

Proverbs

Five proverbs are difficult to translate which means there will be variations in the wording depending on which Bible you use. They are vs 3, 7, 9, 30, 33.

There are different ways of being a fool. (1) There is being gullible – taking as fact or truth what we should verify but don't. (2) There is being overconfident – thinking we can do what may be very hard to do, or what others have tried and failed to do. (3) There is taking dangerous or unnecessary risks – as if we are immune to the failure side of the risk. (4) There is following our feelings and emotions rather than common sense and sensible thinking. (5) And there is acting in haste rather than slowing down in order to assure a good outcome.

Proverbs 14

1. The wise woman builds her house, But the foolish tears it down with her own hands.
 - a. **Principle:** we not only bring troubles, suffering, and destruction into our own lives when we are foolish/sinful, we bring destructive influences and effects into the lives of those effected by our foolish/sinful choices and behavior. Therefore, the foolish parent is not just bringing needless troubles and suffering into his/her own life, but also into the life of the spouse and the children.
 - b. In traditional two-parent homes where the wife is the homemaker, or in single-mother homes, the woman has the most influence on the overall atmosphere in the home, and the emotional and social health and well-being of the children. Therefore, she either is building a good, safe, reasonably well-adjusted home and family, or an unhealthy, unsafe, maladjusted home and family.
 - c. Like men, women bring their own set of troubles, fears, false beliefs, selfish values, and self-preservation habits into marriage and family. The wise man and woman realizes this and puts forth the kind of effort necessary to grow, mature and become a wise spouse/parent. The foolish man/woman continues to live according to the issues they brought into their marriage/family, and in so doing, tears down the marriage relationship and damages the children with their own hands.
 - d. **Proverbs 24:3-4**, A house is built by wisdom, and it is established by understanding; [4] by knowledge the rooms are filled with every precious and beautiful treasure.

2. He who walks in his uprightness fears the LORD, But he who is devious in his ways despises Him.
 - a. To **fears the LORD** is to have a reverential awe toward God coupled with a strong desire to avoid displeasing God in order to remain in good standing with God.
 - b. To **despises God** is to have a low opinion of God, resulting in treating Him and His ways with disdain and as unworthy of your obedience.
 - c. **Principle:** our everyday choices and behavior reveal our view of God, feelings toward God, relationship with God, and treatment of God.
 - i. In spite of who we think we are and what we think we believe and value, it is our daily choices and behavior that reveal who we are, what we value, and what we believe. Therefore, our daily choices and behavior (*not our theology or what we claim to believe*) determines the true state of our relationship with God.
 - ii. Every departure from trusting God/living according to God's word is an example of valuing our own will/way and despising God's will/way.
 - d. **James 4:4**, You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

3. In the mouth of the foolish is a **rod** (*as a branch that feeds his pride or a rod that punishes him for his pride*) for his **back** (*Hebrew: pride*), But the lips of the wise will protect them.
 - a. **New Living Translation:** A fool's proud talk becomes a rod that beats him, but the words of the wise keep them safe.
 - b. Two accompanying Proverbs:
 - i. **Proverbs 26:3**, A whip is for the horse, a bridle for the donkey, And a rod for the back of fools.
 - ii. **Proverbs 21:23**, He who guards his mouth and his tongue, Guards his soul from troubles.
 - c. **Vs 3** follows the principle of **vs 2**, where we bring about our own harm, shame, destruction (*self-destructive*), or good, good reputation, and well-being by our words and behavior. This does not remove God's activity of blessings us for godliness or disciplining/punishing us for ungodliness. It simply affirms that we reap what we sow in both directions – good and evil. (**Galatians 6:7-8**)

