

Easy-to-Read Version

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Proverbs

How do you tell other people about your faith? What if they are from a different culture or have a completely different way of life? The book of Proverbs is a good place to begin.

Proverbs teaches about the kind of life that God wants for all people. And it does this in a way that almost anyone from any country or culture can understand. Proverbs does not talk about the agreements between God and Abraham, Moses or David. It does not talk about what priests did in the Temple. The book of Proverbs teaches people how to live wisely. According to the book of Proverbs, what God wants most for us is to have wisdom. So Proverbs describes wise living from God's point of view.

In the ancient world, people talked a lot about wisdom. Today, we still use an ancient Greek word—philosophy—to talk about wisdom and the search for truth. The ancient Greeks had many different thoughts about wisdom—different philosophies. The way these ideas were usually described was very complicated. So people needed a lot of study to understand them.

In some ways, the book of Proverbs is similar to some of the writings of Greek philosophers. But it is also very different. Both have much to say about how people should live. But a person does not need a lot of education to understand the book of Proverbs. Much of Proverbs is simple and useful advice, like a father talking to his son. It speaks for parents

who love their children and want them to live wisely. And the first lesson is that a wise person knows and respects God.

The book of Proverbs is ancient Jewish wisdom that God still uses to teach people how to live. These wise sayings include teaching on important subjects like self-control, patience and good behaviour. They encourage respect and justice for all people, including those who are poor.

If you want to tell a friend about your faith, introduce them to Proverbs. It is an easy place to start. And you do not have to be a Bible expert to talk about living wisely.

The book of Proverbs provides wisdom from...

A father (1:1 – 9:18)

Solomon (10:1 – 22:16)

Some wise teachers (22:17 – 24:34)

Solomon, collected by Hezekiah's servants (25:1 – 29:27)

Agur (30:1-33)

Lemuel, which he learned from his mother (31:1-31)

Introduction

1 These are the proverbs of Solomon, the son of David and king of Israel.

² Proverbs will teach you to be wise, to accept correction, and to understand wise sayings.

³ They will teach you how to live well. You will learn to do what is right and to be honest and fair.

⁴ These proverbs will make even uneducated people wise.

They will teach young people what they need to know

and how to use what they have learned.

⁵ Even the wise can become wiser by listening to these proverbs.

Those who have understanding can learn to make better decisions.

⁶ These sayings will help you understand proverbs, stories with hidden meanings,

words of the wise, and other difficult sayings.

⁷ Knowledge begins with fear and respect for the LORD,

but stubborn fools hate wisdom and refuse to learn.

Advice to a Son

⁸ My son,^{*} listen to your father when he corrects you,

and don't ignore what your mother teaches you.

⁹ What you learn from your parents will bring you honour and respect,

like a crown or a gold medal.[†]

¹⁰ My son, those who love to do wrong will try to trick you.

Don't listen to them.

¹¹ They will say, "Come with us.

Let's hide and beat to death anyone who happens to walk by.

¹² We will swallow them whole, as the grave swallows the dying.

¹³ We will take everything they have and fill our houses with stolen goods.

¹⁴ So join us, and we will share with you everything we get."

¹⁵ My son, don't follow them.

Don't even take the first step along that path.

¹⁶ They run to do something evil,

and they cannot wait to kill someone.

¹⁷ Even birds will avoid a trap

if they see you spreading the net.

¹⁸ But these people get caught in their own trap!

They plan to hurt others, but they only hurt themselves.

¹⁹ This is what happens to those who are greedy.

Whatever they get destroys them.

Wisdom Shouts Her Warning

²⁰ Wisdom[‡] is shouting in the streets.

She is crying out in the marketplace.

²¹ She is calling out where the noisy crowd gathers:

²² "Fools, how long will you love being ignorant?

How long will you make fun of wisdom?

How long will you hate knowledge?

²³ Pay attention when I correct you!

I want to tell you everything I know and give you all my knowledge.

²⁴ I tried to help, but you refused to listen.

I offered my hand, but you turned away from me.

²⁵ You ignored my advice

and refused to be corrected.

²⁶ So I will laugh at your troubles

and make fun of you when disaster comes.

²⁷ Disasters will strike you like a storm.

Problems will pound you like a strong wind.

Trouble and misery will weigh you down.

^{*}**1:8 My son** The proverbs in this section (chapters 1 – 9) may have been directed originally to a teenage boy, perhaps a prince, who was becoming a young man. It is intended to teach him how to be a responsible person and leader who loves and respects God.

[†]**1:9** Literally, "They are like a wreath of favour to your head and a necklace around your neck."

[‡]**1:20 Wisdom** Wisdom is pictured here as a woman giving a warning about what happens to the foolish people who ignore her advice. In a later passage (9:13-18), Foolishness is represented as another woman who urges people towards a life of sin.

28 “Fools will call for me, but I will not answer.
They will look for me, but they will not find me.
29 That is because they hated knowledge.
They refused to fear and respect the LORD.
30 They ignored my advice and refused to be corrected.
31 So they will have to suffer for the way they lived.
They will be filled with the pain they planned for others.
32 Fools die because they refuse to follow wisdom.
They are content to follow their foolish ways,
and that will destroy them.
33 But those who listen to me will live in safety and comfort.
They will have nothing to fear.”

Seek Wisdom

2 My son, pay attention to what I say.
Remember my commands.
2 Listen to wisdom,
and do your best to understand.
3 Ask for good judgement.
Cry out for understanding.
4 Look for wisdom like silver.
Search for it like hidden treasure.
5 Then you will understand what it means to respect the LORD,
and you will come to know God.
6 The LORD is the source of wisdom;
knowledge and understanding come from his mouth.
7 He helps good people think clearly
and is a shield for those who live as they should.
8 He protects those who are fair to others,
and he watches over his faithful people.
9 If you listen to him, you will understand what is just and fair
and how to do what is right.

10 You will gain wisdom,
and knowledge will bring you joy.
11 Planning ahead will protect you,
and understanding will guard you.
12 These will keep you from following the wrong path
and will protect you from those who have evil plans.
13 Such people have left the straight path
and now walk in darkness.
14 They enjoy doing evil
and are happy with the confusion it brings.
15 Their ways are crooked;
they lie and cheat.
16 Wisdom will save you from a sinful woman,
who tempts you with sweet words to join her in cheating on her husband.
17 She married young and left her husband.
She forgot the marriage vows she made before God.
18 The road to her house is a road to death.
She will lead you to the grave.
19 No one who enters there can return to the life he once had.
20 Wisdom will help you follow the example of good people
and stay on the right path.
21 Honest people will live in the land,
and those who do right will remain there.
22 But the wicked will be forced to leave.
Those who lie and cheat will be thrown out of the land.

Trust the Lord

3 My son, don't forget my teaching.
Remember what I tell you to do.
2 What I teach will give you a good, long life,
and all will go well for you.
3 Don't ever let love and loyalty leave you.

Tie them around your neck,
and write them on your heart.

⁴Then God will be pleased and think
well of you
and so will everyone else.

⁵Trust the LORD completely,
and don't depend on your own
knowledge.

⁶With every step you take, think about
what he wants,
and he will help you go the right way.

⁷Don't trust in your own wisdom,
but fear and respect the LORD and stay
away from evil.

⁸If you do this, it will be like a refreshing
drink
and medicine for your body.

⁹Honour the LORD with your wealth
and the first part of your harvest.

¹⁰Then your barns will be full of grain,
and your barrels will be overflowing
with wine.

¹¹My son, don't reject the LORD's
discipline;
pay attention and don't be angry.

¹²The LORD corrects everyone he loves,
just as a father corrects a child he cares
about.

The Value of Wisdom

¹³Great blessings belong to those who
have wisdom
and to those who gain understanding.

¹⁴Profit that comes from wisdom is bet-
ter than silver
and even the finest gold.

¹⁵Wisdom is worth more than fine
jewels.

Nothing you desire has more value.

¹⁶With her right hand, she offers long
life
and with the other hand, riches and
honour.

¹⁷Wisdom will lead you to a life of joy
and peace.

¹⁸Wisdom is like a life-giving tree to
those who hold on to her;
she is a blessing to those who keep her
close.

¹⁹With wisdom the LORD created the
earth;
with understanding he set the sky in
place.

²⁰With his knowledge he caused the wa-
ters under the earth to flow
and made the clouds drop their rain.

Learn From Wisdom to Be Fair

²¹My son, hold on to wisdom and good
sense.

Don't let them out of your sight.

²²They will bring you a long life
filled with honour.

²³As you go through life,
you will always be safe and never fall.

²⁴When you lie down, you will not be
afraid.

When you rest, your sleep will be
peaceful.

²⁵You have no reason to fear a sudden
disaster
or the destruction that comes to the
wicked.

²⁶You can trust the LORD to protect you.
He will not let you be caught in a trap.

²⁷Do everything you possibly can
for those who need help.

²⁸If your neighbour needs something
you have, don't say,

"Come back tomorrow."

Give it to him right away.

²⁹Don't make plans to harm your
neighbour,
who lives near you and trusts you.^f

³⁰Don't take people to court without
good reason,

^f3:29 *neighbour ... trusts you* Or "neighbour. After all, you live near one another for protection."

especially when they have done nothing to harm you.

³¹ Don't be jealous of those who are violent.

Never choose to be like them.

³² The LORD hates such crooked people, but he is a friend to those who are honest.

³³ The LORD curses a wicked family, but he blesses the homes of those who are good.

³⁴ He humiliates those who think they are better than others, but he shows favour to those who are humble.

³⁵ The way the wise live will bring them honour, but the way fools live will bring them shame.

A Father's Advice About Wisdom

4 Children, listen to your father's teaching. Pay attention, and you will learn how to think.

² The advice I give is good, so don't ever forget what I teach you.

³ When I was my father's little boy and my mother's dear son,[§]

⁴ my father taught me this:

"Pay attention to what I say.

Obey my commands, and you will have a good life.

⁵ Try to get wisdom and understanding. Don't forget my teaching or ignore what I say.

⁶ Don't turn away from wisdom, and she will protect you.

Love her, and she will keep you safe.

⁷ The first step to becoming wise is to look for wisdom, so use everything you have to get understanding.

⁸ Love wisdom, and she will make you great.

Hold on to wisdom, and she will bring you honour.

⁹ Wisdom will reward you with a crown of honour and glory."

