

- 150** ¹Praise the LORD!
 Praise God in his Temple*!
 Praise him in heaven, his strong
 fortress*!
² Praise him for the great things he does!
 Praise him for all his greatness!
³ Praise him with trumpets and horns!
 Praise him with harps and lyres*!
⁴ Praise him with tambourines and dancing!

- Praise him with stringed instruments
 and flutes!
⁵ Praise him with loud cymbals!
 Praise him with crashing cymbals!
⁶ Everything that breathes, praise the
 LORD!
 Praise the LORD!

Proverbs

Introduction

1 ¹These are the proverbs* of Solomon, the son of David* and king of Israel.* ²They will help you learn to be wise, to accept correction, and to understand wise sayings. ³They will teach you to develop your mind in the right way. You will learn to do what is right and to be honest and fair. ⁴These proverbs will make even those without education smart. They will teach young people what they need to know and how to use what they have learned. ⁵Even the wise could become wiser by listening to these proverbs. They will gain understanding and learn to solve difficult problems. ⁶These sayings will help you understand proverbs, stories with hidden meanings, words of the wise, and other difficult sayings.

⁷Knowledge begins with fear and respect for the LORD, but stubborn fools hate wisdom and refuse to learn.

Advice to a Son

⁸My son,^a listen to your father when he corrects you, and don't ignore what your mother teaches you. ⁹What you learn from your parents will bring you honor and respect, like a crown or a gold medal.^b

¹⁰My son, those who love to do wrong will try to trick you. Don't listen to them. ¹¹They will say, "Come with us. Let's hide and beat to death anyone who happens to walk by. ¹²We will swallow them whole, as the grave swallows the dying. ¹³We will take everything they have and fill our houses with stolen goods. ¹⁴So join us, and you can share everything we get."

¹⁵My son, don't follow them. Don't even take the first step along that path. ¹⁶They run

a **1:8 My son** The proverbs in this section may have been directed originally to a teenage boy, perhaps a prince, who was becoming a young man. They are intended to teach him how to be a responsible person and leader who loves and respects God.

b **1:9** Literally, "They are like a wreath of favor to your head and a necklace around your neck."

to do something evil, and they cannot wait to kill someone.

¹⁷You cannot trap birds with a net if they see you spreading it out. ¹⁸But evil people cannot see the trap they set for themselves. ¹⁹This is what happens to those who are greedy. Whatever they get destroys them.

The Good Woman—Wisdom

²⁰Listen! Wisdom^c is shouting in the streets. She is crying out in the marketplace. ²¹She 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? ²³I wanted to tell you everything I knew and give you all my knowledge, but you didn't listen to my advice and teaching.

²⁴"I tried to help, but you refused to listen. I offered my hand, but you turned away from me. ²⁵You ignored my advice and refused to be corrected. ²⁶So I will laugh at your troubles and make fun of you when what you fear happens. ²⁷Disasters will strike you like a storm. Problems will pound you like a strong wind. Trouble and misery will weigh you down.

²⁸"Fools will call for me, but I will not answer. They will look for me, but they will not find me. ²⁹That is because they hated knowledge. They refused to fear and respect the LORD. ³⁰They ignored my advice and refused to be corrected. ³¹They filled their lives with what they wanted. They went their own way, so they will get what they deserve.

³²"Fools die because they refuse to follow wisdom. They are content to follow their foolish ways, and that will destroy them. ³³But those who listen to me will live in safety and comfort. They will have nothing to fear."

c **1:20 Wisdom** Wisdom is pictured here as a good woman trying to get the attention of this young man, calling him to be wise and obey God. In a later passage (9:13–18), Foolishness is represented as another woman who is urging him toward a life of sin.

Listen to Wisdom

2¹My son, pay attention to what I say. Remember my commands. ²Listen to wisdom, and do your best to understand. ³Ask for good judgment. Cry out for understanding. ⁴Look for wisdom like silver. Search for it like hidden treasure. ⁵If you do this, you will understand what it means to respect the LORD, and you will come to know God.

⁶The LORD is the source of wisdom; knowledge and understanding come from his mouth. ⁷He gives good advice to honest people and shields those who do what is right. ⁸He makes sure that people are treated fairly. He watches over his loyal followers.

⁹If you listen to him, you will understand what is just and fair and how to do what is right. ¹⁰You will gain wisdom, and knowledge will bring you joy.

¹¹Planning ahead will protect you, and understanding will guard you. ¹²These will keep you from following the wrong path and will protect you from those who have evil plans. ¹³Such people have left the straight path and now walk in darkness.* ¹⁴They enjoy doing evil and are happy with the confusion it brings. ¹⁵Their ways are crooked; they lie and cheat.

¹⁶Wisdom will save you from that other woman, another man's wife, who tempts you with sweet words. ¹⁷She married when she was young, but then she left her husband. She forgot the marriage vows she made before God. ¹⁸Going into her house leads to death. She will lead you to the grave. ¹⁹All who enter lose their life and never return.

²⁰Wisdom will help you follow the example of good people and stay on the right path. ²¹Honest people will live in the land, and those who do right will remain there. ²²But the wicked will be forced to leave. Those who lie and cheat will be thrown out of the land.

The Blessing of Wisdom

3¹My son, don't forget my teaching. Remember what I tell you to do. ²What I teach will give you a good, long life, and all will go well for you.

³Don'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.

⁹Honor 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,

and don't be angry when he corrects you. ¹²The LORD corrects the one he loves, just as a father corrects a child he cares about.

¹³Those who find wisdom are fortunate; they will be blessed when they gain understanding. ¹⁴Profit that comes from wisdom is better than silver and even the finest gold. ¹⁵Wisdom is worth more than fine jewels. Nothing you desire has more value.

¹⁶With her right hand, Wisdom offers long life—with the other hand, riches and honor. 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 and understanding, the LORD created the earth and sky. ²⁰With his knowledge, he made the oceans and the clouds that produce rain.

²¹My son, don't ever let wisdom out of your sight. Hold on to wisdom and careful planning. ²²They will bring you a long life filled with honor. 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. ²⁵⁻²⁶You have no reason to fear some sudden disaster. The LORD will be your strength. Never fear the destruction that comes to the wicked. The LORD will protect you from that trap.

²⁷Do everything you possibly can for those who need help. ²⁸If your neighbor needs something you have, don't say, "Come back tomorrow." Give it to him immediately.

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

³⁰Don't take people to court without good reason, especially when they have done nothing to harm you.

³¹Don't envy those who are violent. Never choose to be like them. ³²Such crooked people are disgusting to the LORD. But he is a friend to those who are good and honest.

³³The LORD curses* a wicked family, but he blesses the homes of those who live right.

