through the scripture, is that God gives you and I the ability to earn wealth. He gives us the ability to make money so that we

can take care of our needs, but we're never to live for it. And it's never to be the goal of our lives because once we make it the goal of our lives, it becomes an all-consuming goal.

And as we're told elsewhere in the scripture, you can't love both God and money. (Matthew 6:24) We're told also that the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. (1 Timothy 6:10) We're told that many people with a love for money have shipwrecked their faith and pierced themselves with many griefs, to use poetic language. In other words, they've brought a lot of trouble into their lives because of their seeking after wealth.

Let me show you another passage that Jesus gave us in Matthew chapter 6. I'll put this on the screen. Matthew 6, Jesus said,

Matthew 6:19-21 (ESV)

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, (He says, instead) but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. (and then this incredible and very convicting statement) For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Now keep in mind that treasure could be something other than money. It could be anything, other than the Lord. But it doesn't really matter because whatever that treasure is, that's where your heart is going to be. Jesus is simply giving an important statement here that goes in line with what Solomon is telling us about the wisdom of God in Proverbs. Don't lay up treasures for yourselves here on earth.

If you have a job and you're making money, wonderful. But don't make that the reason that you get up in the morning. Don't make that the reason for living. How many Christians are wasting their lives, getting up, going to work, working hard, just to have money, go home exhausted, don't have time to do a thing. Day after day after day, and what do they live for? Well, hopefully I got some vacation time coming up and we're going to go to the coast, spend a little time on play on the beach, hang out. Then we're going to come back and then we're going to start this whole process all over again. And the question is, what are you living for? Are you living just to make money and go on vacation?

As Christians, our lives belong to the Lord, our resources belong to the Lord, our very bodies belong to the Lord, and our purpose should be to serve the Lord. That's why we make money because God's giving us an opportunity to use Him with it, to serve the Lord with it, just like He gives us everything. Everything God gives us.

And here's the point. There's coming a day of reckoning for all of us from the standpoint of what we did with what the Lord gave us. What'd you do with it? Hey, I gave you all kinds of money in your life, what'd you do with it? Well, we went on vacation, bought some beach balls, rented a cabin on the beach. That was fun.

I'm not saying those things are wrong, please hear me. I'm not saying going to the coast is wrong, going on vacation is wrong, not at all, but what are we living for, right?

All right, skip all the way down to verse 29. We talked a little bit about this last week, but it's worth repeating. *“Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? (in other words) Who has (all kinds of problems including) complaining? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes?”*

No, not just those with allergies. Goes on to say in verse 30, *“Those who tarry long over wine; those who go to try mixed wine. ³¹ Do not look at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup and goes down smoothly. ³² In the end it bites like a serpent and stings like an adder.*

³³ *Your eyes will see strange things, and your heart utter perverse things.*

³⁴ *You will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, like one who lies on the top of a mast. ³⁵ “They 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.”*”

It's an interesting and at the same time, sad kind of a commentary that Solomon is giving here. He's obviously seen a lot of people who've been inebriated and he's talking about it here. And what we see from these verses is that alcohol robs a man of wisdom. It robs a man of wisdom, or a woman.

When we've, in the times, in the years, opportunities that we've had to minister to people who have given into alcohol and frankly, other chemicals, we find that even after they stop drinking or stop partaking in whatever it is that's messing them up, even after they stop, it can be a month or two or more before they start thinking straight. Before their thought processes even straighten around to the point where they can make valid reasonable choices. It robs you of wisdom.

Remember, Proverbs is all about wisdom. It's not wise to do things that are going to rob you of wisdom. In fact, it's really dumb. Solomon is basically painting this rather sorry picture of the individual who, as he says, carries long over wine. It seems really fun at the beginning, but in the end he says, it bites like a snake.

Chapter 24, look at verses 3 and 4. *“By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; ⁴by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches.”*

This is the outgrowth of wisdom and Solomon is talking about building things. And I don't think he's talking here about constructing a house made of wood and sheetrock or as they were making them of rocks and mortar or whatever they were made of back then.