Choose the Path of Wisdom

¹⁰ Son, listen to me.

Do what I say, and you will live a long time.

¹¹ I am teaching you about wisdom and guiding you on the right path.

¹² When you walk on it, you will not step into a trap.

Even if you run, you will not trip and fall.

¹³ Always remember this teaching; don't forget it.

It is the key to life, so guard it well.

¹⁴ Don't take the path of the wicked; don't follow those who do evil.

¹⁵ Stay away from that path; don't even go near it.

Turn around and go another way.

¹⁶ The wicked cannot sleep until they have done something evil.

They will not rest until they bring someone down.

¹⁷ They had rather do evil than eat; they enjoy hurting others as much as good wine.

¹⁸ The path of those who do what is right is like the early morning light.

It gets brighter and brighter until the full light of day.

¹⁹ But the path of the wicked is like a dark night.

They trip and fall over what they cannot see.

Stay on the Right Path

²⁰ My son, pay attention to what I say. Listen closely to my words.

[§]4:3 *dear son* Or "only son".

²¹ Don't let them out of your sight.
Never stop thinking about them.

²² These words are the secret of life
and health to all who discover them.

²³ Above all, be careful what you think
because your thoughts control your life.

²⁴ Don't bend the truth
or say things that you know are not
right.

²⁵ Keep your eyes on the path,
and look straight ahead.

²⁶ Make sure you are going the right
way,
and nothing will make you fall.

²⁷ Don't go to the right or to the left,
and you will stay away from evil.

The Wisdom of Avoiding Adultery

5 Son, listen to this piece of wisdom
from me.

Pay attention to what I know to be true.

² Then you will know how to live wisely,
and what you say will show your
understanding.

³ Another man's wife may tempt you
with words as sweet as honey.

Her soothing talk may be so inviting,

⁴ but in the end, she will leave a bitter
taste;

she will cut you like a sharp sword.

⁵ She is on a path leading to death,
and she will lead you straight to the
grave.

⁶ She does not try to stay on the path to
life.

She has lost her way and does not even
know it.

⁷ Now, my sons, listen to me.

Don't forget the words I say.

⁸ Stay away from a woman like that.

Don't even go near her house.

⁹ If you do, others will get the honour
you should have had,
and you will be putting the rest of your
life in the hands of someone cruel.

¹⁰ People you don't know will take all
your wealth.

Others will get what you worked for.

¹¹ In the end, when you are sick and
dying,

you will be sorry about the life you lived.

¹² You will say, "Why didn't I accept
discipline?"

Why did I refuse to be corrected?

¹³ I didn't pay attention to my teachers
and would not listen to anyone!

¹⁴ And now look! My life is almost a total
disaster,
and everyone knows it."

¹⁵ Now, about sex and marriage:

Drink only the water that comes from
your own well,

¹⁶ and don't let your water flow out into
the streets.

¹⁷ Keep it for yourself,
and don't share it with strangers.

¹⁸ Be happy with your own wife.

Enjoy the woman you married while you
were young.

¹⁹ She is like a beautiful deer, a lovely
doe.

Let her love satisfy you completely.

Stay drunk on her love,

²⁰ and don't go stumbling into the arms
of another woman.

²¹ The LORD clearly sees everything you
do.

He watches where you go.

²² The sins of the wicked will trap them.
Those sins will be like ropes holding
them back.

²³ Evil people will die because they have
no self-control.

Their stupidity leads them down a path
to ruin.

Don't Promise to Pay Anyone's Debt

6 My son, don't agree to pay the debts
of others.

Don't make such deals with friends or
strangers.

²If you have done this, you are in a trap.
You are caught by your own words.

³So now you are under the power of
someone else,
and you must go and free yourself.
Don't let your pride stop you.

Go and beg them to free you from that
debt.

⁴Don't put this off until tomorrow.
Don't wait to rest or sleep.

⁵Escape like a deer running from a
hunter.

Free yourself like a bird flying from a
trap.

The Dangers of Being Lazy

⁶You lazy people, you should watch
what the ants do
and learn from them.

⁷Ants have no ruler,
no boss or leader.

⁸But they know to prepare their food in
summer
and gather at harvest what they need for
winter.

⁹You lazy people, how long are you go-
ing to lie there?
When will you get up?

¹⁰You say, "I need a rest.
I think I'll take a short nap."

¹¹But then you sleep and sleep
and become poorer and poorer.
Soon you will have nothing.

It will be as if an armed robber came and
took everything you owned.

Don't Be a Troublemaker

¹²Some people are just troublemakers.
They are always thinking up some
crooked plan and telling lies.

¹³They use secret signals to cheat
people;
they wink their eyes, shuffle their feet
and point a finger.

¹⁴They are always planning something
evil;

they continually cause trouble.

¹⁵But one day disaster will strike them.
They will be hurt so badly that no one
can help them.

What the Lord Hates

¹⁶The LORD hates these seven things:

¹⁷eyes that show pride,
tongues that tell lies,

hands that kill innocent people,

¹⁸hearts that plan evil things to do,
feet that run to do evil,

¹⁹witnesses in court who tell lies,
and anyone who causes family members
to fight.

Stay Away From Other Men's Wives

²⁰My son, remember your father's
command,
and don't forget your mother's teaching.

²¹Remember their words always.

Tie them around your neck and keep
them over your heart.

²²Let this teaching lead you wherever
you go.

It will watch over you while you sleep.
And when you wake up, it will give you
good advice.

²³Your parents give you commands and
teachings
that are like lights to show you the right
way.

This teaching corrects you
and trains you to follow the path to life.

²⁴It stops you from going to an evil
woman

and protects you from the smooth talk of
another man's wife.

²⁵Don't let her beauty tempt you;
don't let her eyes capture you.

²⁶A prostitute might cost a loaf of bread,
but the wife of another man could cost
you your life.

²⁷If you carry hot coals in your lap,
your clothes will be burned.

²⁸If you step on one,

your feet will be burned.

²⁹If you have sex with another man's wife,

you will be punished.

³⁰⁻³¹A hungry man might steal to fill his stomach.

If he is caught, he must pay seven times more than he stole.

It might cost him everything he owns, but other people understand.

They don't lose all their respect for him.

³²But a man who has sex with another man's wife is a fool.

He brings about his own destruction.

³³He will be beaten up and disgraced and never be free from the shame.

³⁴The woman's husband will be jealous and angry

and do everything he can to get revenge.

³⁵No payment, no amount of money, will stop him.

Wisdom Will Save You From a Sinful Woman

7 My son, remember my words.

Don't forget what I have told you.

²Consider my teaching to be as precious as your own eyes.

Obey my commands, and you will have a good life.

³Tie them around your finger.

Write them on your heart.

⁴Think of wisdom as your dear sister and knowledge as your closest friend.

⁵Wisdom will save you from a sinful woman,

another man's wife who tempts you with such sweet words.

⁶One day I was at home, standing by a window.

I looked out through the shutters,

⁷and I saw some foolish teenagers.

I noticed one of them had no sense at all.

⁸Walking along, he came to a corner and followed a path leading to a sinful woman's house.

⁹The sun had set, and daylight was fading.

It was almost dark.

¹⁰The woman came out to meet him, dressed like a prostitute.

She clearly had plans for him.

¹¹She was a wild and rebellious woman, who would not stay at home.

¹²She walked the streets, always looking for someone to trap.

¹³She grabbed the young man and kissed him.

Without shame, she looked him in the eye and said,

¹⁴"I offered a fellowship offering today.

I gave what I promised to give,

¹⁵and I still have plenty of food left.

So I came out to find you, and here you are!

¹⁶I have clean sheets on my bed, special ones from Egypt.

¹⁷My bed smells wonderful with myrrh, aloes and cinnamon.

¹⁸Come, let's enjoy each other until morning.

We can have sex all night!

¹⁹My husband is not home.

He is away on a long trip.

²⁰He took plenty of money with him, so he will be gone for at least two weeks."

²¹This is what the woman said to tempt the young man,

and her smooth words tricked him.

²²He followed her, like an ox being led to the slaughter.

He was like a deer walking into a trap,

²³where a hunter waits to shoot an arrow through its heart.

The boy was like a bird flying into a net, never seeing the danger he was in.

²⁴Now, sons, listen to me.

Pay attention to what I say.

²⁵Don't let your heart lead you to an evil woman like that.

Don't go where she wants to lead you.

²⁶ She has brought down some of the most powerful men; she has left many dead bodies in her path.

²⁷ Her house is the place of death. The road to it leads straight to the grave.

Wisdom Tells Her Story

8 Listen, Wisdom is calling. Yes, Understanding is shouting for us.

² Wisdom stands at the top of the hill, by the road where the paths meet.

³ She is near the entrance to the city, calling from the open gates:

⁴ "I am calling out to all of you. I am speaking to everyone.

⁵ You who are ignorant, learn to be wise. You who are foolish, get some common sense.

⁶ Listen, I have something important to say, and I am telling you what is right.

⁷ My words are true, and I will not say anything that is wrong.

⁸ Everything I say is right; there is nothing false or crooked about it.

⁹ These things are clear to any intelligent person.

They are right to anyone with knowledge.

¹⁰ My teaching should mean more to you than silver and knowledge more than the finest gold.

¹¹ Wisdom is more precious than rubies. It is worth more than anything else you could want.

¹² "I am Wisdom. I live with good sense.

I have knowledge and understanding.

¹³ To respect the LORD is to hate evil.

I hate pride and boasting, evil lives and hurtful words.

¹⁴ I have good advice and common sense to offer.

I have understanding and power.

¹⁵ With my help kings rule, and governors make good laws.

¹⁶ With my help leaders govern, and important officials make good decisions.**

¹⁷ I love those who love me, and those who look for me will find me.

¹⁸ With me there are riches and honour. I have lasting wealth to give to you.

¹⁹ What I give is better than fine gold. What I produce is better than pure silver.

²⁰ I lead people the right way— along the paths of justice.

²¹ I give riches to those who love me, and I fill their houses with treasures.

²² "The LORD made me in the beginning, long before he did anything else.

²³ I was formed a long time ago, before the world was made.

²⁴ I was born before there was an ocean, before the springs began to flow.

²⁵ I was born before the mountains appeared,

before the hills were set into place,

²⁶ before the earth and fields were made, before the dust of this world was formed.