³⁴He will humiliate those who make fun of others, but he is kind to those who are humble.

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

A Father's Advice About Wisdom

4¹Children, listen to your father's teaching. ²Pay attention and you will learn how to learn. ³The advice I give is good, so don't ever forget what I teach you.

⁴When I was my father's little boy and my mother's dear son,^b my father taught me this: "Pay attention to what I say. Obey my commands and you will have a good life." ⁵Try

^a3:29 neighbor ... trusts you Or "neighbor. After all, you live near one another for protection."

^b4:3 dear son Or "only son."

to get wisdom and understanding. Don't forget my teaching or ignore what I say. ⁶Don't turn away from wisdom, and she will protect you. Love her, and she will keep you safe.

⁷The first step to becoming wise is to look for wisdom, so use everything you have to get understanding. ⁸Love wisdom, and she will make you great. Hold on to wisdom, and she will bring you honor. ⁹Wisdom will reward you with a crown of honor and glory."

¹⁰Son, listen to me. Do what I say, and you will live a long time. ¹¹I am teaching you about wisdom and guiding you on the right path. ¹²As you walk on it, you will not step into a trap. Even if you run, you will not trip and fall. ¹³Always remember this teaching. Don't forget it. It is the key to life, so guard it well.

¹⁴Don't take the path of the wicked; don't follow those who do evil. ¹⁵Stay away from that path; don't even go near it. Turn around and go another way. ¹⁶The wicked cannot sleep until they have done something evil. They will not rest until they bring someone down. ¹⁷Evil and violence are their food and drink.

¹⁸The path of those who live right is like the early morning light. It gets brighter and brighter until the full light of day. ¹⁹But the path of the wicked is like a dark night. They trip and fall over what they cannot see.

²⁰My son, pay attention to what I say. Listen closely to my words. ²¹Don't let them out of your sight. Never stop thinking about them. ²²These words are the secret of life and health to all who discover them. ²³Above all, be careful what you think because your thoughts control your life.

²⁴Don't bend the truth or say things that you know are not right. ²⁵Keep your eyes on the path, and look straight ahead. ²⁶Make sure you are going the right way, and nothing will make you fall. ²⁷Don't go to the right or to the left, and you will stay away from evil.

The Wisdom of Avoiding Adultery

5 ¹Son, listen to this piece of wisdom from me. Pay attention to what I know to be true. ²Remember to live wisely, and what you learn will keep your lips from saying the wrong thing. ³Now, another man's wife might be very charming, and the words from her lips so sweet and inviting. ⁴But in the end, she will bring only bitterness and pain. It will be like bitter poison and a sharp sword. ⁵She is on a path leading to death, and she will lead you straight to the grave. ⁶Don't follow her. She has lost her way and does not even know it. Be careful. Stay on the road that leads to life.

⁷Now, my sons, listen to me. Don't forget the words I say. ⁸Stay away from the woman who commits adultery.* Don't even go near her house. ⁹If you do, others will get the honor you should have had. Some stranger will get

everything you worked years to get. ¹⁰People you don't know will take all your wealth. Others will get what you worked for. ¹¹At the end of your life, you will be sad that you ruined your health and lost everything you had. ¹²⁻¹³Then you will say, "Why didn't I listen to my parents? Why didn't I pay attention to my teachers? I didn't want to be disciplined. I refused to be corrected. ¹⁴So now I have suffered through just about every kind of trouble anyone can have, and everyone knows it."

¹⁵Now, about sex and marriage: Drink only the water that comes from your own well, ¹⁶and don't let your water flow out into the streets. ¹⁷Keep it for yourself, and don't share it with strangers. ¹⁸Be happy with your own wife. Enjoy the woman you married while you were young. ¹⁹She is like a beautiful deer, a lovely fawn.* Let her love satisfy you completely. Stay drunk on her love, ²⁰and don't go stumbling into the arms of another woman.

²¹The LORD clearly sees everything you do. He watches where you go. ²²The sins of the wicked will trap them. Those sins will be like ropes holding them back. ²³Evil people will die because they refuse to be disciplined. They will be trapped by their own desires.

Dangers of Debt

6 ¹My son, don't make yourself responsible for the debts of others. Don't make such deals with friends or strangers. ²If you do, your words will trap you. ³You will be under the power of other people, so you must go and free yourself. Beg them to free you from that debt. ⁴Don't wait to rest or sleep. ⁵Escape from that trap 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, and no leader. ⁸But in the summer, ants gather all of their food and save it. So when winter comes, there is plenty to eat.

⁹You lazy people, how long are you going 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 a thief came and stole everything you owned.

Troublemakers

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 to do something bad. ¹⁵But they will be punished. Disaster will strike, and they will be destroyed. There will be no one to help them.

What the Lord Hates

- ¹⁶ The LORD hates these seven things:
¹⁷ eyes that show pride,
 tongues that tell lies,
 hands that kill innocent people,
¹⁸ hearts that plan evil things to do,
 feet that run to do evil,
¹⁹ witnesses in court who tell lies,
 and anyone who causes family members
 to fight.

Warning Against Adultery

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 it protects you from the smooth talk of another man's wife. ²⁵Such a woman might be beautiful, but don't let that 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 drop a hot coal in your lap, your clothes will be burned. ²⁸If you step on one, your feet will be burned. ²⁹If you sleep 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 commits adultery* is a fool. He brings about his own destruction. ³³He will suffer disease and disgrace 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 Keep You From Adultery

7 ¹My son, remember my words. Don't forget what I have told you. ²Consider my teaching 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. ⁴Treat wisdom like the woman you love and knowledge like the one dearest to you. ⁵Wisdom will save you from that other woman, the other man's wife, who tempts you with such sweet words.

⁶One day I was looking out my window ⁷at some foolish teenagers and noticed one who had no sense at all. ⁸He was walking through the marketplace and came to the corner where a certain woman lived. He then turned up the road that goes by her house.

⁹The day was ending. The sun had set, and it was almost dark. ¹⁰Suddenly, there she was in front of him, dressed like a prostitute. She 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,* aloe,* and cinnamon. ¹⁸Come, let's enjoy ourselves all night. We can make love until dawn. ¹⁹My husband has gone on a business trip. ²⁰He took enough money for a long trip and won't be home for two weeks."¹⁹

²¹This is what the woman said to tempt the young man, and her smooth words tricked him. ²²He followed her, like a bull 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. ²⁶She has brought down some of the most powerful men; she has left many dead bodies in her path. ²⁷Her house is the place of death. The road to it leads straight to the grave.

Wisdom—the Good Woman

- 8** ¹Listen, 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 Choose discipline over silver
 and knowledge over the finest gold.

8:20 won't be ... weeks Literally, "will not come home until the full moon." The fellowship meal shows that this happened at the time of the new moon, the first day of the Hebrew month.