The imagery here is building anything, it's building your life. It's about building relationships. It's about building a business. It's about building a home and a family. How good are we at building homes and families these days? We stink flat out. We stink, and why? Because we've gotten away from the wisdom of God's Word. Simple as that. Simple as that.

We've kicked His wisdom to the curb, and yet this proverb says that, *“By wisdom, a house is built.”* And again, that refers to anything that we may be building. And through knowledge of God's Word, we then go through and fill those various rooms of our house with lasting and meaningful treasures.

There's so much wisdom within the pages of scripture for us to apply to our home, our family, our relationships. When people come to me and they say, pastor Paul, I think we need marriage counseling. One of my very first things, if I do decide to do marriage counseling with a couple, it is required that they come to church regularly on Sunday and Wednesday.

And the reason is, because there's so much wisdom just in God's Word. If we would just apply what we're hearing about... We think that, well, if I'm having marriage issues, I need to talk specifically about, I need to go talk to somebody about marriage issues. Not necessarily. I've told you guys before that marriage issues are usually obedience issues. Usually when people say they have marriage problems, they're having obedience problems personally, in their own lives. They may not see it that way, they just see that we're fighting and we want to stop fighting. Well, if you were obeying God, you wouldn't be fighting. Simple as that. Just really, truly as simple as that. Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church. (Ephesians 5:25) Be willing to lay down your life for

her. Wives, show respect for your husbands and the position that God has given him in the home. If those things were happening perfectly, and they don't, I get it. I've been married 41 years myself, believe me, I know.

But if we were doing those things, listen, I can tell you when Sue and I are tangling, it's because I'm being an idiot. It's as simple as that. It's because I am not being obedient to the command, husbands love your wives. It's not brain surgery, it's really pretty simple.

There's so much wisdom though, from God's Word, you might be hearing a passage on a Sunday morning or here on a Wednesday night that has nothing whatsoever to do with marriage or whatever issue you're going through, but the Holy Spirit can still speak to you powerfully through His Word or even when you're just reading your Bible in the morning, having your own quiet time. You don't have to be, you don't have to check out a book, 25 things to do to improve your marriage. Not that those are necessarily bad, but the point is, God's Word is for all things, all areas of life.

And sometimes the Holy Spirit will just speak to you about something personal in your own devotional life that has an incredible chain reaction in your marriage, that affects your marriage greatly. If we would, but apply that wisdom.

Solomon depicts this building of our house, our lives, the things that are meaningful to us, if we would but apply God's wisdom to those things he says. And then through the knowledge of His Word, fill them with things that are lasting and eternal and meaningful, how much better our lives would be.

Verse 5. *"A wise man is full of strength, and a man of knowledge enhances his might, ⁶for by wise guidance you can wage your war, and in abundance of counselors there is victory."* Now we've read before a variation on this thing about abundance of counselors.

And I told you the first time that it assumes that you've got good counselors. Okay. But there's safety when we listen to advice here, that's what this is saying. But I want you to notice the reference here to waging war, it's very important because he says in verse 6, *"for by wise guidance you can wage your war, and in abundance of counselors* (in other words, guys, individuals who are speaking into your life from a standpoint of wisdom and experience) *there* (can be great) ... *victory.*" Right?

God knows that we're in a battle for our lives. I mean, we've said many, many times that this life that we live is a battlefield. It's almost like a constant battle all the time and some people feel it more acutely than others. And some people even struggle more than others. But the point is we're all in a battle. And when we are in a battle, it's very, very common for our emotions to be involved, and God knows that. And when our emotions become involved, I don't know about you, but I make bad decisions when my emotions are involved. I do.

I can have great insight into your life and absolutely just mess up my own because I'm involved. I'm emotionally involved and so that is the time that we need to seek out guidance and godly counsel because we don't think straight many times about what the battles that we're in.

Often we're scared or we're exhausted and again, we're just not thinking like we should. And that's when this statement about wise guidance comes in so much to play in our lives. And I think it begins with the Word of God.