²⁷ I was there when he set up the heavens,

when he marked where the ocean meets the sky.

²⁸ I was there when he put the clouds in the sky,

when he made the deep springs flow.

²⁹ I was there when he set the limits for the sea,

to make it stop where he commanded.

I was there when he laid the foundations of the earth.

** **8:16 and important ... decisions** Some Hebrew copies have "as well as important officials, all the judges on earth".

30 I was like a child^{††} by his side.
I made him happy every day,
and I was always glad to be with him.
31 I was so pleased with the world he
made
and enjoyed the people he put there.
32 “Now, children, listen to me.
If you do what I tell you, you will enjoy
blessings.
33 Listen to my teaching and be wise;
don’t ignore what I say.
34 Those who watch for me at my door,
waiting for a chance to listen to me,
will enjoy great blessings.
35 Those who find me find life,
and the LORD will be pleased with them.
36 But those who reject me are hurting
themselves.
Whoever hates me loves death.”

Wisdom’s Invitation

9 Wisdom has built her house;
she has made it strong with seven
pillars.
2 She has prepared meat and wine for a
feast;
the food is on the table.
3 She has sent her servant girls to
announce
from the highest hill in the city:^{‡‡}
4 “Whoever needs instruction, come.”
To all who are foolish she says,
5 “Come, eat my food
and drink the wine I have prepared.
6 Leave your old, foolish ways and live!
Advance along the path of
understanding.”
7 Criticize a person who is rude and
shows no respect, and you will only
get insults.
Correct the wicked, and you will only get
hurt.

8 Don’t correct such people,
or they will hate you.
But correct those who are wise,
and they will love you.
9 Teach the wise,
and they will become wiser.
Instruct those who do what is right,
and they will gain more knowledge.
10 Wisdom begins with fear and respect
for the LORD.
Knowledge of the Holy One leads to
understanding.
11 Wisdom will help you live longer;
she will add years to your life.
12 If you become wise,
it will be for your own good.
If you are rude and show no respect,
you are the one who will suffer.

Foolishness Also Calls

13 Foolishness is that other woman,
who is loud, stupid and knows nothing.
14 She sits on her chair at the door of her
house,
up on the highest hill of the city.
15 When people walk by,
thinking about what they have to do,
she calls out to them,
16 “Whoever needs instruction, come.”
To all who are foolish she says,
17 “Stolen water is sweet;
stolen bread tastes good.”
18 Those people don’t realize that her
house is full of ghosts
and that her guests have entered the
world of the dead.

Proverbs of Solomon

10 These are the proverbs of
Solomon:
A wise son makes his father happy;
a foolish son makes his mother sad.

^{††}8:30 *child* Or “skilled worker”.

^{‡‡}9:3 Or “She has sent out her servant girls and invited people to come to the highest hill in the city to eat with her.”

²Wealth gained by doing wrong is not worth it,
but doing good will save your life.

³The LORD does not let good people go hungry,
but he keeps the wicked from getting what they want.

⁴Laziness makes you poor,
but working hard makes you rich.

⁵A smart son works hard all summer,
but the son who sleeps through the harvest is a disgrace.

⁶People say good things about people who do what is right.

But good words from the wicked only hide their plans to do harm.

⁷Good people leave memories that bless us,

but the wicked are soon forgotten.

⁸The wise follow instruction,
but the fool who will not stop talking will suffer for it.

⁹Whoever lives honestly is safe and secure,

but those who lie and cheat will be caught.

¹⁰Evil secrets[¶] lead to pain and suffering,

but speaking openly brings peace.^{§§}

¹¹Words that bring life flow from good people,

but the words of the wicked hide their violent plans.

¹²Hate stirs up arguments,
but love forgives and forgets.

¹³A person with understanding speaks words of wisdom;

a person who says something stupid will be punished.

¹⁴Wise people are quiet and learn new things,

but fools talk and bring trouble on themselves.

¹⁵Wealth protects the rich,
but poverty destroys the poor.

¹⁶What good people do brings life,
but wicked people produce only sin.

¹⁷Those who accept correction show others how to live.

Those who reject correction lead others the wrong way.

¹⁸People sometimes lie to hide their hatred,

but saying bad things about someone is even more foolish.

¹⁹A person who talks too much gets into trouble.

A wise person learns to be quiet.

²⁰Words from good people are like pure silver,

but thoughts from the wicked are worthless.

²¹Good people say things that help others,

but the wicked die from a lack of understanding.

²²It is the LORD's blessing that brings wealth,

and no hard work can add to it.*

²³Fools enjoy doing wrong,

but the wise enjoy wisdom.

²⁴The wicked will be defeated by what they fear,

but good people will get what they want.

²⁵The wicked are destroyed when trouble comes,

but good people stand strong forever.

²⁶Having a lazy servant is as irritating as vinegar on the teeth or smoke in the eyes.

²⁷Respect for the LORD will add years to your life,

[¶]**10:10** *Evil secrets* Or “secret signals lead to pain and suffering”. See 6:12-15.

^{§§}**10:10** *speaking openly brings peace* This is from the ancient Greek version. The Hebrew text repeats the second half of verse 8.

***10:22** Or “A blessing from the LORD will bring you true wealth—wealth without troubles.”

but the wicked will have their lives cut short.

²⁸ Good people can look forward to happiness,[†]

but what the wicked hope for will not come true.

²⁹ The LORD protects those who do right,

but he destroys those who do wrong.

³⁰ Good people will always be safe, but the wicked will be forced out of the land.

³¹ Those who do what is right say wise things,

but people stop listening to troublemakers.[‡]

³² Good people know the right things to say,

but the wicked say things to make trouble.

11 The LORD hates false scales, but he loves accurate weights.

² Proud and boastful people will be shamed,

but wisdom stays with those who are modest and humble.

³ Good people are guided by their honesty,

but crooks who lie and cheat will ruin themselves.

⁴ Money is worthless when you face God's punishment,

but living right will save you from death.

⁵ Doing right makes life better for those who are good,

but the wicked are destroyed by their own wicked ways.

⁶ Doing right sets honest people free, but people who can't be trusted are trapped by their greed.

⁷ When the wicked die, all their hopes are lost;

everything they thought they could do comes to nothing.

⁸ Good people escape from trouble, but the wicked come along and are trapped by it.

⁹ With their words, hypocrites can destroy their neighbours,

but with what they know, good people can escape.

¹⁰ When good people are successful, the whole city is happy,

and they all shout with joy when evil people are destroyed.

¹¹ Blessings from the honest people living in a city will make it great,

but the things evil people say can destroy it.

¹² Stupid people say bad things about their neighbours,[¶]

but wise people know to be quiet.

¹³ People who tell secrets about others cannot be trusted,

but those who can be trusted keep quiet.

¹⁴ A nation without wise leaders will fall. Many good advisers make a nation safe.

¹⁵ You will be sorry if you promise to pay a stranger's debt.

Refuse to make such promises and you will be safe.

¹⁶ A kind and gentle woman gains respect,

but violent men gain only wealth.

¹⁷ People who are kind will be rewarded for their kindness,

but cruel people will be rewarded with trouble.

¹⁸ The work of evil people is all lies,

[†]10:28 *Good people ... happiness* Or "What good people hope for brings happiness."

[‡]10:31 Or "The mouth of a good man speaks wisdom, but the tongue of a troublemaker will be cut off."

[¶]11:12 *Stupid people ... neighbours* Or "The neighbours hate a stupid person."

but those who do right will receive a good reward.[§]

¹⁹ People who do what is right are on their way to life,

but those who always want to do wrong are on their way to death.

²⁰ The LORD hates those who love to do evil,

but he is pleased with those who try to do right.

²¹ The truth is, evil people will be punished,

and good people will be set free.

²² A beautiful woman without good sense

is like a gold ring in a pig's nose.

²³ What good people want brings more good,

but what evil people want brings more trouble.

²⁴ Some people give freely and gain more;

others refuse to give and end up with less.

²⁵ Give freely, and you will profit.

Help others, and you will gain more for yourself.

²⁶ People curse a greedy man who refuses to sell his grain,

but they bless a man who sells his grain to feed others.

²⁷ People are pleased with those who try to do good,

but those who look for trouble will find it.

²⁸ Those who trust in their riches will fall like dead leaves,

but good people will blossom.

²⁹ Those who cause trouble for their families will inherit nothing but the wind.

A foolish person will end up as a servant to one who is wise.

³⁰ What good people produce is like a life-giving tree.

Those who are wise give new life to others.^{**}

³¹ If good people are rewarded here on earth,

surely those who do evil will also get what they deserve.

12 Whoever loves discipline loves to learn;

whoever hates to be corrected is stupid.

² The LORD is pleased with good people, but he punishes those who plan evil.

³ Evil people are never safe, but good people remain safe and secure.

⁴ A good wife is like a crown to her husband,

but a shameful wife is like a cancer.

⁵ Good people are honest and fair in all they do,

but those who are evil lie and cannot be trusted.

⁶ Evil people use their words to hurt others,

but the words from good people can save others from danger.

⁷ When evil people are destroyed, they are gone and forgotten,

but good people are remembered long after they are gone.

⁸ You praise people for their intelligence, but no one respects those who are stupid.

⁹ It is better to appear unimportant and have a servant

than to pretend to be important and have no food.

¹⁰ Good people take good care of their animals,

[§]**11:18** This is a wordplay in Hebrew. The word “lies” sounds like the word “reward”.

^{**}**11:30** Or, according to one ancient version, “The fruit of a good man is a tree of life, but a violent man takes lives.”

but the wicked know only how to be cruel.^{††}

¹¹ Farmers who work their land have plenty of food,

but those who waste their time on worthless projects are foolish.

¹² The wicked want a share of what an evil man might catch,

but like a plant with deep roots, a good man is the one who produces the most.^{‡‡}

¹³ The wicked are trapped by their evil words,

but good people escape from such trouble.

¹⁴ People get good things for the words they say,

and they are rewarded for the work they do.

¹⁵ Fools always think their own way is best,

but wise people listen to what others tell them.

¹⁶ Fools quickly become angry, but wise people ignore insults.

¹⁷ Good people speak the truth and can be trusted in court,

but liars make bad witnesses.

¹⁸ Speak without thinking, and your words can cut like a knife.

Be wise, and your words can heal.

¹⁹ Lies last only a moment,

but the truth lasts forever.