4. Where no oxen are, the manger is clean, But much revenue comes by the strength of the ox.

- a. **Principle:** one natural outcome of responsible living is messes, broken things, added time and energy, yet it produces good rewards.
 - b. **Examples:**
 - i. Having children means dealing with children acting like children, having to repair or replace broken things, cleaning up messes, more laundry and dishes, more effort getting ready on time, etc., yet most children are a joy and a blessing – especially as they get older.
 - ii. Growing spiritually requires going through hard times, dealing with ungodly habits and fears, changing unhealthy ways of thinking, and dying to desires and passions that feed ungodliness. Yet spiritual growth brings unparalleled rewards.
5. A trustworthy witness will not lie, But a false witness utters lies.
- a. **Principle:** You can trust a trustworthy person, and in this case, you can trust him to tell the truth regardless of who wins/loses. You cannot trust someone who repeatedly lies for personal gain or self-protection.
 - b. **Proverbs 14:25**, A truthful witness saves lives, But he who utters lies is treacherous.
 - c. Ultimately, a false witness must answer to God: **Proverbs 19:9**, A false witness will not go unpunished, And he who tells lies will perish.
6. A scoffer seeks wisdom and finds none, But knowledge is easy to one who has understanding.
- a. Scoffing is driven by conceit (*an inflated view of self*) and arrogance (*looking down on others*). **Proverbs 21:24**, “Proud,” “Haughty,” “Scoffer,” are his names, who acts with insolent pride (*being rude, domineering, without regard for the feelings of others*).
 - b. Though the scoffer wants to know things and be esteemed as knowledgeable and wise, he does not seek wisdom to become a good or godly person, he seeks it to feed his self-made sense of superiority and enable him to domineer in conversations and to show others how little they know compared to him.
 - c. Therefore, whatever wisdom he gains has no good, life-improving effect on him or on those he deals with so that it is as if he had not gained any wisdom.
 - d. However, knowledge and wisdom are found easily by those who seek them in order to grow in knowledge and wisdom for the sake of growing in godliness and in loving and caring for others.

7. Leave the presence of a fool, Or you will not discern words of knowledge.
 - a. **New Living Translation: Proverbs 14:7**, Stay away from fools, for you won't find knowledge on their lips.
 - b. Avoid spending time with a fool lest his foolish thinking, speaking, and behavior rubs off on you and you progressively become like him and therefore lose the ability to be discerning and sensible.

8. The wisdom of the sensible is to understand his way, But the foolishness of fools is deceit.
 - a. The sensible person observes, examines, and judges his behavior against the Word of God. In other words, the sensible person shows his wisdom through honest self-examination with the goal of growing in godliness and love for those around him – in accord with God and His word.
 - b. If the foolish person observes, examines, and judges his behavior, he does so against the behavior of those worse than himself, or he lives in a state of denial as to the true nature and effect on others of his behavior. Thus he is able to think of himself as being good/godly when he isn't.

9. Fools mock at sin, But among the upright there is good will.
 - a. **Alternate reading:** Fools mock (*treat with scorn or contempt as if it is an unnecessary requirement or antiquated religious burden*) guilt (*which is intended to drive us to confess our sin, and make things right with God and those we have sinned against*), **or**, Fools mock the guilt-offering (*which is intended to make things right between the sinner and God*), But among the upright there is favor with God (*because they do not sin against God and man, or because after sinning, they make things right with God and man*).
 - i. **Proverbs 11:20**, The perverse in heart are an abomination to the LORD, But the blameless in their walk are His delight.
 - ii. **Proverbs 15:8**, The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, But the prayer of the upright is His delight.
 - b. For those who sin, good will/standing with God is rebuilt by confessing sin, making right the wrong done, and returning to intentionally and seriously living godly.

10. The heart knows its own bitterness, And a stranger does not share its joy.
 - a. Only the person experiencing loss, rejection, disappointment, shame, etc., knows the extent of the pain he or she feels.
 - b. In the same way, we can describe the joy we feel, but we cannot pass the extent of our feelings to anyone else.