Obviously, we need to seek out God's Word, and I mean, really seek it out. Have you ever struggled with finding an answer and you just made a determination you were going to read your Bible until God gave you an answer. It's like, I'm going to sit here and I'm going to read and I'm going to keep turning pages until finally, I get hit in the head with an answer for this thing.

God will meet you. God will meet you in His Word when we make a determination to seek like we've never sought before. But, there's also nothing wrong as Solomon says here with an abundance of counselors assuming that they're godly people.

But you know what? And there's nothing wrong with asking somebody when you're in a time of spiritual warfare and you're under it and you're not sure you're really making the right decisions. There's nothing wrong with going up to somebody and saying, okay, help me out here. What does the Bible say about, and then lay out your situation because you want the counsel ultimately of God's Word. And then you want to hear from these individuals how the Lord has even worked in their lives related to that sort of a thing, and then you go from there. But, I can't speak enough about seeking wise guidance, seeking good, godly, biblical counsel. It's a very important thing that we do in our lives. One of the dumbest things that we do when we're going through hard times is isolate ourselves. But it has there are certain personalities that just, they do.

And I've talked to many Christians who've told me how they went through a time. In fact, I got a note from a gal just today. It was a very troubling note, but

she wrote me today and she talked about how she went through a very troubling time in her life related to church. And she was walking with the Lord, serving in a local church. And there was some kind of an issue, she didn't go into detail about that particular thing, but she said that as a result of that, she walked away from the Lord for years. Just fell out of fellowship, started living a completely worldly and immoral lifestyle.

And we do that, don't we? We isolate ourselves many times when we're hurt or confused. And we probably do it for different reasons. In some cases we're ashamed. We think everybody knows what's going on in our lives and they don't. People have said to me before, well, I'd come back to church, but what would people think? And I said, I'll tell you what they think. They're thinking about their own lives, you're not even on their radar, sorry. But they're not thinking about you, most of them. And the ones that are mature enough to think properly, and they know that they're no different than you are. The other ones who aren't mature enough aren't thinking about you at all.

Just come back, you know what I mean? What does the Bible say about? That's a great way to start a conversation with somebody when you need that kind of wisdom.

Skip down to verse 10. Talking more about difficulty. It says here, *"If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small."* Now, what is that, what do you think of when you read this proverb? Do you think, well, wow, that's a smack in the head.

Have you ever fainted in the day of adversity? Because I have. Seriously, I've done it a number of times. This verse isn't necessarily suggesting that you have to be strong in and of yourself because the days of adversity come to all of us, every single one of us.

And when they do, and when we faint, or I think some of your Bibles may say falter, when that happens, God is giving us an opportunity to understand just how weak we are. You get it? Why did the Lord allow this to happen? Cause He wanted you to see how weak you are. I've said that to people many times. Why did he want to do that? So you'd come to Him to find strength because you're not strong enough. But you thought you were, and you had to find out the hard way that you're really a weenie.

See, that's what happened with Peter. Peter's like, I'll never deny you, Lord and the Lord had to let him see just how weak of a man he really was. Had to put him in a situation where people are looking at him going, weren't you with that

Nazarene? Didn't you cut off one of my relatives ears out there when they were arresting Him and all this other stuff? I don't know who you're talking about. 3 times he denies Him. Here's the rooster crow, sees Jesus look at Him and suddenly Peter realizes, I am nothing. And that was the reality of what Peter came to. That was the realization that he came to, I am nothing. Why do you think he went off and wept bitterly?

It's because every imaginary idea of the kind of a man he was absolutely stripped away at that moment. And Peter saw who he really was. He was a weak man, he was a very weak man.

Now, you might say, well, gee, that's kind of cruel for God to have to do that to a guy. Oh, well, let me tell you, it's got to be done. It's got to be done. Otherwise, Peter's going to keep walking down the road of life thinking he's something when he's not. And he's going to get pummeled over and over and over again until he finally learns the most important lesson of his life. I am a weak man and I'm only strong when I am strong in Him. And that's the point of all of this.

