

Proverbs

Proverbs 18

1. He who separates himself seeks **his own** desire, He quarrels against all sound wisdom.
 - a. The words “**his own**” are not in the Hebrew, they are supplied by the translators. Without them the proverb would read: “He who separates himself seeks desire, he quarrels against all wisdom.”
 - b. A possible paraphrase of **vs 1** with the words “**his own**” included:
 - i. The one who chooses to live alone does so in order to do as he pleases without being constrained by anyone else’s needs, wants, or wishes. To justify his choice, he argues against all sound wisdom including God’s word regarding the value of relationships and the ability of trials, difficulties, and challenges (*as found in marriage, family, and community*) to make us more godly.
2. A fool does not delight in understanding, But only in revealing his own mind.
 - a. The thing that brings the fool delight is not that of becoming a more mature, better educated, more understanding, wiser person (*for the good of all*), but to be the center of attention – which is why he dominates conversations and acts as if he knows it all.
 - b. The fool’s primary focus is himself – which is why he delights in talking about himself, his opinions, and his knowledge. The wise person’s primary focus is the good of all – which is why he delights in understanding and wisdom.
3. When a wicked man comes, contempt (*the feelings those harmed by the wicked have for the wicked*) also comes, And with dishonor comes scorn (*public disgrace/shame*).
 - a. The difficulty with this proverb is discerning the source of the contempt and scorn. Is it the wicked man, or those observing and/or experiencing his wickedness?
 - b. **Possible paraphrase:** When a wicked man comes, he brings contempt for all that is right and good with him, And his dishonorable ways make it clear he scorns what is right and good.

- c. **Probable paraphrase:** When a wicked man comes, those harmed by his wickedness feel contempt for him, And with the dishonor his behavior deserves comes public disgrace and shame.
4. The words of a man's mouth are deep waters; The fountain of wisdom is a bubbling brook.
 - a. People can be verbose (*long-winded*) in expressing their thoughts, opinions, perspectives, philosophies, beliefs, and values on any number of subjects or issues – be they past, present, or future. Yet it is hard to discern the essence or understand the depth of what they are saying due to their lack of clarity and brevity. Therefore, listening to people who are talking in these ways is like looking into deep water – the further down you try to see the harder it is because the water gets darker and murkier the deeper you peer.
 - b. This is not so with wisdom. It is like a bubbling brook – clear through and through and therefore much easier to discern the essence and understand the truth being conveyed.
 - c. An **alternate reading** of vs 4 comes from the **Amplified Bible**: The words of a [discreet and wise] man's mouth are like deep waters [plenteous and difficult to fathom (*requires thought, pondering to understand and apply them*)], and the fountain of skillful and godly Wisdom is like a gushing stream [sparkling, fresh, pure, and life-giving].
5. To show partiality to the wicked is not good, Nor to thrust aside the righteous in judgment.
 - a. Defending/justifying a wicked person's behavior is wrong, just as failing/refusing to deal justly with the righteous is wrong. Yet, when it comes to persecuting/silencing the righteous, what is wrong is treated as right and what is just is perverted to protect the behavior of the wicked.
 - b. **Proverbs 17:15**, He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous, Both of them alike are an abomination to the LORD.
 - c. **Exodus 23:1-3**, You shall not bear a false report; do not join your hand with a wicked man to be a malicious witness. [2] You shall not follow the masses in doing evil, nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after a multitude in order to pervert justice; [3] nor shall you be partial to a poor man in his dispute.
 - d. **Exodus 23:6-8**, You shall not pervert the justice due to your needy brother in his dispute. [7] Keep far from a false charge, and do not kill the innocent or the righteous, for I will not acquit the guilty. [8] You

shall not take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the clear-sighted and subverts the cause of the just.

6. A fool's lips bring strife, And his mouth calls for blows.
 - a. **New Living Translation:** Fools' words get them into constant quarrels; they are asking for a beating.
 - b. **English Standard Version:** A fool's lips walk into a fight, and his mouth invites a beating.
 - c. **Vs 6-7** seem to be intended to go together, and the message is that a fool's mouth is his own enemy. Before a fool's behavior gets him into trouble, his mouth does.