- 11 Wisdom is better than pearls,
and nothing you desire compares with
her.

The Value of Wisdom

- 12^a I am Wisdom.
I live with Good Judgment.
I am at home with Knowledge and
Planning.
- 13 To respect the LORD means 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.^a
- 17 I love those who love me,
and those who look for me will find me.
- 18 With me there are riches and honor.
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^a 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 and hills
were set into place,
before the earth and fields were made,
before the dust of this world was
formed.
- 27 I was there
when he set up the skies,
when he drew a circle in the ocean to
make a place for the land.
- 28 I was there
when he put the clouds in the sky and
made the deep springs flow.
- 29 I was there
when he set the limits on the sea to
make it stop where he said.
I was there
when he laid the foundations of the
earth.
- 30 I grew up as a child by his side,^b
laughing and playing all the time.
- 31 I played in the world he made
and enjoyed the people he put there.

^a8:16 and important ... decisions Or "as well as important officials, all the judges on earth."

^b8:30 I grew ... his side Or "I was beside him like a skilled worker."

- 32^a Now, children, listen to me.
If you follow my ways,
you will be happy too.
- 33 Listen to my teaching and be wise;
don't ignore what I say.
- 34 Whoever waits at my door
and listens for me will be blessed.
- 35 Those who find me find life,
and the LORD will reward them.
- 36 But those who do not find me
put their lives in danger.
Whoever hates me loves death."

Wisdom's Invitation

9¹ Wisdom has built her house; she has made it strong with seven columns.^c ²She has cooked meat, mixed wine, and put food on the table. ³She has sent her servant girls to announce from the highest hill in the city,^d ⁴"Whoever needs instruction, come." She invites all the simple people and says, ⁵"Come, eat my food and drink the wine I have prepared. ⁶Leave your old, foolish ways and live! Advance along the path of understanding."

⁷Criticize a person who is rude and shows no respect, and you will only get insults. Correct the wicked, and you will only get hurt. ⁸Don't correct such people, or they will hate you. But correct those who are wise, and they will love you. ⁹Teach the wise, and they will become wiser. Instruct those who live right, and they will gain more knowledge.

¹⁰Wisdom begins with fear and respect for the LORD. Knowledge of the Holy One leads to understanding. ¹¹Wisdom will help you live longer; she will add years to your life. ¹²If 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—the Other Woman

¹³Foolishness is that other woman, who is loud, stupid, and knows nothing. ¹⁴She sits on her chair at the door of her house, up on the highest hill of the city. ¹⁵When people walk by, she calls out to them. They show no interest in her, but still she says, ¹⁶"Whoever needs instruction, come." She invites all the simple people and says, ¹⁷"Stolen water is sweet. Stolen bread tastes good." ¹⁸Those simple people don't realize that her house is full of ghosts and that her guests have entered the world of the dead.

Solomon's Proverbs

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

^c9:1 seven columns In ancient Israel, a good house was one that had four main rooms with seven columns to support the roof.

^d9:3 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 will not really help you, but doing right will save you from death.

³The LORD takes care of good people and gives them the food they need, but he keeps the wicked from getting what they want.

⁴Lazy hands will make you poor; hard-working hands will make you rich.

⁵A son who works hard while it is harvest time will be successful, but one who sleeps through the harvest is worthless.

⁶People say good things about those who live right, but the words of the wicked only hide their violent plans.

⁷Good people leave memories that bless us, but the wicked are soon forgotten.

⁸The wise accept instruction, but fools argue and bring trouble on themselves.

⁹Honest people can always feel secure, but lying cheaters will be caught.

¹⁰If you fail to speak the truth, trouble will follow. If you speak openly, peace will come.^a

¹¹The words of good people are like a spring of fresh water,^b but the words of the wicked only hide their violent plans.

¹²Hatred causes arguments, but love over-looks all wrongs.

¹³Intelligent people speak words of wisdom, but fools must be punished before they learn their lesson.^c

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.

¹⁸You might have to lie to hide your hatred, but saying something hurtful could be even more foolish.^d

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.^e

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.

²⁶Sending a lazy person to do anything is as irritating as vinegar on your teeth or smoke in your eyes.

²⁷Respect for the LORD will add years to your life, but the wicked will have their lives cut short.

²⁸What good people hope for brings happiness,^f but what the wicked hope for brings destruction.

²⁹The LORD protects those who do right, but he destroys those who do wrong.

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

³¹Those who live right say wise things, but people stop listening to troublemakers.^g

³²Good people know the right things to say, but the wicked say things to make trouble.

11 ¹The LORD hates false scales, but he loves accurate weights.

²Proud and boastful people will be shamed, but wisdom stays with those who are modest and humble.

³Good people are guided by their honesty, but crooks who lie and cheat will ruin themselves.

⁴Money is worthless when you face God's punishment, but living right will save you from death.

⁵Doing right makes life better for those who are good, but the wicked are destroyed by their own wicked ways.

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

⁷When the wicked die, all their hopes are lost; everything they thought they could do comes to nothing.

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

⁹With their words hypocrites* can destroy their neighbors. But with what they know, good people can escape.

¹⁰When good people are successful, the whole city is happy, and they all shout with joy when evil people are destroyed.

¹¹Blessings from the honest people living in a city will make it great, but the things evil people say can destroy it.

¹²Stupid people say bad things about their neighbors.^h Wise people know to be quiet.

^a10:10 *If you ... come* This is from the ancient Greek version. The Hebrew text repeats the second half of verse 8.

^b10:11 *spring of fresh water* Or "the source of life."

^c10:13 Literally, "Wisdom can be found on the lips of the intelligent, but a rod on the back of fools." This is a wordplay. In Hebrew, "lip" sounds like "rod."

^d10:18 Or "Sometimes it would be foolish to say something negative, but the only way to hide your opposition would be to lie."

^e10:22 Or "A blessing from the LORD will bring you true wealth—wealth without troubles."

^f10:28 *good people ... happiness* Or "Good people can look forward to happiness."

^g10:31 Or "The mouth of a good man speaks wisdom, but the tongue of a troublemaker will be cut off."

^h11:12 *Stupid people ... neighbors* Or "The neighbors hate a stupid person."

¹³People who tell secrets about others cannot be trusted. Those who can be trusted keep quiet.

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

¹⁵You will be sorry if you promise to pay a stranger's debt. Refuse to make such promises and you will be safe.

¹⁶A kind and gentle woman gains respect, but violent men gain only wealth.

¹⁷People who are kind will be rewarded for their kindness, but cruel people will be rewarded with trouble.

¹⁸The work of evil people is all lies, but those who do right will receive a good reward.^a

¹⁹People 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.