Our strength needs to be in the Lord where we lean fully on Him. Let me show you a passage from Ephesians chapter 6. This is a very important verse or a couple of verses. Paul writes and says,

Ephesians 6:10-11 &13 (ESV)

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.

Finally, be strong in the Lord (right?, not in yourself but in the Lord) and in the strength of his might. (not in yours, you're not strong, he says) Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.

To keep standing, right? This is not one of those pep talks that you get from people when they tell you to buck up. Hey partner, buck up. That's not what's going on here.

God's not telling you to buck up. He's telling you to literally lay yourself before the Savior and let Him be your strength. You're not strong enough. You're not strong enough to overcome sin. You're not strong enough to overcome the

issues and diversities of life. You're not strong enough to deal with the enemy by any stretch of the imagination.

I keep telling people, the enemy's been at this a lot longer than you have and he's got his adversarial role down to a T. And he probably knows you better than you know yourself, at least in terms of your human nature. And if you're going to engage him on some kind of a fleshly level, yeah. It's very, very important that we find our strength in the Lord.

If you find yourself fainting in the day of adversity, well, the Lord just did you a favor. He showed you how weak you are so that you can come to Him and find your strength in Him.

Verse 11, *“Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter. ¹² If you say, “Behold, we did not know this,” does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it, and will he not repay man according to his work?”*

You've probably heard the term, sin of omission, I would imagine. Well, of course, that refers to things that we don't do, that we know that we should do. And this proverb speaks of sins of omission, where he says you, recognize, or you know that there are people who are helpless against whatever corruption and justice and they're literally being brought to the slaughter. And you know that you should do something about it so do something about it. And don't pretend like you don't know what's going on.

And frankly I know that there are many Christians who use these couple of verses to speak of their motivation to work with women in an unplanned pregnancy to save the life of that unborn child. I know that others use these passages to speak of their motivation to work and helping to stop human trafficking and all sorts of other things.

But whatever the specific application that the Lord lays upon your heart. It is our responsibility to just hear from the Lord and to respond according to what He is giving to you and I. And don't expect everybody to have the same bent that you do. If the Lord laid something on your heart related to these verses, then do it with all your heart. And if you can get other people involved, great. But if somebody's got another area that they, where they feel led or called to minister, then let them go do that.

Verse 13. *“My son, eat honey, for it is good, and the drippings of the honeycomb are sweet to your taste.”* You think, wow, that's an interesting thing to put in the Proverbs. Now, here's the connection he's making in the next verse.

“¹⁴ Know that wisdom is such (or if you will, the same) to your soul; if you find it, there will be a future, and your hope will not be cut off.” Pretty interesting here, isn't it, that the wisdom of God is likened to the sweetness of honey. Because we have these biblical references of people eating honey in the Old Testament and having it brighten their eyes.

Because obviously brings up your blood sugar and it can give you energy and so forth. But when you think of that term, that figurative term, the sweetness of life. Honey is the representative figure for that because it's completely natural and so forth and so on. But it's really interesting to me that wisdom is likened to honey because there are places in the Bible where prophets in a vision are told to eat the Word of God. In other words, to consume a scroll.

John, it happens to John in the Book of Revelation. Let me show you this one on the screen from Revelation chapter 10. It says,

Revelation 10:9-10 (ESV)

So I went to the angel and told him to give me the little scroll. And he said to me, “Take and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey.” And I took the little scroll from the hand of the angel and ate it. It was sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it my stomach was made bitter.

So I went to the angel and told him to give me the little scroll. And he said to me, “Take and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey.” (and of course the sweetness of it in his mouth is a reference to the sweetness of the Word of God. The bitterness in his stomach is because it was a very negative prophecy that was going to be given to the people of the earth. But he says,) *And I took the little scroll from the hand of the angel and ate it. It was sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it my stomach was made bitter.*

So really, a fascinating picture. But don't you agree that the Word of God is like that? When you hear the Word of God and you feel nourished just hearing the scriptures, just hearing somebody even talk about the Word of God, reading a verse in the morning or two, or a chapter or whatever, and just it's like, wow, just the sweetness of God's Word.