²⁰ People who work for evil make trouble,

but those who plan for peace bring happiness.

²¹ No harm comes to good people,

but evil people will have many troubles.

²² The LORD hates people who tell lies,

but he is pleased with those who tell the truth.

²³ Smart people don't tell everything they know,

but fools tell everything and show they are fools.

²⁴ Those who work hard will be put in charge of others,

but lazy people will have to work like slaves.

²⁵ Worry takes away your joy, but a kind word makes you happy.

²⁶ Good people show their friends the right way to go,

but evil people lead them the wrong way.

²⁷ Lazy people don't get what they want, but riches come to those who work hard.

²⁸ Along the path of goodness there is life;

that is the way to live forever.^{¶¶}

13 A wise son listens to his father's advice,

but a proud son will not listen to correction.

² People get good things for the words they say,

but those who cannot be trusted only want to hurt others.

³ People who are careful about what they say will save their lives,

but those who speak without thinking bring ruin on themselves.

⁴ Lazy people always want things but never get them.

Those who work hard get plenty.

⁵ Good people hate lies, but the wicked do evil, shameful things.

⁶ Goodness protects honest people, but evil destroys those who love to sin.

^{††}12:10 *but the wicked ... cruel* Or "but even the 'kindness' of the wicked is still cruelty".

^{‡‡}12:12 The Hebrew text is not clear.

^{¶¶}12:28 *that is ... forever* Or "but there is a path that leads to death".

⁷ Some people pretend they are rich, but they have nothing.

Others pretend they are poor, but they are really rich.

⁸ The rich might have to pay a ransom to save their lives, but the poor never receive such threats.

⁹ The light of those who do right shines brighter and brighter, but the lamp of the wicked becomes darker and darker.^{§§}

¹⁰ Pride causes arguments, but those who listen to others are wise.

¹¹ Money gained by cheating others will soon be gone.

Money earned through hard work will grow and grow.

¹² Hope that is delayed makes you sad, but a wish that comes true fills you with joy.

¹³ Those who reject a command hurt themselves; those who respect a command will be rewarded.

¹⁴ The teaching of the wise is a source of life; their words will save you from deadly traps.

¹⁵ People respect a person with good sense, but someone who cannot be trusted is on the way to ruin.

¹⁶ Wise people always think before they do anything, but fools show how stupid they are by what they do.

¹⁷ An unreliable messenger brings trouble, but one who can be trusted brings peace.

¹⁸ If you refuse to correct your mistakes, you will be poor and disgraced. But if you listen to correction,

you will be honoured.

¹⁹ People are happy when they get what they want, but stupid people want nothing but evil, and they refuse to change.

²⁰ Be friends with those who are wise, and you will become wise.

Choose fools to be your friends, and you will have trouble.

²¹ Trouble chases sinners wherever they go,

but good things happen to good people.

²² It is good to have something to pass down to your grandchildren, but wealth hidden away by sinners will be given to those who live right.

²³ A poor person's field might produce plenty of food,

but unjust people often take it away.

²⁴ Parents who will not correct their children have no love for them.

Those who love their children are careful to discipline them.

²⁵ Good people will have plenty to eat, but the wicked will go hungry.

14 A wise woman makes her home what it should be, but the home of a foolish woman is destroyed by her own actions.*

² Those who do what is right honour the LORD,

but dishonest people hate him.

³ Foolish words cause you trouble; wise words protect you.

⁴ A barn with no cattle might be clean, but strong bulls are needed for a good harvest.

⁵ A good witness is one who does not lie. A bad witness is a liar who cannot be trusted.

⁶ Anyone who makes fun of wisdom will never find it,

§§13:9 Or "The light of those who do right is happy; the lamp of the wicked goes out."

*14:1 Or "Wisdom builds her house, but Foolishness tears hers down with her own hands."

but knowledge comes easily to those who understand its value.

⁷ Stay away from fools; there is nothing they can teach you.

⁸ Wisdom lets smart people know what they are doing,

but stupid people only think they know.

⁹ Fines are needed to make fools obey the law,

but good people are happy to obey it.

¹⁰ When you are sad, no one else feels the pain;

and when you are happy, no one else can really feel the joy.

¹¹ An evil person's house will be destroyed,

but a good person's family will do well.

¹² There is a way that people think is right,

but it leads only to death.

¹³ Laughter might hide your sadness, but when the laughter is gone, the sadness remains.

¹⁴ Evil people will be paid back for the wrong they do,

and good people will be rewarded for the good they do.

¹⁵ Fools believe every word they hear, but wise people think carefully about everything.

¹⁶ Wise people are careful and avoid trouble;

fools are too confident and careless.

¹⁷ A quick-tempered person does stupid things,

but anyone who quietly plans evil is hated.

¹⁸ Fools are rewarded with more foolishness.

Smart people are rewarded with knowledge.

¹⁹ Good people will defeat those who are evil,

and the wicked will bow down to those who are good.

²⁰ The poor have no friends, not even their neighbours,

but the rich have many friends.

²¹ It is wrong to hate your neighbours.

Be kind to the poor, and God will bless you.

²² It is a mistake to work at doing evil, but whoever works to do good will find love and loyalty.

²³ If you work hard, you will have plenty.

If you do nothing but talk, you will not have enough.

²⁴ A wise person's reward is wealth, but a fool's reward is foolishness.

²⁵ A witness who tells the truth saves lives,

but one who tells lies hurts others.

²⁶ People who respect the LORD will be safe,

and they will make their children feel secure.

²⁷ Respect for the LORD gives true life and will save you from death's trap.

²⁸ Kings of large nations have great honour.

Rulers without a country have nothing.

²⁹ A patient person is very smart.

A quick-tempered person makes stupid mistakes.

³⁰ Peace of mind makes the body healthy,

but jealousy is like a cancer.

³¹ Whoever takes advantage of the poor insults their Maker,

but whoever is kind to them honours him.

³² The wicked will be defeated by their evil,

but good people are protected by their honesty.[†]

[†]14:32 by *their honesty* This is based on the ancient Greek and Syriac versions. The traditional Hebrew text has "in their death".

³³ A wise person is always thinking wise thoughts,
but a fool knows nothing about wisdom.

³⁴ Goodness makes a nation great,
but sin is a shame to any people.

³⁵ Kings are pleased with intelligent officials,
but they will punish shameful ones.

15 A gentle answer makes anger disappear,
but a rough answer makes it grow.

² Listening to wise people increases your knowledge,
but only nonsense comes from the mouths of fools.

³ The LORD sees what happens everywhere;
he watches everyone, good and evil.

⁴ Kind words are like a life-giving tree,
but lying words will crush your spirit.

⁵ Fools refuse to listen to their parents.
A wise person is always willing to be disciplined.

⁶ Good people are rich in many ways,
but those who are evil get nothing but trouble.

⁷ Wise people say things that give you new knowledge,
but fools say nothing worth hearing.

⁸ The LORD hates the offerings of the wicked,

but he is happy to hear the prayers of those who do what is right.

⁹ The LORD hates the way evil people live,

but he loves those who try to do good.

¹⁰ Whoever stops living right will be punished,
and whoever hates to be corrected deserves death.

¹¹ The LORD knows everything, even what happens after death,
so surely he knows what people are thinking.

¹² Fools hate to be told they are wrong,
so they refuse to ask wise people for advice.

¹³ If you are happy, your face shows it.
If you are sad, your spirit feels defeated.

¹⁴ Intelligent people want more knowledge,
but fools only want more nonsense.

¹⁵ Life is always hard for the poor,
but the right attitude can turn it into a party.

¹⁶ It is better to be poor and respect the LORD

than to be rich and have many troubles.

¹⁷ It is better to eat a little where there is love

than to eat a lot where there is hate.

¹⁸ A quick temper causes fights,
but patience brings peace and calm.

¹⁹ For lazy people, life is a path overgrown with thorns and thistles,
but for those who do what is right, it is a smooth highway.

²⁰ Wise children make their parents happy,
but foolish children bring them shame.

²¹ Doing foolish things makes a fool happy,
but a wise person is careful to do what is right.

²² If you don't ask for advice, your plans will fail.

With many advisers, they will succeed.

²³ People are happy when they give a good answer;

there is nothing better than the right word at the right time.

²⁴ What wise people do leads to life here on earth[‡]

and stops them from going down to the place of death.

²⁵ The LORD destroys a proud man's house

but protects a widow's property.

[‡]15:24 *here on earth* Literally, "above", that is, "above the ground".

²⁶The LORD hates evil thoughts,
but he is pleased with kind words.

²⁷Whoever takes money to do wrong in-
vites disaster.

Refuse such gifts, and you will live.

²⁸Good people think before they
answer,

but the wicked do not, and what they say
causes trouble.

²⁹The LORD is far away from the
wicked,

but he always hears the prayers of those
who do what is right.

³⁰A smile[¶] makes people happy.

Good news makes them feel better.

³¹To be counted among the wise,
you must learn to accept helpful
criticism.

³²If you refuse to be corrected, you are
only hurting yourself.

Listen to criticism, and you will gain
understanding.

³³Wisdom teaches you to respect the
LORD.

You must be humbled before you can be
honoured.

16 People might plan what they
want to say,
but only the LORD can give them the
right words.

²People think that whatever they do is
right,

but the LORD judges their reason for do-
ing it.

³Turn to the LORD for help in every-
thing you do,
and you will be successful.

⁴The LORD has a plan for everything.
In his plan, the wicked will be destroyed.

⁵The LORD hates those who are proud.
You can be sure he will punish them all.

⁶Faithful love and loyalty will remove
your guilt.[§]

Respect the LORD, and you will stay far
away from evil.

⁷When people live to please the LORD,
even their enemies will be at peace with
them.

⁸It is better to be poor and do right
than to be rich and do wrong.

⁹People can plan what they want to do,
but it is the LORD who guides their steps.

¹⁰When a king speaks, his words are
law.

So when he makes a decision, it is never
a mistake.

¹¹The LORD wants honest weights and
measures;

he wants all business agreements to be
fair.

¹²Kings hate to see anyone doing wrong,
because justice makes kingdoms strong.

¹³Kings want to hear the truth;
they like those who are honest.

¹⁴An angry king can put someone to
death,

so it is wise to keep the king happy.

¹⁵When the king is happy, life is better
for everyone.

When he is pleased, it is like a refreshing
spring rain.