7. A fool's mouth is his ruin, And his lips are the snare of his soul.
 - a. **New Living Translation:** The mouths of fools are their ruin; they trap themselves with their lips.
 - b. **English Standard Version:** A fool's mouth is his ruin, and his lips are a snare to his soul.

8. The words of a whisperer are like dainty morsels (*that are quickly swallowed*), And they go down into the innermost parts of the body.
 - a. Whispering and/or gossip is telling or listening to information about someone who is not present.
 - b. Two common traits of gossip: (1) people love to tell and hear gossip; (2) People remember gossip – especially when it is about something embarrassing, inappropriate, unexpected, immoral, or a failure of some sort. Therefore, gossip colors our view of others without giving them an opportunity to explain, provide context, or our finding out if they accepted blame and took responsibility. This can do unjust, excessive, or irreparable harm to a person's reputation.
 - c. **Proverbs 20:19**, He who goes about as a slanderer reveals secrets (*to the harm of the one whose secrets are revealed*), Therefore do not associate with a gossip.

9. He also who is slack (*not using due diligence or care*) in his work Is brother to him who destroys.
 - a. **Septuagint adds a second explanatory part:** He who does not use his endeavors to heal himself is brother to him who commits suicide.
 - b. Failure to use due diligence in your work means doing or making things that will likely fail in some way. In principle, that is equal to destroying it.

10. The name of the LORD is a strong tower; The righteous runs into it and is safe.
 - a. **Vs 10-11 go together** – **Vs 10** speaks of trusting God to be our source of security. This is rational/wise trust.
 - b. The word “**name**” speaks of “who God is in nature and action.” The “**strong tower**” speaks of being in a safe place high above whatever is seeking to harm us.
 - c. In nature and action, God is the ultimate, always dependable source of security. But to gain and dwell in the security found in God, we must trust Him and live righteously.
 - i. It is important to note that in whatever area and way we do not live righteously, we are doing so because we distrust God.
 - ii. In this way, trust in God and godly living are inseparable.
 - iii. Therefore, it is natural for the righteous – who trust God regarding godly living – to trust in God as their ultimate source of security.
 - d. **Psalm 18:2-3**, The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. [3] I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies.

11. A rich man's wealth is his strong city, And like a high wall in his own imagination (*foolish delusions*).
 - a. **Vs 10-11 go together** – **Vs 11** speaks of trusting money to be our source of security. This is irrational/foolish trust.
 - b. Though wealth is a source of power that in some situations can provide a way of escape, insulate us from, or dull our senses to the full effects of the troubling, threatening, or even terrifying realities of life, it is not an ultimate, always dependable source of security.
 - c. Therefore, it is a foolish delusion to depend on wealth as one depends on God for security – presently or in the future.
 - d. **1 Timothy 6:17-19**, Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. [18] Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, [19] storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.
 - e. **Proverbs 3:9-10**, Honor the LORD from your wealth and from the first of all your produce; [10] So your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will overflow with new wine.

12. Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, But humility goes before honor.
 - a. The proud person can cling to his pride until something comes along and forcefully humbles him (*usually some form of destruction that exposes the weaknesses, inabilities, foolishness, and empty claims of the proud*). In other words, you can get away with being proud until you are forcefully humbled.
 - i. **Proverbs 16:18**, Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling.
 - ii. Though the world may honor the proud, God doesn't, and worldly honor last only as long as the world is willing to overlook one's flaws. However, God honors, raises up, exalts, and brings into His kingdom the humble – which is why true humility precedes lasting honor.
 - b. Two evils of pride are (1) it opposes the wisdom of fearing the Lord, and (2) it makes self the first and foremost focus of one's love and attention rather than God and neighbor.