Skip down to verse 17. Wisdom of God. *“Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and let not your heart be glad when he stumbles, ¹⁸ lest the Lord see it and be displeased, and turn away his anger from him.”* The inference there, meaning, and then turn it onto you.

This is a tough one, but as believers, we've got to be very careful never to catch ourselves rejoicing when trouble finally catches up to those who have been troubling us. It's just too easy, isn't it? Just to say, yeah, well, how's that feel? Getting what you deserve finally. Yeah. Isn't that nice?

You know what's so wrong about that? It's because that attitude presumes that God gives everybody what they deserve. And the fact of the matter is you're not getting what you deserve. And frankly, neither is that person necessarily because the fact of the matter is none of us deserves God's love.

None of us deserves His forgiveness. None of us deserves eternal life. None of us deserves sonship and inheritance alongside Jesus. Are you kidding me? Did we actually believe that we, did we dilute ourselves into thinking we deserved it? None of us, and we don't get what we do deserve, which is judgment.

So, the Lord says, don't take on that attitude toward your enemy, because the Lord will be displeased, because that means you've begun to separate yourself and your understanding from your enemy. You think you're better than him. You're not better than him, or her. So be careful about those attitudes. All right.

Now we skip down, as we get to verse 23, it appears here that we've completed the sayings of Solomon, although in the next chapter we're going to see some others, but it says here in verse 23, *“These also are sayings of the wise.”* And many of them are very similar to the ones we've already looked at.

Skipped down to verse 27. This is an interesting verse on an agricultural figure or illustration. It says, *“Prepare your work outside; get everything ready for yourself in the field, and after that build your house.”*

Now, this is wisdom. This is wisdom. I don't care if you're not a farmer, it doesn't matter. There's a principle of wisdom that is found in this verse that is really good because it's speaking of the order of things. And what it's saying here is, okay under an agricultural idea, to get your field ready means, to prepare your means of income. In other words, get your financial situation in order so that you have an income coming in. You're able to feed your family and that sort of thing. And then begin to..., whatever you're doing.

Build your house, build your business or whatever. Get that income coming in, get it moving along so there's great wisdom that's put in here. Don't get these things out of order. Because if you start spending money and spending money, you don't have any income, obviously, you're going to run up against a brick wall and not be able to continue. Simple wisdom, but you'd be shocked how many people try to get around it.

Verse 30. This chapter ends with an observation. It says, *“I passed by the field of a sluggard, (that means a lazy person) by the vineyard of a man lacking sense,³¹ and behold, it was all overgrown with thorns; the ground was covered with nettles, and its stone wall was broken down.*

³² Then I saw and considered it; I looked and received instruction. ³³ A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, ³⁴ and poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want (or as the NIV says, scarcity) like an armed man.” Or somebody breaking into your home to steal.

It looks like Solomon isn't writing this particular one, but whoever is speaks of just passing by this field, this vineyard of this individual who likes to rest more than they like to work. And it's hard today, isn't it? To drive by people's properties and see them completely broken down and overgrown. It's hard, isn't it? Because there's a lot of them.

Frankly, around here even, just between here where I live and the church I drive by properties every single day that have just been left to let the weeds grow, garbage gather, and it really is a common problem. But in many cases, not every single one, but in many cases, as this proverb says, poverty is avoidable and especially in our country.

The ability that we have in the United States of America to earn wealth is unprecedented in this country. That's why people are streaming here from other countries, by the way, because they know it's unprecedented. They know they can earn more money than they can in their home country. And what this proverb is saying is that it can be avoided.

Proverbs 25, let's go to the 25th chapter. Just do a couple of these. We're told here in verse 1, that *“These also are proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied.”* This is about a century after the time of Solomon. And we're told here that Hezekiah, king of Judah had some of his men write down some of these proverbs that had been passed along by Solomon. Many of them are repeats of what we've seen in previous chapters.