- c. In those times when trying to comfort someone who is hurting or rejoicing with someone who is rejoicing, we can apply this truth by not assuming or acting as if we know how they feel. The best we can do is have some sense or approximation of how they feel.
11. The house of the wicked will be destroyed, But the tent of the upright will flourish.
- a. Sin brings trouble into our lives, and it ultimately leads to eternal death. Righteousness brings God's blessings into our lives, and ultimately leads to eternal life.
12. There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.
- a. This is repeated in **Proverbs 16:25**
 - b. Human-based thinking and reasoning can seem exceedingly wise, but it is built on self-interest, and the good of self over the good of others – which is the opposite of godliness and love, and therefore can only lead to more trouble in this life and eternal death in the next.
13. Even in laughter the heart may be in pain, And the end of joy may be grief.
- a. Many live with disappointment and pain of some kind, and though it may be hidden on the inside, it is still there even in moments of laughter. Moments of laughter may help us forget our inward pain for a time, but it does not remove it.
 - b. In a similar way, moments of joy, even great joy, pass, and what is left is the realities of everyday life – which may include ongoing grief.
 - i. Think of the man who has lost his wife, or the mother who has lost her child. Neither laughter nor joy remove the pain of loss.
14. The backslider in heart will have his fill of his own ways, But a good man will be satisfied with his.
- a. To **backslide** is to slide backward from progress once made; to fall away or to gradually abandon faith in God and godliness.
 - b. The **backslider in heart** is someone who continues an outward show of godliness while inwardly growing in distrust of God and the desire for worldly things and ungodly ways.
 - c. Since out of our heart comes good or evil, the backslider in heart will make choices and behave in ways that will eventually become his normal way of living – thus having his fill of his own ways as opposed to God's ways.

- d. For example: **Numbers 11:19–20**, You shall eat, not one day, nor two days, nor five days, nor ten days, nor twenty days, [20] but a whole month, until it comes out of your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you; because you have rejected the LORD who is among you and have wept before Him, saying, “Why did we ever leave Egypt?”
 - e. Living godly brings the kind of rewards that satisfy – not just in the moment, but for eternity. Thus righteous behavior satisfies the one who behaves accordingly.
15. The naive believes everything, But the sensible man considers his steps.
- a. To be **naive** is to show a lack of critical, analytically careful thinking, to be gullible, and to willingly believe something on little or no evidence – which allows the naive to be easily duped.
 - b. To **consider** our steps is to carefully examine the situation, thoughtfully and carefully ponder a solution or way forward, and then examine the outcome in order to learn from what worked, or what was wise and what wasn't.
16. A wise man is cautious and turns away from evil, But a fool is arrogant and careless.
- a. To be **arrogant** in this case is to think you are better, wiser, more capable than you are, and act accordingly – even though you lack the ability and skills to accomplish what you claim you can. In this sense, arrogance and carelessness go hand-in-hand.
17. A quick-tempered man acts foolishly, And a man of evil devices is hated.
- a. **Anger** is a powerful motivator, but it most often results in action that is impulsive rather than the result of careful thought and planning.
 - b. **Evil schemes** may get you what you want in the moment, but they give you a bad reputation that leads to being despised by those taken advantage of or who need to trust you but can't.
18. The naive inherit foolishness, But the sensible are crowned with knowledge.
- a. The outcome or future results of naivety is a foolish life.
 - b. The outcome or future results of sensibleness is increased knowledge that continues to improve your ability to live sensibly.
 - c. See **vs 24**.

19. The evil will bow down before the good, And the wicked at the gates of the righteous.
- Sin may bring immediate rewards/benefits, but it always ends in the loss of whatever was gained so that in the end the evil person has nothing.
 - Righteousness may bring immediate loss (*being taken advantage of or giving to the needy*), but in the end the righteous get everything.
 - Matthew 5:5**, Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.
20. The poor is hated even by his neighbor, But those who love the rich are many.
- This proverb brings to light the ungodly, typically worldly attitudes and actions which ought not exist among God's people. See **vs 21**.
21. He who despises his neighbor sins, But happy (*blessed*) is he who is gracious to the poor.
- To **despises your neighbor** is to have a low opinion of him/her based on some form of prejudice or conceit or arrogance or lack of compassion – which results in treating him with disdain and as unworthy of your love, care, compassion, or charitable help. This is sin.
 - Psalms 41:1**, How blessed is he who considers the helpless; the LORD will deliver him in a day of trouble.
 - Proverbs 19:17**, One who is gracious to a poor man lends to the LORD, and He will repay him for his good deed.
22. Will they not go astray (*from the path of godly, sensible living*) who devise evil? But kindness and truth will be to those who devise good (*first of all, from God, but also from those blessed by the good*).
- Jesus affirms this truth/principle in **Luke 16:1-9**.
23. In all labor there is profit, But mere talk leads only to poverty.
24. The crown of the wise is their riches, But the folly of fools is foolishness.
- The proof of wisdom is the good it brings to the one who acts wisely.
 - The proof of folly is the troubles, loss, and suffering it brings to the one who acts foolishly.
25. A truthful witness saves lives, But he who utters lies is treacherous.
- Principle**: When seeking justice, you can trust a truthful person to speak the truth regardless of who it helps or hurts. But a dishonest person will lie for personal gain without concern for who it hurts.