²⁰The LORD hates those who love to do evil, but he is pleased with those who try to do right.

²¹The truth is, evil people will be punished, and good people will be set free.

²²A beautiful woman without good sense is like a gold ring in a pig's nose.

²³What good people want brings more good. What evil people want brings more trouble.

²⁴Some people give freely and gain more; others refuse to give and end up with less.

²⁵Give freely, and you will profit. Help others, and you will gain more for yourself.

²⁶People curse* a greedy man who refuses to sell his grain, but they bless a man who sells his grain to feed others.

²⁷People are pleased with those who try to do good. Those who look for trouble will find it.

²⁸Those who trust in their riches will fall like dead leaves, but good people will blossom.

²⁹Those 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.

³⁰What good people produce is like a life-giving tree. Those who are wise give new life to others.^b

³¹If good people are rewarded here on earth, then surely those who do evil will also get what they deserve.

12¹Whoever loves discipline loves to learn; whoever hates to be corrected is stupid.

²It is good to learn what pleases the LORD, because he condemns those who plan to do wrong.

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

⁴A good wife is like a crown to her husband, but a shameful wife is like a cancer.

⁵Good people are honest and fair in all they do, but those who are evil lie and cannot be trusted.

⁶Evil people use their words to hurt others, but the words from good people can save others from danger.

⁷When evil people are destroyed, they are gone and forgotten, but good people are remembered long after they are gone.

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

⁹It is better to appear unimportant and have a servant than to pretend to be important and have no food.

¹⁰Good people take good care of their animals, but the wicked know only how to be cruel.^c

¹¹Farmers who work their land have plenty of food, but those who waste their time on worthless projects are foolish.

¹²The 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.^d

¹³The wicked are trapped by their foolish words, but good people escape from such trouble.

¹⁴People get good things for the words they say, and they are rewarded for the work they do.

¹⁵Fools always think their own way is best, but wise people listen to what others tell them.

¹⁶Fools are easily upset, but wise people avoid insulting others.

¹⁷Good people speak the truth and can be trusted in court, but liars make bad witnesses.

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

¹⁹Lies last only a moment, but the truth lasts forever.

²⁰People who work for evil make trouble, but those who plan for peace bring happiness.

²¹The Lord will keep good people safe, but evil people will have many troubles.

²²The LORD hates people who tell lies, but he is pleased with those who tell the truth.

²³Smart people don't tell everything they know, but fools tell everything and show they are fools.

²⁴Those who work hard will be put in charge of others, but lazy people will have to work like slaves.

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

^a11:18 This is a wordplay in Hebrew. The word "lies" sounds like the word "reward."

^b11:30 Or, according to one ancient version, "The fruit of a good man is a tree of life, but a violent man takes lives."

^c12:10 but the wicked ... cruel Or "but even the 'kindness' of the wicked is still cruelty."

^d12:12 The Hebrew text here is hard to understand.

²⁶Good people are careful about choosing their friends, but evil people always choose the wrong ones.

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

²⁸Along the path of goodness there is life; that is the way to live forever.^a

13 ¹A wise son listens to his father's advice, but a proud son will not listen to correction.

²People get good things for the words they say, but those who cannot be trusted say only bad things.

³People who are careful about what they say will save their lives, but those who speak without thinking will be destroyed.

⁴Lazy people always want things but never get them. Those who work hard get plenty.

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹¹Money gained by cheating others will soon be gone. Money earned through hard work will grow and grow.

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

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

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

¹⁵People like a person with good sense, but life is hard for someone who cannot be trusted.

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

¹⁷Disaster will catch up to the wicked messenger, but a runner who can be trusted will bring peace.

¹⁸If you refuse to learn from your mistakes, you will be poor, and no one will respect you. If you listen when you are criticized, you will be honored.

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

²⁰Be friends with those who are wise, and you will become wise. Choose fools to be your friends, and you will have trouble.

²¹Trouble chases sinners wherever they go, but good things happen to good people.

²²It 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.

²³The poor might have good land that produces plenty of food, but bad decisions can take it away.^c

²⁴If you don't correct your children, you don't love them. If you love them, you will be quick to discipline them.

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

14 ¹A wise woman makes her home what it should be, but the home of a foolish woman is destroyed by her own actions.^d

²Those who live right respect the LORD, but dishonest people hate him.

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

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

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

⁶Anyone who makes fun of wisdom will never find it, but knowledge comes easily to those who understand its value.

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

⁸Wisdom lets smart people know what they are doing, but stupid people only think they know.

⁹Fines are needed to make fools obey the law, but good people are happy to obey it.

¹⁰When you are sad, no one else feels the pain; and when you are happy, no one else can really feel the joy.

¹¹An evil person's house will be destroyed, but a good person's family will do well.

¹²There is a way that people think is right, but it leads only to death.

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

¹⁴Evil people will be paid back for the wrong they do, and good people will be rewarded for the good they do.

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

¹⁶Wise people are careful and avoid trouble; fools are too confident and careless.

¹⁷A quick-tempered person does stupid things, but it is also true that people don't like anyone who quietly plans evil.

¹⁸Fools are rewarded with more foolishness. Smart people are rewarded with knowledge.

^a12:28 *that is ... forever* Or "but there is a path that leads to death."

^b13:9 Or "The light of those who do right is happy; the lamp of the wicked goes out."

^c13:23 Or "The fields of the poor might produce plenty of food, but the unjust often take it away."

^d14:1 Or "Wisdom builds her house, but Foolishness tears hers down with her own hands."

¹⁹Good people will defeat those who are evil, and the wicked will be forced to show respect to those who live right.

²⁰The poor have no friends, not even their neighbors, but the rich have many friends.

²¹It is wrong to say bad things about your neighbors. Be kind to the poor, and you will be blessed.

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

²³If you work hard, you will have plenty. If you do nothing but talk, you will not have enough.

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

²⁵A witness who tells the truth saves lives, but one who tells lies hurts others.

²⁶People who respect the LORD will be safe, and they will make their children feel secure.

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

²⁸Kings of large nations have great honor. Rulers without a country have nothing.

²⁹A patient person is very smart. A quick-tempered person makes stupid mistakes.

³⁰Peace of mind makes the body healthy, but jealousy is like a cancer.

³¹Whoever takes advantage of the poor insults their Maker, but whoever is kind to them honors him.

³²The wicked will be defeated by their evil, but good people are protected by their honesty.^a

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

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

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

15 ¹A gentle answer makes anger disappear, but a rough answer makes it grow.

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

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

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

⁵Fools refuse to listen to their father's advice, but those who accept discipline are smart.

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

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

⁸The LORD hates the offerings of the wicked, but he is happy to hear the prayers of those who live right.