We're going to skip all the way down to verse 17 and here's some wisdom for you. *“Let your foot be seldom in your neighbor's house, lest he have his fill of you and hate you.”* There you go. In other words, don't wear out your welcome with your neighbor. Know when to go home, leave your neighbor to have some privacy.

Verse 20. This is interesting. *“Whoever sings songs to a heavy heart is like one who takes off a garment on a cold day, (in other words, somebody who rips off somebody's coat on a cold day) and like vinegar on soda.”* If you've ever tried that.

He's saying basically trying to cheer someone up who's got a heavy heart is one thing, but to be insensitive to that person's receptivity to what you're trying to accomplish can actually just make matters worse.

Verse 21, *“If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat, and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink, ²² for you will heap burning coals on his head, and the Lord will reward you.”* Do you know this is one of those proverbs that the Apostle Paul quotes in the Book of Romans. It's in the 12th chapter. And the idea here is to be kind, even to an enemy.

So think about somebody who you know dislikes you greatly. And then they go through a challenging time or a difficult something or other period and you reach out to do something kind for them. And what the proverb says here is that there will be two consequences from your actions.

The first is that he says, you will heat burning coals on his head. Which is a figurative statement meant to describe causing your enemy great regret for his previous actions and attitudes toward you.

Second consequence that is given in verse 22 is that the Lord will reward you. He will reward you for doing good to the one who dislikes you. Why? Because that's what He does. The Bible says that God sends rain on the just and the unjust. (Matthew 5:45) He is no respecter of persons in that sense. He gives the blessing of sunshine and rain and so forth to all people and he is pleased when we do the same.

And finally, verse 28, it says, *“A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls.”* You have to picture this in your mind and we don't. We don't have cities with walls anymore but the way they would of course gain entrance into a city was by breaking down the wall and they would build ramps and they would have battering rams and they would... If you can break down

the walls of the city, you can gain access to the city and you can defeat your enemy so a wall was put up as a means of protection against the enemy. Any city that didn't have a wall was vulnerable to any raiders that came along at any time and wanted to just pillage because they can get in any way they want and steal in during the night and what all else.

So what this proverb is saying is a man who does not have self-control is likened to a city with no wall. In that sense, he is vulnerable to constant and consistent attacks of the enemy. Why? Because he has no means of protecting himself or saying no. There's no means of pushing back the presence of the enemy and largely this is what we do as parents.

We're obviously teaching our kids, we're trying to teach them right from wrong. We want them to know the Lord. We want them to know the scripture, but largely we're trying to teach our kids to have self-control, which is a lost art in parenting today. I'll just tell you, it's a lost art. I mean, having a parent train a child to have self-control, to sit still for example, or not to speak while the adults are talking. That takes self-control, but children don't have that naturally. They learn as they're taught to have self-control.

It's like, you can control yourself, you can control your emotions, you can control your words. You don't have to let stupid, foolish things come out of your mouth. And you don't have to be constantly going mom, mom, mom, mom, while she's talking to someone and having a conversation or on the phone or something like that. Your kids can learn to have that kind of self-control. It's important that we teach them that kind of self-control, so that when they grow up and become adults, they're not just these completely vulnerable human beings to the incredible temptations and difficulties that this world presents.

But you can see... We have, boy I could probably let people get up and give a testimony if they'd be willing to about having been raised in a situation where they were never taught self-control and then they came to Jesus and their life was for miserable for a period of time because all of these issues from the world were just seemed to just get in without any kind of resistance, and it was just horrible.

And so, what happens is they have to learn from the Holy Spirit to walk in that self-control, which by the way, is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. It's the last one mentioned, but it's no less important than any of the others. Fruit of the Holy Spirit, one of them is self-control. Well, the Holy Spirit wants to do that in your life and my life as believers.

As parents, we teach our children to walk in it to at least a modicum of self-control so that when they're older and they are walking in conjunction with the Holy Spirit, there's something to work with and they understand that concept and have a greater ability to yield that sort of an area of their life to the Lord because they've learned as children to say no.