¹⁶Wisdom is worth much more than
gold,

and understanding is worth much more
than silver.

¹⁷Good people try to avoid evil.

They watch what they do and protect
themselves.

¹⁸Pride is the first step towards
destruction;

proud thoughts lead to defeat.

¹⁹It is better to be a humble person liv-
ing among the poor

[¶]15:30 *smile* Literally, “a sparkle in the eyes”.

[§]16:6 *remove your guilt* The Hebrew word means “to wipe clean” or “to erase” a person’s sins.

than to share the wealth among the proud.

²⁰ Good things happen to those who learn from their experiences, and the LORD blesses those who trust him.

²¹ People will know if someone is wise. Those who choose their words carefully can be very convincing.

²² Good sense is a spring of fresh water to those who have it, but fools can offer only foolishness.

²³ Wise people always think before they speak, so what they say is worth listening to.

²⁴ Kind words are like honey; they are easy to accept and good for your health.

²⁵ There is a way that seems right to people, but that way leads only to death.

²⁶ The thought of hunger keeps the workers working so that they can eat.

²⁷ Troublemakers create disasters. Their advice destroys like a wildfire.

²⁸ Troublemakers are always causing problems. Their gossip breaks up the closest of friends.

²⁹ Cruel people trick their neighbours and make them do wrong.

³⁰ With a wink of the eye, they plan to trick someone. With a grin, they make plans to hurt their friends.

³¹ Grey hair is a crown of glory on people who have lived good lives. It is earned by living right.

³² It is better to be patient than to be a strong soldier.

It is better to control your anger than to capture a city.

³³ People might throw lots to make a decision,

but the answer always comes from the LORD.

17 It is better to eat a dry piece of bread in peace than a house full of food with everyone arguing.

² A smart servant will gain control over his master's foolish son.

He will receive a share of what his master has saved for his children.

³ Fire is used to make gold and silver pure, but a person's heart is made pure by the LORD.

⁴ People who do evil listen to evil ideas. Liars listen to liars.

⁵ Whoever makes fun of beggars insults their Maker.

Whoever laughs at someone else's trouble will be punished.

⁶ Grandchildren are the pride and joy of old age, and children take great pride in their parents.

⁷ You would not expect to hear a fine speech from a fool, and you should not expect lies from a ruler.

⁸ Some people think a bribe is like a lucky charm; it seems to work wherever they go.

⁹ Forgive someone, and you will strengthen your friendship. Keep reminding them, and you will destroy it.

¹⁰ Smart people learn more from a single correction than fools learn from a hundred beatings.

¹¹ Those who are evil only want to cause trouble.

In the end, punishment without mercy will be sent to them.

¹² It is better to meet a bear robbed of her cubs

than a fool who is busy doing foolish things.

¹³If you do wrong to those who were good to you, you will have trouble the rest of your life.

¹⁴The start of an argument is like a small leak in a dam.

Stop it before a big fight breaks out.

¹⁵The LORD hates for judges to punish the innocent

or let the guilty go free.

¹⁶Money is wasted on fools.

They cannot buy wisdom when they have no sense.

¹⁷A friend loves you all the time, but a brother was born to help in times of trouble.

¹⁸Only a fool would promise to pay for someone else's debts.

¹⁹Anyone who loves sin loves trouble.

Building an entrance too high is inviting disaster.**

²⁰Crooks will not profit from their crimes,

and those who plan to cause trouble will be trapped when it comes.

²¹A man who has a fool for a son will be disappointed.

A fool brings no joy to his father.

²²Happiness is good medicine,

but sorrow is a disease.

²³A wicked judge will accept a bribe, and that keeps justice from being done.

²⁴A smart person keeps looking for wisdom,

but a fool's thoughts wander from one place to another.

²⁵Foolish children upset their parents and make them sad.

²⁶It is wrong to punish an innocent person

or attack leaders for doing what is right.

²⁷Wise people choose their words carefully.

Those who know what they are doing remain calm.††

²⁸Even fools seem wise if they are silent. They say nothing and appear to be smart.

18 Some people like to do things their own way, and they get upset when people give them advice.

²Fools don't want to learn from others; they only want to share their own ideas.

³Do something evil, and people will hate you.

Do something shameful, and they will have no respect for you.

⁴Words from wise people are like a flowing stream

or a deep well—the well of wisdom.

⁵It is wrong to favour the guilty and rob the innocent of justice.

⁶Fools say things to start arguments. They are just asking for a beating.

⁷Fools hurt themselves when they speak.

Their own words trap them.

⁸People love to hear gossip.

It is like tasty food on its way to the stomach.

⁹Someone who does careless work is as bad as someone who destroys things.

¹⁰The name of the LORD is like a strong tower.

Those who do what is right can run to him for protection.

¹¹The rich think their wealth will protect them.

They think it is a strong fortress.

¹²A proud person will soon be ruined, but a humble person will be honoured.

**17:19 *Building ... disaster* Or “Anyone who boasts a lot is asking for trouble.”

††17:27 *remain calm* Literally, “have a cool spirit”.

¹³ Let people finish speaking before you try to answer them so that you will not embarrass yourself and look foolish.

¹⁴ A good attitude will support you when you are sick, but if you give up, nothing can help.^{‡‡}

¹⁵ Wise people want to learn more, so they listen closely to gain knowledge.

¹⁶ Gifts can open many doors and help you meet important people.

¹⁷ The first person to speak always seems right until someone comes and asks the right questions.

¹⁸ Use lots to settle arguments, especially between two powerful people.

¹⁹ An insulted brother is harder to win back than a city with strong walls. Arguments separate people like the strong bars of a palace gate.

²⁰ Your words can be as satisfying as fruit, as pleasing as the food that fills your stomach.

²¹ The tongue can speak words that bring life or death. Those who love to talk must be ready to accept what it brings.

²² If you find a wife, you have found something good.

She is the LORD's gift to you.

²³ The poor are polite when they beg for help.

The rich are rude with their answer.

²⁴ Some friends are fun to be with,^{¶¶} but a true friend can be better than a brother.

19 It is better to be poor and honest than to be a liar and a fool.

² Being excited about something is not enough.

You must also know what you are doing.

Don't rush into something, or you might do it wrong.

³ Fools ruin their lives, and then they blame the LORD for it.

⁴ Wealth will bring you many friends, but become poor and your friends will leave you.

⁵ A witness who lies will be punished; that liar will not escape.

⁶ Many people are nice to a generous person.

Everyone wants to be friends with someone who gives gifts.

⁷ If you are poor, your family will turn against you, and your friends will avoid you even more.

You might beg them for help, but no one will come to help you.

⁸ Be a friend to yourself; do all you can to be wise.

Try hard to understand, and you will be rewarded.

⁹ A witness who lies will be punished; that liar will be destroyed.

¹⁰ A fool should not be rich, and a slave should not rule over princes.

¹¹ Experience makes you more patient, and ignoring insults brings great honour.

¹² The shouts of an angry king are like a roaring lion, but his kind words are like a gentle rain falling on the grass.

¹³ A foolish child is a disaster for a father. A complaining wife is like the constant dripping of water.

¹⁴ People receive houses and money from their parents, but a good wife is a gift from the LORD.

¹⁵ Laziness brings on sleep, and an appetite for rest brings on hunger.

¹⁶ Obey the law and live;

^{‡‡}18:14 *help* Literally, "lift up" or "heal".

^{¶¶}18:24 *Some friends ... with* Or "Some friends can bring disaster."

ignore it and die.

¹⁷ Giving help to the poor is like loaning money to the LORD.

He will pay you back for your kindness.

¹⁸ Discipline your children while there is hope for change.

If you fail to discipline them, you are helping them on the way to ruin.

¹⁹ People who are quick to become angry must pay the price.

Protect them from punishment, and they become worse.

²⁰ Listen to advice and accept discipline, and in time you will be wise.

²¹ People might make many plans, but what the LORD says is what will happen.

²² People want a friend they can trust. It is better to be poor than to be a liar.

²³ Respect the LORD and you will have a good life, one that is satisfying and free from trouble.

²⁴ Some people are too lazy to take care of themselves.

They will not even lift the food from their plate to their mouths.

²⁵ Punish a rude, arrogant person, and even slow learners will become wiser.

Just a little correction is enough to teach a person who has understanding.

²⁶ Sons or daughters who mistreat their parents bring shame and disgrace on their family.

²⁷ My son, if you stop listening to instructions, you will keep making stupid mistakes.

²⁸ Using a criminal as a witness makes a joke of justice.

People like that only want to do wrong.

²⁹ People who show no respect for anything must be brought to justice.

You must punish such fools.

20 Wine and beer make people get loud and start fights.

Whoever gets drunk is stupid.

² An angry king is like a roaring lion.

If you make him angry, you could lose your life.

³ People who refuse to argue deserve respect.

Any fool can start an argument.

⁴ Some people are too lazy to plough and plant seeds.

So at harvest time, they look for food and find nothing.

⁵ Wise advice is like a well full of water. If you are smart, you will draw it out.

⁶ You might call many people your “friends”,

but it is hard to find someone who can really be trusted.

⁷ When people live good, honest lives, their children are blessed.

⁸ When the king sits and judges people, he must look carefully to separate the evil from the good.

⁹ Can anyone say their heart is pure?

Who can say, “I am free from sin”?

¹⁰ Here are two things the LORD hates: dishonest weights and dishonest measures.

¹¹ Even children show what they are like by the things they do.

You can see if their actions are pure and right.

¹² Eyes for seeing and ears for hearing—the LORD made them both!

¹³ If you love to sleep, you will become poor.

Wake up and work, and you will have plenty to eat.

¹⁴ Buyers complain that the price is too high.

But later they boast about the bargain they got.

¹⁵ Wise words are like precious jewels.

They are worth more than gold or rubies.

¹⁶ Anyone who promises to pay the debt of a stranger deserves to lose the coat given as a guarantee.

¹⁷ Stolen food tastes sweet at first, but it turns to sand in your mouth.

¹⁸ Get good advice when you make your plans.

Before you start a war, find good advisers.

¹⁹ A gossip will not keep your secrets.

So avoid people who talk too much.

²⁰ Those who would curse their father or mother are like a lamp that goes out on the darkest night.

²¹ If your wealth was easy to get, it will not be worth much to you.^{§§}

²² Don't ever say, "I'll pay them back for what they did to me!"