⁹The LORD hates the way evil people live, but he loves those who try to do good.

¹⁰Whoever stops living right will be punished. Whoever hates to be corrected will be destroyed.

¹¹The LORD knows everything, even what happens in the place of death. So surely he knows what people are thinking.

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

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

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

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

¹⁶It is better to be poor and respect the LORD than to be rich and have many troubles.

¹⁷It is better to eat a little where there is love than to eat a lot where there is hate.

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

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

²⁰Wise children make their parents happy. Foolish children bring them shame.

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

²²If you don't ask for advice, your plans will fail. With many advisors, they will succeed.

²³People are happy when they give a good answer. And there is nothing better than the right word at the right time.

²⁴What wise people do leads to life here on earth^b and stops them from going down to the place of death.

²⁵The LORD destroys a proud man's house but protects a widow's property.

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

²⁷Whoever takes money to do wrong invites 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^c 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.

^a14:32 Or "The wicked will be crushed by their evil, and those who hope for their destruction are right to do so."

^b15:24 *here on earth* Literally, "above," that is, "above the ground."

^c15:30 *smile* Literally, "a sparkle in the eyes."

³³Wisdom teaches you to respect the LORD. You must be humbled before you can be honored.

16¹People might plan what they want to say, but it is the LORD who gives them the right words.

²People think that whatever they do is right, but the LORD judges their reason for doing it.

³Turn to the LORD for help in everything 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.^a 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 all scales and balances to be right; he wants all business agreements to be fair.

¹²Kings hate to see anyone doing wrong,^b because kingdoms grow strong only when everyone is honest and fair.

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

¹⁴When a king gets angry, he 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. 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 toward destruction. Proud thoughts will lead you to defeat.

¹⁹It is better to be a humble person living among the poor than to share the wealth among the proud.

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

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

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

^a16:6 *remove your guilt* Or "make atonement." The Hebrew word means "to cover," or "to erase" a person's sins.

^b16:12 *Kings ... wrong* Or "It is disgusting when kings do wrong."

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

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

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

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

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

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

²⁹Cruel people trick their neighbors and make them do wrong.³⁰With a wink of the eye, they plan to trick someone. With a grin, they make plans to hurt their friends.

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

³²It is better to be patient than to be a strong soldier. It is better to control your anger than to capture a city.

³³People might throw lots* to make a decision, but the answer always comes from the LORD.

17¹It is better to have nothing but a dry piece of bread to eat in peace than a whole house full of food with everyone arguing.

²A smart servant will gain control over his master's foolish son. He will be treated like a son and get a share of the inheritance.

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

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

⁵Whoever makes fun of beggars insults their Maker. Whoever laughs at someone else's trouble will be punished.

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

⁷You wouldn't expect to hear a fine speech from a fool, and you shouldn't expect lies from a ruler.

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

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

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

¹¹Those who are evil only want to cause trouble. In the end, punishment without mercy will be sent to them.

¹²It 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 these two things: punishing the innocent and letting 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, and a brother was born to help in times of trouble.

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

¹⁹A troublemaker loves to start arguments. Anyone who likes to brag is asking for trouble.

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.

²⁴Intelligent people think about what needs to be done here and now. Fools are always dreaming about faraway places.

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.

²⁷Intelligent people choose their words carefully. Those who know what they are doing remain calm.^a

²⁸Silent fools seem wise. They say nothing and appear to be smart.

18 ¹Some 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 tell 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 water bubbling up from a deep well—the well of wisdom.

⁵You must be fair in judging others. It is wrong to favor 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 honored.

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁸The best way to settle an argument between two powerful people may be to use lots.*

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

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

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

²²If you find a wife, you have found something good. She shows that the LORD is happy with you.

²³The poor are polite when they beg for help. The rich are rude with their answer.

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

19 ¹It is better to be poor and honest than to be a liar and a fool.

²Being 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.

³People ruin their lives with the foolish things they do, and then they blame the LORD for it.

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

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

⁶Many people are nice to a generous person. Everyone wants to be friends with someone who gives gifts.

⁷If 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.

⁸Be a friend to yourself; do all you can to be wise. Try hard to understand, and you will be rewarded.

⁹A witness who lies will be punished. That liar will be destroyed.

^b18:14 *help* Literally, "lift up" or "heal."

^c18:24 *Some friends ... with* Or "Some friends can bring disaster."

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

¹¹Experience makes you more patient, and you are most patient when you ignore insults.

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

¹³A foolish son brings a flood of troubles to his father, and a complaining wife is like the constant dripping of water.

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

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

¹⁶Obey the law and live; ignore it and die.

¹⁷Giving help to the poor is like loaning money to the LORD. He will pay you back for your kindness.

¹⁸Discipline your children while there is still hope. Avoiding it can be deadly.

¹⁹People who are quick to become angry must pay the price. Protect them from punishment, and they become worse.

²⁰Listen to advice and accept discipline; then you, too, will become wise.

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

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

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

²⁴Some people are too lazy to take care of themselves. They will not even lift the food from their plate to their mouth.

²⁵Punish a rude, arrogant person, and even slow learners will become wiser. But just a little correction is enough to teach a person who has understanding.

²⁶Those who would steal from their father and chase away their mother are disgusting, shameful people.

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

²⁸Using a criminal as a witness makes a joke of justice. People like that only want to do wrong.

²⁹People who show no respect for anything must be brought to justice. You must punish such fools.

20 ¹Wine and beer make people lose control; they get loud and stumble around. And that is foolish.

²An angry king is like a roaring lion. If you make him angry, you could lose your life.

³People who refuse to argue deserve respect. Any fool can start an argument.

⁴Some people are too lazy to plant seeds. So at harvest time, they look for food and find nothing.

⁵Getting information from someone can be like getting water from a deep well. If you are smart, you will draw it out.

⁶You might call many people your "friends," but it is hard to find someone who can really be trusted.

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

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

⁹Can anyone say their heart is pure? Who can say, "I am free from sin"?

¹⁰The LORD hates for people to use the wrong weights and measures to cheat others.

¹¹Even children show what they are like by the things they do. You can see if their actions are pure and right.

¹²It was the LORD who gave us eyes for seeing and ears for hearing.

¹³If you love to sleep, you will become poor. Use your time working and you will have plenty to eat.

¹⁴When buying something, people always say, "It's no good. It costs too much." Then they go away and tell others what a good deal they got.

¹⁵The right knowledge can bring you gold, pearls, and other expensive things.

¹⁶If someone promises to pay the debt of a stranger, get a coat or something from him to keep until the debt is paid.

¹⁷It may seem to be a good thing to get something by cheating, but in the end, it will be worth nothing.

¹⁸Get good advice when you make your plans. Before you start a war, find good advisors.