13. He who gives an answer before he hears, It is folly and shame to him.
 - a. **New Living Translation**: Spouting off before listening to the facts is both shameful and foolish. **Note vs 2**.
 - b. Jumping to conclusions or acting as if you know it all when you don't is foolish and brings shame (*makes you look like a fool*).
 - c. This is especially important when offering advice. Listen longer. Get both sides of the story. Seek to understand the history behind a situation or action. Consider what the person is up against in relation to his beliefs, values, fears, hopes, personality.

14. The spirit of a man can endure his sickness, But as for a broken spirit who can bear it?
 - a. **Principle**: Who we are within (*spirit, character*) has the ability to face, deal with, and continue on in spite of bodily sickness, injury, or physical limitations. In other words, the mind is more powerful than the body, so though the body may get broken in some way, the mind can continue on unaffected. However, if our spirit or character gets broken and crushed, the whole person is affected.
 - b. Severe discouragement, despair, and depression are common examples of this proverb.
 - c. The solution to a broken spirit is found in God and trusting Him to work all things out for good. **Note: Psalm 37 and 73**.

15. The mind of the prudent acquires knowledge, And the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.
 - a. To be **prudent** and **wise** is to be practical, careful, and discreet in solving problems, dealing with issues, handling information, and navigating relationships.
 - b. A prudent, wise person gives careful forethought before acting on something. Therefore, the prudent and wise want to continue acquiring knowledge so they can continue using careful forethought as a means of dealing with life and people. Plus, the activity of careful forethought naturally increases learning and growth in knowledge.
 - c. Interesting note: Those who know the most and live accordingly know best how little they know.

16. A man's gift makes room for him And brings him before great men.
 - a. If we assume this proverb is not supporting bribes (*giving something of value to subvert justice or bend the rules in order to get what you want or avoid what you don't want*), then we can assume it is affirming the giving of a gift to gain a listening ear to make your case – where without a gift you could not get a listening ear.
 - b. A **bribe** becomes the turning point in altering justice or the law for personal gain. A **gift** becomes the turning point in being heard so that whatever decision is made, it is made with the inclusion of your side of the story.

17. The first to plead his case seems right, Until another comes and examines him.
 - a. To decide what is true without hearing both sides of the story, or without asking probing questions to better discern the truth in the story if there is only one party present presenting the story is not just foolish, it is wrong, unloving, and leads to false accusations and injustice.
 - b. It is a rare person who is honest about his or her own part in a situation, and who does not exaggerate or embellish the wrong of the other person in order to make himself look better, more innocent, or more a victim.
 - c. We must take the time necessary to hear both sides if we are to gain the truth and respond according to the truth.
 - d. This principle is just as true when listening to a family member, friend, neighbor, or fellow Christian who is telling their side of a difficult situation, conflict, or marital woe as it is in a court of law.

18. The cast lot puts an end to strife And decides between the mighty ones.
 - a. In this context, to engage in **strife** is to become adversarial, to quarrel and fight for control or for your way as opposed to resolving differences in a mutually agreeable and therefore mutually satisfying way.
 - b. When powerful people enter into strife as a means of settling their differences, the power struggle becomes that much more violent and destructive.
 - c. The peaceful solution is to have the conflict/difference be decided by casting lots or engaging a third-party mediator. In other words, it is best to take the decision out of the hands of those who use strife to resolve their differences and put into an uninvolved third party who will make the decision without favoritism or partiality.
 - d. Casting lots was a means of seeking God's decision: **Proverbs 16:33**, The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD. In my opinion, a godly third party is another means of seeking God's decision.