Wait for the LORD to make things right.

²³ The LORD hates for people to use the wrong weights to cheat others.

It is wrong to use scales that are not accurate.

²⁴ The LORD guides our steps, and we never know where he will lead us.*

²⁵ Think carefully before you promise to give something to God.

Later, you might wish you had not made that promise.

²⁶ Like a farmer who separates wheat from the chaff, a wise king will decide who is wrong and crush them.

²⁷ Your spirit is like a lamp to the LORD. He is able to see into your deepest parts.[†]

²⁸ A king who is loyal and true will keep his power.

Loyalty will keep his kingdom strong.

²⁹ We admire a young man for his strength,

but we respect an old man for his grey hair.

³⁰ A beating can remove evil and make you completely clean.[‡]

21 The LORD controls a king's mind like a channel guides water.

He leads the king wherever he wants him to go.

² People think that whatever they do is right,

but the LORD judges the reasons for everything they do.

³ Do what is right and fair.

The LORD loves that more than sacrifices.

⁴ Proud looks and proud thoughts are sins,

and pride lights the way for the wicked.

⁵ Careful planning leads to profit.

Acting too quickly leads to poverty.

⁶ Wealth that comes from telling lies disappears quickly and leads to death.

⁷ The bad things that evil people do will destroy them,

because they refuse to do what is right.

⁸ Criminals cause trouble wherever they go,

but good people are honest and fair.

⁹ It is better to live in a small corner on the roof

than to share the house with a woman who is always arguing.

¹⁰ Evil people always want to do more evil,

and they show no mercy to people around them.

^{§§}20:21 Or "An inheritance greedily guarded in the beginning will not be blessed in the end."

*20:24 Or "A man's steps are from the LORD, and people don't understand his way."

†20:27 Or "The LORD examines your breath and searches your deepest thoughts."

‡20:30 The Hebrew text is not clear.

¹¹ Even a fool becomes wiser by seeing someone punished for laughing at wisdom,

but a little instruction is enough to teach the wise.

¹² God is good. He knows what the wicked are doing, and he will punish them.

¹³ Those who refuse to help the poor will not receive help when they need it themselves.

¹⁴ If you are dealing with an angry person, quietly slip some money to them.

A gift given in secret will calm even the strongest anger.

¹⁵ A decision that is fair makes good people happy, but it makes those who are evil very afraid.

¹⁶ Whoever leaves the path of wisdom will be on their way to an early death.

¹⁷ Loving pleasure leads to poverty.

Wine and luxury will never make you wealthy.

¹⁸ The wicked must pay for what happens to good people; the cheaters will be taken in exchange for the honest.

¹⁹ It is better to live alone in the desert than with a quick-tempered wife who loves to argue.

²⁰ Wise people save the nice things they have.

Fools use up everything as soon as they get it.

²¹ People who try hard to do good and be faithful will find life and honour.

²² A wise warrior can defeat a city full of soldiers and tear down the walls they trust to protect them.

²³ People who are careful about what they say will save themselves from trouble.

²⁴ Proud people think they are better than others.

They show they are evil by what they do.

²⁵ Lazy people will cause their own destruction

because they refuse to work.

²⁶ Lazy people are greedy and never have enough.

Good people are generous and have plenty.

²⁷ God hates sacrifices from the wicked, especially when their reason for offering them is evil.

²⁸ Witnesses who lie will be caught and punished.

The ones who listen to them carefully will win the case when they speak.

²⁹ The wicked act like they are telling the truth, but honest people can see what they are doing.

³⁰ There is no one wise enough to make a plan that can succeed if the LORD is against it.

³¹ You can prepare your horses for battle, but only the LORD can give you the victory.

22 It is better to be respected than to be rich.

A good name is worth more than silver or gold.

² The rich and the poor are the same.

The LORD made them all.

³ Wise people see trouble coming and get out of the way, but fools ignore the danger and suffer for it.

⁴ Respect the LORD and be humble.

Then you will have wealth, honour and true life.

⁵ Evil people follow a path full of thorns and traps,

but people who want to protect themselves avoid such dangers.

⁶ Teach children in a way that fits their needs,
and even when they are old, they will
not leave the right path.

⁷ The rich rule over the poor.

The one who borrows is a slave to the
one who lends.

⁸ Those who spread trouble will harvest
trouble.

In the end, they will be destroyed for the
trouble they caused.

⁹ Generous people will be blessed,
because they share their food with the
poor.

¹⁰ Get rid of the proud who laugh at what
is right, and trouble will leave with
them.

All arguments and insults will end.

¹¹ Love a pure heart and kind words,
and the king will be your friend.

¹² The LORD watches over true
knowledge,
and he opposes those who try to deceive
others.

¹³ A person who is lazy and wants to stay
home says,

“There is a lion outside, and I might be
killed in the streets!”

¹⁴ The sweet words of a sinful woman are
a trap,
and those who make the LORD angry fall
into it.

¹⁵ Children do foolish things,
but if you punish them, they will learn
not to do them.

¹⁶ These two things will make you poor:
hurting the poor to make yourself rich
and giving gifts to the rich.

Thirty Wise Sayings

— 1 —

¹⁷ Listen carefully to these words from
the wise.

Pay attention to what I have learned.

¹⁸ It will be good for you to remember
these words
and have them ready when they are
needed.

¹⁹ I will teach you these things now.

I want you to trust the LORD.

²⁰ I have written 30 sayings for you.[†]

These are words of advice and wisdom.

²¹ They will teach you things that you
can know for sure to be true.

Then you can give good answers to those
who sent you.

— 2 —

²² It is easy to steal from the poor, but
don't do it,
and don't take advantage of them in
court.

²³ The LORD is on their side; he supports
the poor,
and he will take the life of those who
take from them.

— 3 —

²⁴ Don't be friends with people who be-
come angry easily;
don't stay around quick-tempered
people.

²⁵ If you do, you may learn to be like
them.

Then you will have the same problems
they do.

— 4 —

²⁶ Don't promise to pay what another
person owes
or offer something you have to replace
their debt.

²⁷ If you cannot pay, you will lose every-
thing you have.

So why should you lose the bed you sleep
on?

[†]22:20 *I have ... for you* Or “I wrote this for you earlier.”

— 5 —

²⁸Never move an old property line that was marked long ago by your ancestors.

— 6 —

²⁹Skilled workers will always serve kings.

They will never have to work for less important people.

— 7 —

23 When you sit and eat with an important person, don't look around to see what food others are served.

²Never eat too much, even if you are very hungry.

³Control your desire for his fine food. You may be sorry if you eat too much.

— 8 —

⁴Don't ruin your health trying to get rich.

Stop thinking all the time about wealth.

⁵In the blink of an eye, money can disappear, as if it grew wings and flew away like a bird.

— 9 —

⁶Don't eat with selfish people. Control any desire you have for their finest foods.

⁷They might tell you to eat and drink all you want, but they don't really mean it. They are the kind of people

who are only thinking about the cost.

⁸Eating their food will only make you feel sorry, and all your nice words will have been for nothing.

— 10 —

⁹Don't try to teach fools. They will make fun of your wise words.

— 11 —

¹⁰Never move an old property line, and don't take land that belongs to orphans.

¹¹The Lord will be against you. He is powerful and protects orphans.

— 12 —

¹²Listen to your teacher and learn all you can.

¹³Always correct young people when they need it.

A few blows with a stick will not kill them.

¹⁴In fact, you might save their lives.

— 13 —

¹⁵My son, it makes me happy when you make a wise decision.

¹⁶It makes me feel good inside when you say the right things.

— 14 —

¹⁷Never be jealous of sinners, but always respect the LORD.

¹⁸This will give you something to hope for that will not disappoint you.

— 15 —

¹⁹So listen, my son, and be wise. Always be careful to follow the right path.

²⁰Don't make friends with people who drink too much wine and eat too much food.

²¹Those who eat and drink too much become poor. They sleep too much and end up wearing rags.

— 16 —

²² Listen to your father. Without him,
you would never have been born.

Respect your mother, even when she is
old.

²³ Truth, wisdom, learning and under-
standing are worth paying money
for.

They are worth far too much to ever sell.

²⁴ The father of a good person is very
happy.

A wise child brings him joy.

²⁵ Make both of your parents happy.

Give your mother that same joy.

— 17 —

²⁶ My son, listen closely to what I am
saying.

Let my life be your example.

²⁷ Prostitutes and bad women are a trap.
They are like a deep well that you cannot
escape.

²⁸ A bad woman waits for you like a
thief,
and she causes many men to be unfaith-
ful to their wives.

— 18 —

²⁹ Who is always in trouble and
miserable?

Who gets into fights and arguments?

Who gets hurt for no reason and has red,
bloodshot eyes?

³⁰ Anyone who stays out late drinking
wine

and trying all kinds of mixed drinks.

³¹ So be careful with wine.

It is pretty and red as it sparkles in the
cup,

and it goes down so smoothly when you
drink it.

³² But in the end, it will bite like a snake;
it will sting you with its poison.

³³ Wine will cause you to see strange
things

and to say things that make no sense.

³⁴ You will lie down and think you are
on a rough sea.

You will feel like you are at the top of
the mast.

³⁵ You will say, “They hit me, but I never
felt it.

They beat me, but I don’t remember it.

I wish I could wake up.

Then I could go and get another drink.”

— 19 —

24 Don’t be jealous of evil people.

Have no desire to be around
them.

² In their hearts they plan to do evil.

All they talk about is making trouble.

— 20 —

³ Good homes are built on wisdom
and understanding.

⁴ Knowledge fills the rooms
with rare and beautiful treasures.

— 21 —

⁵ Wise warriors are more powerful than
strong ones.

Knowledge is more useful than physical
strength.

⁶ So get good advice before you go to
war.

To win, you must have many good
advisers.

— 22 —

⁷ Fools cannot understand wisdom.

They have nothing to say when people
are discussing important things.

— 23 —

⁸ If you start planning ways to do wrong,
people will learn that you are a
troublemaker.

⁹ Such foolish plans are wrong,
and people have no respect for someone
who laughs at what is right.

— 24 —

¹⁰ You don't really know how strong you are until you are tested in times of trouble.

— 25 —

¹¹ If an innocent person is being dragged away for execution, do all you can to save them.

¹² You cannot say, "It's none of my business."
The Lord knows everything, and he knows why you do things.
He watches you,
and he will pay you back for what you do.