26. In the fear of the LORD there is strong confidence, And his children will have refuge.
- Those who fear God and live accordingly are (*have the right to be*) confident God will take care of them (*provide/protect*).
 - However, God's care does not end with the righteous, it extends to their children and their children's children. (**Note: Deuteronomy 7:9**)
27. The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, That one may (*or enables one to*) avoid the snares of death.
28. In a multitude of people is a king's glory, But in the dearth (*scarcity*) of people is a prince's ruin.
- The bigger the kingdom, the more glory the king has, and if he is a good, benevolent king, the more likely his kingdom, and hence his glory, will continue on after his death under his family's rule.
 - To rule over a small group of people is to lack the means to defend the kingdom, financially support the kingdom, and to assure the future of the kingdom. Thus the kingdom will likely end in an inglorious way.
29. He who is slow to anger has great understanding (*he understands the foolishness of acting out of anger*), But he who is quick-tempered exalts folly (*exalts acting rashly/foolishly*).
30. A tranquil heart (*contented, peaceful due to trusting God*) is life to the body, But passion (*envy or jealousy leading to discontent and distrust of God*) is rottenness to the bones.
- Amplified Bible:** A calm and undisturbed mind and heart are the life and health of the body, but envy, jealousy, and wrath are like rottenness of the bones.
31. He who oppresses the poor taunts his Maker (*defies, mocks, and dares God to judge and punish him*), But he who is gracious to the needy honors Him.
32. The wicked is thrust down by his wrongdoing, But the righteous has a refuge when he dies.
- Romans 6:23**, For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
 - Ezekiel 18:5&9**, "But if a man is righteous and practices justice and righteousness . . . [9] if he walks in My statutes and My ordinances so as

to deal faithfully—he is righteous and will surely live,” declares the Lord GOD.

33. Wisdom rests (*feels at home*) in the heart of one who has understanding, But in (*what is in, **OR**, even in*) the hearts of fools it is made known.
- a. Wisdom finds a good home and therefore resides in the heart of those who have understanding.
 - b. But what is in the heart of a fool comes out, **OR**, wisdom is made known even to fools, but they ignore it or reject it and go their own foolish way.
34. Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a disgrace to any people.
- a. To **exalt** a nation is to elevate it in rank and dignity among the nations.
 - b. Righteousness not only exalts a nation in the sight of other nations, but in God’s sight also, Who then blesses that nation, thus exalting it much more.
 - c. To bring **disgrace** on a people is to bring dishonor and shame so as to discredit them.
 - i. The more a nation gives way to sin and its evil ways, the more it brings dishonor and shame upon itself – by bringing the troubles caused by sin into its own land, thus making it look foolish to other nations and turning God against it so that He brings discipline and punishment upon it.
 - ii. **Proverbs 16:12**, It is an abomination for kings to commit wicked acts, For a throne is established on righteousness (*and destroyed by unrighteousness*).
35. The king's favor is toward a servant who acts wisely, But his anger is toward him who acts shamefully.
- a. The wise are praised and blessed by those in authority who recognize the worth of wisdom and the good it brings to the whole group.
 - b. The evil ones and the fools are condemned and punished by those in authority who see the foolishness of sin because of the harm it brings to the whole group.