¹⁹You cannot trust someone who would talk about things told in private. So don't be friends with someone who talks too much.

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

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

²²Don't ever say, "I'll pay them back for what they did to me!" Wait for the LORD. He will make things right.

²³The LORD hates for people to use the wrong weights to cheat others. It is wrong to use scales that are not accurate.

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

²⁵Think carefully before you promise to give something to God. Later, you might wish you had not made that promise.

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

²⁷Your spirit is like a lamp to the LORD. He is able to see into your deepest parts.^c

^a20:21 Or "An inheritance greedily guarded in the beginning will not be blessed in the end."

^b20:24 Or "A man's steps are from the LORD, and people don't understand his way."

^c20:27 Or "The LORD examines your breath and searches your deepest thoughts."

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

²⁹We admire a young man for his strength, but we respect an old man for his gray hair.

³⁰A beating can remove evil and make you completely clean.^a

21 ¹To the LORD, a king's mind is like a ditch used to water the fields. He can lead the king wherever he wants him to go.

²People think that whatever they do is right, but the LORD judges the reasons for everything they do.

³Do what is right and fair. The LORD loves that more than sacrifices.

⁴Proud looks and proud thoughts are sins. They show a person is evil.

⁵Careful planning leads to profit. Acting too quickly leads to poverty.

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

⁷The bad things that evil people do will destroy them, because they refuse to do what is right.

⁸Criminals cause trouble wherever they go, but good people are honest and fair.

⁹It is better to live in a small corner on the roof than to share the house with a woman who is always arguing.

¹⁰Evil people always want to do more evil, and they show no mercy to people around them.

¹¹When you punish a proud person who laughs at what is right, even fools will learn something.^b But a little instruction is enough for the wise to learn what they should.

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

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

¹⁴If anyone is angry with you, give them a gift in private. A gift given in secret will calm even the strongest anger.

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

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

¹⁷Loving pleasure leads to poverty. Wine and luxury will never make you wealthy.

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

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

²⁰Wise people save the nice things they have. Fools use up everything as soon as they get it.

²¹People who try hard to do good and be faithful will find life, goodness, and honor.

²²A wise person can defeat a city full of warriors and tear down the defenses they trust in.

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

²⁴Proud people think they are better than others. They show they are evil by what they do.

²⁵Lazy people will cause their own destruction because they refuse to work.

²⁶Some people are greedy and never have enough. Good people are generous and have plenty.

²⁷The LORD hates sacrifices from the wicked because they offer them for some evil purpose.

²⁸Witnesses who lie will be caught and punished. A careful listener will always be there to speak up.

²⁹Good people know they are right, but the wicked have to pretend.

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

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

22 ¹It is better to be respected than to be rich. A good name is worth more than silver or gold.

²The rich and the poor are the same. The LORD made them all.

³Wise people see trouble coming and get out of its way, but fools go straight to it and suffer for it.

⁴Respect the LORD and be humble. Then you will have wealth, honor, and true life.

⁵Evil people are trapped by many troubles, but those who want to live avoid them.

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

⁷The rich rule over the poor. The one who borrows is a slave to the one who lends.

⁸Those who spread trouble will harvest trouble. In the end, they will be destroyed for the trouble they caused.

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

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

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

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

¹³A person who is lazy and wants to stay home says, "There is a lion outside, and I might be killed in the streets!"

¹⁴The sin of adultery^c is a trap, and the LORD gets very angry with those who fall into it.

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

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

^a20:30 The Hebrew text here is hard to understand.

^b21:11 Or "Punish a rude, arrogant person, and the others will become wise."

Thirty Wise Sayings

¹⁷Listen carefully to these words from the wise. Pay attention to what I have learned. ¹⁸It will be good for you to remember these words and have them ready when they are needed. ¹⁹I will teach you these things now. I want you to trust the LORD. ²⁰I have written 30 sayings for you.^a These are words of advice and wisdom. ²¹They will teach you things that you can know for sure to be true. Then you can give good answers to the one who sent you.

— 1 —

²²It is easy to steal from the poor, but don't do it. And don't take advantage of them in court. ²³The LORD is on their side. He supports the poor, and he will take from those who take from them.

— 2 —

²⁴Don't be friends with people who become angry easily. Don't stay around quick-tempered people. ²⁵If you do, you may learn to be like them. Then you will have the same problems they do.

— 3 —

²⁶Don't promise to pay someone else's debt. ²⁷If you cannot pay, you will lose everything you have. So why should you lose the bed you sleep on?

— 4 —

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

— 5 —

²⁹Skilled workers will always serve kings. They will never have to work for less important people.

— 6 —

23 ¹When you sit and eat with an important person, remember who you are with. ²Never eat too much, even if you are very hungry. ³Don't eat too much of his fine food. It might be a trick.

— 7 —

⁴Don't ruin your health trying to get rich. If you are smart, you will give it up. ⁵In the blink of an eye, money can disappear, as if it grew wings and flew away like a bird.

— 8 —

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. ⁸And if you eat their food, you will get sick and be embarrassed.

— 9 —

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

— 10 —

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.

— 11 —

¹²Listen to your teacher and learn all you can.

— 12 —

¹³Always correct children when they need it. If you spank them, it 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 envy evil people, 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 —

²²Listen to your father. Without him, you would never have been born. Respect your mother, even when she is old. ²³Truth, wisdom, learning, and understanding are worth paying money for. They are worth far too much to ever sell. ²⁴The father of a good person is very happy. A wise child brings him joy. ²⁵Make both of your parents happy. Give your mother that same joy.

— 17 —

²⁶My son, listen closely to what I am saying. Let my life be your example. ²⁷Prostitutes and bad women are a trap. They are like a deep well that you cannot escape. ²⁸A bad woman waits for you like a thief, and she causes many men to be unfaithful to their wives.

— 18 —

²⁹⁻³⁰Who gets into fights and arguments? Who gets hurt for no reason and has red, bloodshot eyes? People who stay out too late drinking wine, staring into their strong drinks.

^a22:20 *I have ... for you* Or "I wrote this for you earlier."

³¹So 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. ³²But in the end, it will bite like a snake.

³³Wine will cause you to see strange things and to say things that make no sense. ³⁴When you lie down, you will think you are on a rough sea and feel like you are at the top of the mast.* ³⁵You will say, "They hit me, but I never felt it. They beat me, but I don't remember it. Now I can't wake up. I need another drink."

— 19 —

24 ¹Don't be jealous of evil people. Have no desire to be around them. ²In their hearts they plan to do evil. All they talk about is making trouble.

— 20 —

³Good homes are built on wisdom and understanding. ⁴Knowledge fills the rooms with rare and beautiful treasures.