— 26 —

¹³ My son, eat honey; it is good.
Honey straight from the honeycomb is the sweetest.

¹⁴ In the same way, know that wisdom is good for you.
Wisdom will give you something to hope for that will not disappoint you.

— 27 —

¹⁵ Don't be like a criminal who makes plans to rob those who are good.
Don't attack their homes.

¹⁶ Good people might fall again and again, but they always get up.
It is the wicked who are defeated by their troubles.

— 28 —

¹⁷ Don't be happy when your enemy has troubles.
Don't be glad when they fall.

¹⁸ The LORD will see this, and he might be upset with you
and decide not to punish your enemy.

— 29 —

¹⁹ Don't let those who are evil upset you,

and don't be jealous of them.

²⁰ They have no hope.
Their light will burn out.

— 30 —

²¹ Son, respect the LORD and the king,
and don't join with those who are against them,

²² because people like that can quickly be destroyed.

You have no idea how much trouble God and the king can make for their enemies.

More Wise Sayings

²³ These are also words from the wise:
A judge must be fair.

He must not support some people simply because he knows them.

²⁴ The people will turn against a judge who lets the guilty go free.

Even the people of other nations will curse him.

²⁵ But if a judge punishes the guilty, then people will be happy with him,
and he will be a blessing to them.

²⁶ An honest answer is as pleasing as a kiss on the lips.

²⁷ First get your fields ready,
next plant your crops
and then build your house.

²⁸ Don't be a witness against someone who has done no wrong.
Don't hide the truth with lies.

²⁹ Don't say, "You hurt me, so I will do the same to you."
I will punish you for what you did to me."

³⁰ I walked past a field that belonged to a lazy man.

It was a vineyard that belonged to someone who understood nothing.

³¹ Weeds were growing everywhere!
Wild vines covered the ground,
and the wall around the vineyard was broken and falling down.

³²I looked at this and thought about it.
This is what I learned:
³³a little sleep, a little rest,
folding your arms and taking a nap.
³⁴Suddenly, you will be poor, as if an
armed robber had come.
You will have nothing but the feeling
you were robbed.

More Wise Sayings From Solomon

25 These are some more wise sayings from Solomon. These proverbs were copied by servants of Hezekiah, the king of Judah.

²We honour God for the things he keeps secret,
but we honour kings for the things they can discover.

³We cannot discover how high the sky is above us or how deep the earth is below.

The same is true with the minds of kings.
We cannot understand them.

⁴Remove the worthless things from silver to make it pure,
and a worker can make something beautiful.

⁵Take the evil advisers away from a king,
and goodness will make his kingdom strong.

⁶Don't boast about yourself before the king
and pretend you are someone important.

⁷It is much better for the king to invite you to take a more important position
than to embarrass you in front of his officials.

⁸Don't be too quick to tell a judge about something you saw.
You will be embarrassed if someone else proves you wrong.

⁹If you have a disagreement with someone, talk to them alone.
And don't tell their secrets to anyone else.

¹⁰Whoever hears you will stop respecting you
and will never trust you again.

¹¹Saying the right thing at the right time is like a gold apple in a silver setting.

¹²Wise advice to a listening ear is like gold earrings or fine jewellery.

¹³How refreshing it is to have a messenger who can be trusted!

It's like having something as cold as snow on a hot summer day.

¹⁴People who promise to give gifts but never give them
are like clouds and wind that bring no rain.

¹⁵With patience, you can make anyone change their thinking, even a ruler.
Gentle speech is very powerful.

¹⁶Honey is good,
but don't eat too much of it, or you will be sick.

¹⁷And don't visit your neighbours' homes too often,
or they will begin to hate you.

¹⁸A person who gives false testimony against a neighbour
is as deadly as a club, a sword or a very sharp arrow.

¹⁹Never depend on a liar in times of trouble.
It's like chewing with a bad tooth or walking with an injured foot.

²⁰Singing happy songs to a sad person is as foolish as taking away someone's coat on a cold day
or mixing soda and vinegar.

²¹If your enemies are hungry, give them something to eat.
If they are thirsty, give them some water.

²² In doing this you will make them feel ashamed,[§] and the LORD will reward you for being good to them.

²³ Just as wind blowing from the north brings rain, telling secrets brings anger.

²⁴ It is better to live in a small corner of the roof than to share the house with a woman who is always arguing.

²⁵ Good news from a faraway place is like a cool drink of water when you are hot and thirsty.

²⁶ It is sad to see a good person let the wicked have their way. It is like seeing a muddy spring or a filthy well.

²⁷ Just as eating too much honey is not good, it is not good to always be looking for honour.

²⁸ People who cannot control themselves are like cities without walls to protect them.

26 Just as snow should not fall in summer, nor rain at harvest time, so people should not honour a fool.

² Don't worry when someone curses you for no reason. Nothing bad will happen.

Such words are like birds that fly past and never stop.

³ You have to whip a horse, you have to put a bridle on a mule, and you have to beat a fool.

⁴ You can't answer foolish questions from a fool without looking like a fool yourself.

⁵ But if you don't answer questions from fools, they will think they are smart.

⁶ Never let a fool carry your message.

If you do, it will be like cutting off your own feet.

You are only asking for trouble.

⁷ A fool trying to say something wise is like a paralysed person trying to walk.

⁸ Showing honour to a fool is as bad as tying a rock in a sling.

⁹ A fool trying to say something wise is like a drunk waving a thorn bush like a weapon.

¹⁰ Hiring a fool or a stranger passing by is dangerous—like an archer shooting arrows wildly into the air.

¹¹ Like a dog that returns to its vomit, a fool does the same foolish things again and again.

¹² People who think they are wise when they are not are worse than fools.

¹³ A person who is lazy and wants to stay at home says, "What if there is a lion out there? Really, there might be a lion in the street!"

¹⁴ Like a door on its hinges, a lazy man turns back and forth on his bed.

¹⁵ Lazy people are too lazy to lift the food from their plates to their mouths.

¹⁶ Lazy people think they are seven times smarter than the people who really have good sense.

¹⁷ To step between two people arguing is as foolish as going out into the street and grabbing a stray dog by the ears.

¹⁸⁻¹⁹ Anyone who would trick someone and then say, "I was only joking" is like a fool who shoots flaming arrows into the air and accidentally kills someone.

²⁰ Without wood, a fire goes out. Without gossip, arguments stop.

[§]25:22 *In ... ashamed* Literally, "for you will heap coals of fire on his head".

²¹ Charcoal keeps the coals glowing,
wood keeps the fire burning,
and troublemakers keep arguments
alive.

²² People love to hear gossip.
It is like tasty food on its way to the
stomach.

²³ Good words that hide an evil heart
are like silver paint over a cheap, clay
pot.

²⁴ Evil people say things to make them-
selves look good,
but they keep their evil plans a secret.

²⁵ What they say sounds good, but don't
trust them.

They are full of evil ideas.

²⁶ They hide their evil plans with nice
words,
but in the end, everyone will see the evil
they do.

²⁷ Whoever digs a pit can fall into it.
Whoever rolls a large stone can be
crushed by it.

²⁸ Liars hate the people they hurt,
and false praise can hurt people.

27 Never boast about what you will
do in the future;
you have no idea what tomorrow will
bring.

² Never praise yourself.
Let others do it.

³ A stone is heavy, and sand is hard to
carry,
but the irritation caused by a fool is
much worse.

⁴ Anger is cruel and can destroy like a
flood,
but jealousy is much more dangerous.

⁵ Open criticism is better
than hidden love.

⁶ You can trust a friend who says things
that hurt.

But watch out for an enemy who greets
you like a friend.

⁷ When you are full, you will not even
eat honey.

When you are hungry, even something
bitter tastes sweet.

⁸ A man away from home
is like a bird away from its nest.

⁹ Perfume and incense make you feel
good,
and so does good advice from a friend.

¹⁰ Don't forget your own friends
or friends of your family.

When trouble comes,
don't always ask your family for help.
It is better to go to a neighbour nearby
than to relatives who live far away.

¹¹ My son, be wise. This will make me
happy.

Then I will be able to answer those who
criticize me.

¹² Wise people see trouble coming and
get out of the way,
but fools ignore the danger and suffer for
it.

¹³ When you make a deal with a
stranger, get something from him
and any other foreigners with him to
make sure he will pay you.

¹⁴ Don't wake your neighbours with a
loud "Good morning!"
To them, it will seem like a curse.

¹⁵ A complaining wife is like water
that never stops dripping on a rainy day.

¹⁶ Stopping her is like trying to stop the
wind
or trying to hold oil in your hand.

¹⁷ As one piece of iron sharpens another,
so friends keep each other sharp.

¹⁸ People who take care of fig trees are
allowed to eat the fruit.

In the same way, people who take care
of their masters will be rewarded.

¹⁹ Just as you can see your own face re-
flected in water,
so your heart reflects the kind of person
you are.

²⁰ Just as the place of death and destruc-
tion is never full,
people always want more and more.

²¹ People use fire to purify gold and silver.

In the same way, you are tested by the praise people give you.

²² Even if you pound fools to powder like grain in a bowl, you will never force the foolishness out of them.

²³ Learn all you can about your sheep. Take care of your goats the best you can.

²⁴ Neither wealth nor a crown will last forever.

²⁵ Cut the hay, and new grass will grow. Then gather the new plants that grow on the hills.

²⁶ Cut the wool from your lambs, and make your clothes.

Sell some of your goats, and buy some land.

²⁷ You will still have plenty of milk for you and your family and enough to keep your servants healthy.

28 The wicked are afraid of everything, but those who do what is right are as brave as lions.

² A lawless nation will have many bad leaders,

but a smart leader will rule for a long time in a land where people obey the law.

³ A leader who takes advantage of the poor is like a hard rain that destroys the crops.**

⁴ Those who refuse to obey the law praise evil people, but those who obey the law oppose them.

⁵ The wicked don't understand justice, but those who love the LORD understand it completely.

⁶ It is better to be poor and honest than rich and evil.

⁷ A smart son obeys the laws, but a son who spends time with worthless people brings shame to his father.

⁸ If you get rich by charging high interest rates, your wealth will go to someone who is kind to the poor.

⁹ When people do not listen to God's teachings, he does not listen to their prayers.

¹⁰ Those who plan to hurt good people will fall into their own traps, but good things will happen to those who are good.