19. A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city, And contentions (*same Hebrew word as strife in vs 18*) are like the bars of a citadel.
 - a. It is easy to offend a family member (*damage your relationship with them*) by repeatedly treating them in thoughtless, careless, unloving, unfair ways.
 - b. It is equally easy to drive family members away and give them reason to stay away by repeatedly taking an adversarial approach to them, quarreling with them, fighting to be in control over them, repeatedly wanting or even demanding your way.
 - c. Once you have driven them away, it is hard to win them back for the following reasons: (1) they don't trust you, (2) they don't want to be hurt again, (3) they are tired of having to fight with you to be treated fairly and lovingly, (4) they haven't, aren't ready to, or won't forgive you, (5) they don't see enough change in you, or change maintained for enough time to feel safe around you, (6) staying away from you is easier than giving you another chance.
 - d. Though it requires time and work to learn how to love, how to care for others, how to look out for their good, how communicate in clear and respectful ways, and how to have a servant's attitude, it is much easier than the work required to undo the damage done to a relationship after being repeatedly unloving, selfish, insensitive, unkind, abusive in word and action, etc. Wisdom takes the route of less work, not more.
 - e. **Romans 12:18**, If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.

20. With the **fruit** of a man's mouth (*outcome of what he says*) his stomach will be satisfied; He will be satisfied with the **product** of his lips (*outcome of what he says*).
- Proverbs 12:14**, A man will be satisfied with good by the **fruit** of his words, And the deeds of a man's hands (*outcome of what he does*) will return to him.
 - Proverbs 13:2**, From the fruit of a man's mouth he enjoys good (*outcome of what he says*), But the desire of the treacherous is violence.
 - Principle**: Just as our deeds produce an outcome, so do our words. How we speak to those around us affects how they see, think of, and treat us. When the fruit of our lips shows respect, humility, and kindness, we improve the probability of getting a favorable response.
21. Death and life are in the power of the tongue, And those who love it will eat its fruit.
- Principle**: The tongue is capable of doing great harm and committing great evil, but also of doing great good and bringing about healing of mind (*counseling*), healing of relationships (*reconciliation*), justice, and love. We will reap/eat what we sow with our tongue in this life and in the next— be it good or evil, life or death.
 - Matthew 12:36-37**, But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment. [37] For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.
22. He who finds a wife finds a good thing And obtains favor from the LORD.
- If we compare **Proverbs 8:35** (*For he who finds me (wisdom) finds life and obtains favor from the LORD.*) with this **vs**, we see that finding wisdom and a wife leads to obtaining favor from God.
 - If we compare **Proverbs 8:11** (*For wisdom is better than jewels; and all desirable things cannot compare with her.*) with **Proverbs 31:10** (*An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels.*) we see that wisdom and a good wife are worth more than jewels.
 - It seems to me that in most cases, a wife, whether good or bad, can be used by God to transform the husband into a godly man, godly husband, and a godly father – thus blessing both the home and the husband beyond what anyone could imagine.
 - In my opinion, this kind of outcome is an example of, and the result of obtaining God's favor.

23. The poor man utters supplications (*humble prayers for God's help, humble petitions for human help*), But the rich man answers roughly.
- a. The poor man represents someone who has minimal resources for dealing with the challenges of life. He realizes his need and position and humbly seeks help.
 - b. The rich man represents someone who, because of his wealth, sees himself as self-sufficient, and therefore needing neither humility nor the guarding of his words. He can be pridefully haughty and still have enough to meet his needs. **Note vs 11.**
 - c. We see the foolishness of the rich man in:
 - i. **Proverbs 16:18**, Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling.
 - ii. **Matthew 18:10-14**, the parable of the Pharisee and tax collector praying in the Temple.
24. A man of too many friends comes to ruin, But there is a friend (*Lit. one who loves*) who sticks closer than a brother.
- a. **Alternate translation: New King James Version:** A man who has friends must himself be friendly, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.
 - b. The phrase “A man of too many friends comes to ruin” is not speaking against friendliness, but against amassing and treating casual friendships as if they are true friendship that can be counted on when you need a friend most. The reality is, a casual friend cannot be counted on to stick with us regardless of the circumstances or situation – even when we have brought trouble upon ourselves.
 - c. A true friend will stick with us through whatever we face – which is more than most family members will do.
 - d. **Proverbs 17:17**, A friend loves at all times, And a brother is born for adversity.