— 21 —

⁵Wisdom makes a man more powerful. Knowledge gives a man strength. ⁶Get good advice before you start a war. To win, you must have many good advisors.

— 22 —

⁷Fools cannot understand wisdom. They have nothing to say when people are discussing important things.

— 23 —

⁸If you start planning ways to do wrong, people will learn that you are a troublemaker. ⁹Such foolish plans are wrong, and people have no respect for someone who laughs at what is right.

— 24 —

¹⁰If you are weak in times of trouble, that is real weakness.

— 25 —

¹¹If you see someone on their way to death or in danger of being killed, you must do something to save them. ¹²You 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 —

¹³My son, eat honey; it is good. Honey straight from the honeycomb is the sweetest. ¹⁴In the same way, know that wisdom is good for you. Wisdom will give you something to hope for that will not disappoint you.

— 27 —

¹⁵Don't be like a criminal who makes plans to rob those who are good or take away their

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

— 28 —

¹⁷Don't be happy when your enemy has troubles. Don't be glad when they fall. ¹⁸The LORD will see this, and he might be upset with you and decide not to punish your enemy.

— 29 —

¹⁹Don't let those who are evil upset you, and don't be jealous of them. ²⁰They have no hope. Their light will burn out.

— 30 —

²¹Son, respect the LORD and the king, and don't join with those who are against them, ²²because 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

²³These are also words from the wise:

A judge must be fair. He must not support some people simply because he knows them. ²⁴The people will turn against a judge who lets the guilty go free. Even the people of other nations will curse* him. ²⁵But if a judge punishes the guilty, then people will be happy with him, and he will be a blessing to them.

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

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

²⁸Don't speak against someone without a good reason, or you will appear foolish.

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

³⁰I walked past a field that belonged to a lazy man. It was a vineyard that belonged to someone who understood nothing. ³¹Weeds 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— ³⁴these things will make you poor very quickly. Soon you will have nothing, as if a thief broke in and took everything away.

More Wise Sayings From Solomon

25 ¹These are some more wise sayings from Solomon. These proverbs* were copied by servants of Hezekiah, the king of Judah.

²We honor God for the things he keeps secret. But we honor 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 advisors away from a king, and goodness will make his kingdom strong.

⁶Don't brag 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 want to tell your friends about your own problems, tell them. But don't discuss what someone told you in private. ¹⁰Whoever hears it will lose their respect for you and will never trust you again.

¹¹Saying the right thing at the right time is like a golden apple in a silver setting. ¹²Wise advice to a listening ear is like gold earrings or fine jewelry.

¹³To his master who sent him, a messenger who can be trusted is as refreshing as a drink of cold water on a hot summer day.^a

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 neighbors' homes too often, or they will begin to hate you.

¹⁸A person who gives false testimony against a neighbor 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 a crippled foot.

²⁰Singing happy songs to a sad person is as foolish as taking a coat off 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. ²²This will make them feel the burning pain of shame,^b and the LORD will reward you for being good to them.

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

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

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

^a25:13 *drink ... day* Literally, "as the cold snow at harvest time." This probably refers to snow or ice brought down from Mt. Hermon in Lebanon.

^b25:22 *This ... shame* Literally, "for you will heap coals of fire on his head."

²⁶Good people who don't stand strong against evil are like springs that have been polluted or pools that have turned dirty and muddy.

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

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

Wise Sayings About Fools

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

²Don't worry when someone curses* you for no reason. Nothing bad will happen. Such words are like birds that fly past and never stop.

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

⁴⁻⁵There is no good way to answer fools when they say something stupid. If you answer them, then you, too, will look like a fool. If you don't answer them, they will think they are smart.

⁶Never let a fool carry your message. If you do, it will be like cutting off your own feet. You are only asking for trouble.

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

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

⁹A fool trying to say something wise is like a drunk trying to pick a thorn out of his hand.

¹⁰Hiring a fool or a stranger who is just passing by is dangerous—you don't know who might get hurt.

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

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

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

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

¹⁵Lazy people are too lazy to lift the food from their plate to their mouth.

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

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

¹⁸⁻¹⁹Anyone 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.

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

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

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

²³Good words that hide an evil heart are like silver paint over a cheap, clay pot. ²⁴Evil people say things to make themselves look good, but they keep their evil plans a secret. ²⁵What they say sounds good, but don't trust them. They are full of evil ideas. ²⁶They hide their evil plans with nice words, but in the end, everyone will see the evil they do.

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

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

27 ¹Never brag about what you will do in the future; you have no idea what tomorrow will bring.

²Never praise yourself. Let others do it.

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

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

⁵Open criticism is better than hidden love.

⁶You can trust what your friend says, even when it hurts. But your enemies want to hurt you, even when they act nice.

⁷When you are full, you will not even eat honey. When you are hungry, even something bitter tastes sweet.

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

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

¹⁰Don't forget your own friends or your father's friends. If you have a problem, go to your neighbor for help. It is better to ask a neighbor who is near than a brother who is far away.

¹¹My son, be wise. This will make me happy. Then I will be able to answer those who criticize me.

¹²Wise people see trouble coming and get out of its way, but fools go straight to the trouble and suffer for it.

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

¹⁴Don't wake up your neighbors early in the morning with a shout of "Good morning!" They will treat it like a curse,* not a blessing.

¹⁵A complaining wife is like water that never stops dripping on a rainy day. ¹⁶Stopping her is like trying to stop the wind or trying to hold oil in your hand.

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

¹⁸People 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.

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

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

²¹People use fire to purify gold and silver. In the same way, you are tested by the praise people give you.

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

²³Learn all you can about your sheep. Take care of your goats the best you can. ²⁴Neither wealth nor nations last forever. ²⁵Cut the hay, and new grass will grow. Then gather the new plants that grow on the hills. ²⁶Cut the wool from your lambs, and make your clothes. Sell some of your goats, and buy some land. ²⁷Then there will be plenty of goat's milk for you and your family, with enough to keep the servants healthy.

28 ¹The wicked are afraid of everything, but those who live right are as brave as lions.

²A 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.

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

⁴Those who refuse to obey the law promote evil. Those who obey the law oppose evil.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁴People who respect others will be blessed, but stubborn people will have plenty of troubles.

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

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

^a28:3 Or "A poor person who takes advantage of beggars is like a hard rain and no food."

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

¹⁸Honest people will be safe, 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. That is much better than just saying something to be nice.

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.

29Some people refuse to bend when someone corrects them. Eventually they will break, and there will be no one to repair the damage.

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

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 others in order to get what you want, you are only setting a trap for yourself.

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, but those who do what is right will want you to be their friend.

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.

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

¹⁵Punishment and discipline can make children wise, but children who are never corrected will bring shame to their mother.