¹¹ The rich always think they are wise, but a poor person who is wise can see the truth.

¹² When good people become leaders, everything is great, but when the wicked rise to power, everyone hides.

¹³ Whoever hides their sins will not be successful, but whoever confesses their sins and stops doing wrong will receive mercy.

¹⁴ Great blessings belong to those who are careful to avoid sin, but stubborn people will have plenty of troubles.

¹⁵ An evil ruler over those who are helpless is like an angry lion or a charging bear.

¹⁶ A foolish ruler hurts the people under him, but a ruler who hates wrong will rule for a long time.

¹⁷ A murderer will never have peace. Don't support such a person.

¹⁸ Honest people will be safe,

** **28:3** Or "A poor person who takes advantage of beggars is like a hard rain and no food."

but dishonest people will be ruined.

¹⁹Whoever works hard will have plenty to eat,

but whoever wastes their time with dreams will always be poor.

²⁰People who can be trusted will have many blessings,

but those who are just trying to get rich in a hurry will be punished.

²¹It is wrong for a judge to support someone simply because he knows them,

but some judges will change their decisions for the price of a loaf of bread.

²²Selfish people only want to get rich. They do not realize that they are very close to being poor.

²³Correct someone, and later they will thank you.

They will respect that more than dishonest praise.

²⁴Someone might steal from their parents and say,

“I did nothing wrong.”

But that person is as bad as an enemy who smashes everything in the house.

²⁵Greedy people might sue you in court, but those who trust the LORD are rewarded.

²⁶It is foolish to be too confident.

Those who ask for advice are wise and will escape disaster.

²⁷Whoever gives to the poor will have plenty.

Whoever refuses to help them will get nothing but curses.

²⁸When the wicked rise to power, everyone hides.

When they are defeated, good people multiply.

29 If you keep refusing to listen to warnings,

one day you will be hurt so badly that no one can help you.

²When the rulers are good, the people are happy.

When the rulers are evil, the people groan.

³A son who loves wisdom makes his father happy.

One who wastes his money on prostitutes will lose his wealth.

⁴A nation will be strong when it has a fair and just king.

A nation will be weak when it has a king who is selfish and demands gifts.

⁵If you give false praise to get what you want,

you will be caught in your own trap.

⁶Evil people are defeated by their sin, but good people will sing and be happy.

⁷Good people want to do what is right for the poor,

but the wicked don't care.

⁸Proud people who laugh at what is right cause problems that divide whole cities,

but people who are wise are able to calm those who are angry.

⁹If someone who is wise tries to settle a problem with a fool,

the fool will argue and say stupid things, and they will never agree.

¹⁰If you always try to be honest, murderers will hate you;

they will try to kill everyone who does what is right.^{††}

¹¹Fools are quick to express their anger, but wise people are patient and control themselves.

¹²If a ruler listens to lies, all his officials will be evil.

¹³In one way the poor and those who steal from them are the same:

the LORD made them both.

^{††}29:10 *they will try ... is right* Or “but those who do what is right will want you to be their friend”.

¹⁴ If a king judges the poor fairly,
he will rule for a long time.

¹⁵ The right kind of punishment can
make children wise,
but children out of control are a disgrace
to their mother.

¹⁶ If the wicked are ruling the nation, sin
will be everywhere,
but those who do what is right will win
in the end.

¹⁷ Correct your children whenever they
are wrong.

Then you will always be proud of them.
They will never make you ashamed.

¹⁸ If a nation is not guided by God, the
people will lose self-control,
but the nation that obeys God's law will
be happy.

¹⁹ Servants will not learn a lesson if you
only talk to them.
They might understand you, but they
will not obey.

²⁰ There is more hope for a fool
than for someone who speaks without
thinking.

²¹ If you are too nice to your young
servants,
they will cause you trouble later.

²² An angry person causes arguments,
and someone who is quick-tempered is
guilty of many sins.

²³ Your pride can bring you down.
Humility will bring you honour.

²⁴ If you take part in a crime, you are
your own worst enemy.

When you refuse to be a witness to the
crime, you will be put under a curse.

²⁵ Fear can be a trap,
but if you trust in the LORD, you will be
safe.

²⁶ Many people want the friendship of a
ruler,

but the LORD is the only one who judges
people fairly.

²⁷ Good people hate those who do
wrong,
and the wicked hate those who do right.

Wise Sayings of Agur Son of Jakeh

30 These are the words of Agur son
of Jakeh. He has this message:
“God, I am tired, so very tired.

How can I keep going?”^{‡‡}

² I am too stupid to be called human.

I am not as smart as most other people.

³ I have not learned to be wise.

I know nothing about the Holy One.[¶]

⁴ Who has ever gone up to heaven and
come back down?

Who can hold the winds in his hand?

Who can gather up all the water in his
lap?

Who has set the limits for the world?

If you know anyone who has done these
things,

tell me his name and his son's name!

⁵ Every word that God speaks is true.

God is a safe place for those who go to
him.

⁶ So don't try to change what God says.

If you do, he will punish you and prove
that you are a liar.

⁷ God, I ask you to do two things for me;
please agree to do them before I die.

⁸ Don't let me tell lies.

And don't make me too rich or too
poor—

give me only enough food for each day.

⁹ If I have too much, I might say that I
don't need you

or that I don't even know you, LORD.

But if I am too poor, I might steal
and bring shame to the name of my God.

¹⁰ Never say bad things about a slave to
his master.

^{‡‡}30:1 *He has ... keep going?* Or “This is his message to Ithiel and Ucal.”

[¶]30:3 *Holy One* Literally, “the holy ones”.

If you do, that slave will curse you, and you will suffer for it.

¹¹ Some people curse their fathers and show no respect to their mothers.

¹² Some people think they are pure, but they are still covered with the filth of their sin.

¹³ Some people are so proud of themselves, and they look down on everyone else.

¹⁴ Some people are like wild animals with teeth as sharp as knives.

They attack the poor, taking all that they have, until they completely destroy them.

¹⁵ Greedy people know only two things:^{§§}

“Give me,” and “Give me.”

There are three other things that are never satisfied—

really, four things that never have enough:

¹⁶ the place of death, a woman with no children,

dry ground that needs rain

and a fire that will never stop by itself.

¹⁷ People who make fun of their father or refuse to obey their mother

should have their eyes plucked out by wild birds

and be eaten by vultures.

¹⁸ There are three things I don't understand—

really, there are four things that amaze me:

¹⁹ the way an eagle flies high in the sky,

the way a snake slides over a rock,

the way a ship sails on the sea,

and the way a man loves a woman.

²⁰ A woman who is not faithful to her husband acts as if she is innocent.

She eats, wipes her mouth

and says she has done nothing wrong.

²¹ There are three things that make trouble on the earth—

really, four that the earth cannot endure:

²² a slave who becomes a king,

fools who have everything they need,

²³ a woman whose husband hated her but still married her

and a servant girl who becomes ruler over the woman she serves.

²⁴ There are four things on the earth that are small but very wise:

²⁵ ants are small and weak,

but they save their food all summer;

²⁶ badgers are small animals,

but they make their homes in the rocks;

²⁷ locusts have no king,

but they are able to work together;

²⁸ lizards are small enough to catch with your hands,

but you can find them living in the palaces of kings.

²⁹ There are three things that look proud when they walk—

really, there are four:

³⁰ a lion, the greatest of the animals,

who runs from nothing,

³¹ a cockerel walking proudly, a male goat

and a king in front of his people.

³² If you have been foolish enough to become proud

and make plans against other people,

stop and think about what you are doing.

³³ Stirring milk causes butter to form.

Hitting someone's nose causes blood to flow,

and making people angry causes trouble.

Wise Words for a King

31 These are the words that the mother of King Lemuel of Massa taught him:

² I prayed for a son,

and you are the son I gave birth to.

§§30:15 Literally, “A leech has two daughters.”

³ Don't waste your strength on women.
Women destroy kings, so don't waste
yourself on them.

⁴ Lemuel, it is not wise for kings to drink
wine.

It is not wise for rulers to want beer.

⁵ They may drink too much and forget
what the law says.

Then they might take away the rights of
the poor.

⁶ Give beer to people without hope.

Give wine to those who are in trouble.

⁷ Let them drink to forget their troubles.

Let them forget they are poor.

⁸ Speak up for people who cannot speak
for themselves.

Help people who are in trouble.

⁹ Stand up for what you know is right,
and judge all people fairly.

Protect the rights of the poor and those
who need help.

A Good Wife

¹⁰ *A good wife is so hard to find!
She is worth far more than jewels.

¹¹ Her husband depends on her.
He will never be poor.

¹² She does good for her husband all her
life.

She never causes him trouble.

¹³ She is always gathering wool and flax[†]
and enjoys making things with her
hands.

¹⁴ She is like a ship from a faraway place.
She brings home food from everywhere.

¹⁵ She wakes up early in the morning
and cooks food for her family
and gives the servants their share.

¹⁶ She looks at land and buys it.
She uses the money she has earned and
plants a vineyard.

¹⁷ She works very hard.

She is strong and able to do all her work.

¹⁸ She knows what she makes to sell is
good;

she works late into the night.

¹⁹ She makes her own thread
and weaves her own cloth.

²⁰ She always gives to the poor
and helps those who need it.

²¹ She does not worry about her family
when it snows.

She has given them all good, warm
clothes.

²² She makes sheets and covers for the
beds,

and she wears clothes of fine linen.

²³ Her husband is a respected member of
the city council,

where he meets with the other leaders.

²⁴ She makes clothes and belts
and sells them to the merchants.

²⁵ She is a strong person,[‡] and people re-
spect her.

She looks to the future with confidence.

²⁶ She speaks with wisdom
and teaches others to be loving and kind.

²⁷ She oversees the care of her house.

She is never lazy.

²⁸ Her children say good things about
her.

Her husband boasts about her and says,

²⁹ "There are many good women,
but you are the best."

³⁰ Grace and beauty can fool you,
but a woman who honours the LORD
should be praised.

³¹ Give her the reward she deserves.

Praise her in public for what she has
done.

***31:10** In Hebrew, each verse of this poem starts with the next letter of the alphabet, so this poem shows all the good qualities of a woman "from A to Z".

[†]**31:13** *flax* A plant used to make linen cloth.

[‡]**31:25** *She is a strong person* Or "She is praised."