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

¹⁷Correct your children whenever they are wrong. Then you will always be proud of them. They will never make you ashamed.

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

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

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

²¹Give your servants everything they want, and they will learn to be wasteful.

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

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

²⁴You are your own worst enemy if you take part in a crime. You will not be able to tell the truth even when people threaten you.

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

²⁶Many people want the friendship of a ruler, but the LORD is the only one who judges people fairly.

²⁷Good people think the wicked are disgusting, and the wicked feel disgust for those who are honest.

Wise Sayings of Agur Son of Jakeh

30¹These are the wise sayings of Agur son of Jakeh from Massa. He says, "God, I am tired, so tired. How can I keep going?"^a

²I am stupid. I am not as smart as other people are. ³I have not learned to be wise. I know nothing about the Holy One.^b ⁴Who has ever gone up to heaven and come back down? Who gathered the winds in his hand? Who can gather up all the water in his lap? Who set the limits for the world? What is his name, and what is his son's name? Do you know?

⁵You can trust this: Every word that God speaks is true. God is a safe place for those

^a30:1 He says, "God, ... keep going?" Or "This is his message to Ithiel and Ucal."

^b30:3 Holy One Literally, "the holy ones."

who go to him. ⁶So don't try to change what God says. If you do, he will punish you and prove that you are a liar.

⁷LORD, I ask you to do two things for me before I die. ⁸Don't let me tell lies. And don't make me too rich or too poor—give me only enough food for each day. ⁹If I have too much, I might deny that I need you, LORD. But if I am too poor, I might steal and bring shame to the name of my God.

¹⁰Never say bad things about a slave to his master. If you do, he will curse* you, and you will suffer for it.

¹¹Some people curse their fathers and refuse to bless their mothers.

¹²Some people think they are pure, but they have done nothing to remove the filth of their sin.

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

¹⁴There are people whose teeth are like swords and their jaws like knives. They take everything they can from the poor.

¹⁵Greedy people know only two things^a: "Give me," and "Give me." There are three other things that are never satisfied—really, four things that never have enough: ¹⁶the place of death, a woman with no children, dry ground that needs rain, and a fire that will never stop by itself.

¹⁷People 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.*

¹⁸There are three things that are hard for me to understand—really, four things that I don't understand: ¹⁹an eagle flying in the sky, a snake moving on a rock, a ship moving across the ocean, and a man in love with a woman.

²⁰A woman who is not faithful to her husband acts innocent. She eats, wipes her mouth, and says she has done nothing wrong.

²¹There are three things that make trouble on the earth—really, four that the earth cannot bear: ²²a slave who becomes a king, fools who have everything they need, ²³a woman whose husband hated her but still married her, and a servant girl who becomes ruler over the woman she serves.

²⁴There 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 kings' palaces.

²⁹There are three things that act important when they walk—really, there are four:

³⁰ a lion—he is the warrior of the animals and runs from nothing,

³¹ a rooster walking proudly,^b a goat, and a king among his people.

³²If you have been foolish enough to become proud and make plans against other people, stop and think about what you are doing.

³³Stirring 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 ¹These are the wise sayings that King Lemuel's mother taught him:

²I prayed for a son, and you are the son I gave birth to. ³Don't waste your strength on women. Women destroy kings, so don't waste yourself on them. ⁴Lemuel, it is not wise for kings to drink wine. It is not wise for rulers to want beer. ⁵They may drink too much and forget what the law says. Then they might take away the rights of the poor. ⁶Give beer to people without hope. Give wine to those who are in trouble. ⁷Let them drink to forget their troubles. Let them forget they are poor.

⁸Speak up for people who cannot speak for themselves. Help people who are in trouble. ⁹Stand up for what you know is right, and judge all people fairly. Protect the rights of the poor and those who need help.

The Perfect Wife

^{10c} How hard it is to find the perfect wife.^d 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^e 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, 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.

^b**30:31** a rooster walking proudly Or possibly, "a greyhound" or "a war horse."

^c**31:10-31** 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."

^d**31:10** the perfect wife Or "a noble woman."

^e**31:13** flax A plant used to make linen cloth.

^a**30:15** Literally, "A leech has two daughters."

- She is strong and able to do all her work.
- 18 She works late into the night to make sure her business earns a profit.
- 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 spreads 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,^a and people respect 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 brags about her and says,
- 29^a“There are many good women, but you are the best.”
- 30 Grace and beauty can fool you, but a woman who respects the LORD should be praised.
- 31 Give her the reward she deserves. Praise her in public for what she has done.

^a31:25 *She is a strong person* Or “She is praised.”

Ecclesiastes

1 ¹These are the words from the Teacher, a son of David and king of Jerusalem. ²Everything is so meaningless. The Teacher says that it is all a waste of time!^b ³Do people really gain anything from all the hard work they do in this life?^c

Things Never Change

⁴People live and people die, but the earth continues forever. ⁵The sun rises and the sun goes down, and then it hurries to rise again in the same place.

⁶The wind blows to the south, and the wind blows to the north. The wind blows around and around. Then it turns and blows back to the place it began.

⁷All rivers flow again and again to the same place. They all flow to the sea, but the sea never becomes full.

⁸Words cannot fully explain things,^d but people continue speaking.^e Words come again and again to our ears, but our ears don't become full. And our eyes don't become full of what we see.

b1:2 meaningless ... a waste of time The Hebrew word means “vapor or breath” or “something that is useless, meaningless, empty, wrong, or a waste of time.”

c1:3 in this life Literally, “under the sun.” Also in verses 9, 13.

d1:8 Words cannot fully explain things Literally, “All words are weak.”

e1:8 but people continue speaking The Hebrew could also be translated, “People cannot speak.”

Nothing Is New

⁹All things continue the way they have been since the beginning. The same things will be done that have always been done. There is nothing new in this life.

¹⁰Someone might say, “Look, this is new,” but that thing has always been here. It was here before we were.

¹¹People don't remember what happened long ago. In the future, they will not remember what is happening now. And later, other people will not remember what the people before them did.

Does Wisdom Bring Happiness?

¹²I, the Teacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem. ¹³I decided to study and to use my wisdom to learn about everything that is done in this life. I learned that it is a very hard thing that God has given us to do. ¹⁴I looked at everything done on earth, and I saw that it is all a waste of time. It is like trying to catch the wind.^f ¹⁵If something is crooked, you cannot say it is straight. And if something is missing, you cannot say it is there.

¹⁶I said to myself, “I am very wise. I am wiser than all the kings who ruled Jerusalem before me. I know what wisdom and knowledge really are.”

f1:14 trying to catch the wind Or “It is very troubling to the spirit.” The word for “troubling” can also mean “craving,” and the word for “spirit” can also mean “wind.” Also in verse 17.

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