

Wisdom in Work

Proverbs 12:1-14

Proverbs 12:1-14 - *“Whoever loves instruction loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid.*

A good man obtains favor from the LORD, but a man of wicked intentions He will condemn.

A man is not established by wickedness, but the root of the righteous cannot be moved.

An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, but she who causes shame is like rotteness in his bones.

The thoughts of the righteous are right, but the counsels of the wicked are deceitful.

The words of the wicked are, “Lie in wait for blood,” but the mouth of the upright will deliver them.

The wicked are overthrown and are no more, but the house of the righteous will stand.

A man will be commended according to his wisdom, but he who is of a perverse heart will be despised.

Better is the one who is slighted but has a servant, than he who honors himself but lacks bread.

A righteous man regards the life of his animal, but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.

He who tills his land will be satisfied with bread, but he who follows frivolity is devoid of understanding.

The wicked covet the catch of evil men, but the root of the righteous yields fruit.

The wicked is ensnared by the transgression of his lips, but the righteous will come through trouble.

A man will be satisfied with good by the fruit of his mouth, and the recompense of a man’s hands will be rendered to him.”

Background Notes

The theme of Proverbs is Wisdom. Wisdom is the application of truth to life. It is the ability to live life skillfully. It involves good judgment and common sense.

Living a godly life in an ungodly world is not easy. This is why a good working knowledge of the Book of Proverbs is very valuable. Proverbs is probably the most practical book in the Old Testament. It covers all aspects of life.

Doctrinal Point

The proverbs are wise advice for everyday living.

Verse 1: *“Whoever loves instruction [or discipline] loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid.”* Based on this proverb, would you say that you are wise or stupid in God’s eyes? This proverb is **not** saying that our attitude should be: “I love to be disciplined.” The “love” here is in contrast to the “hate.”

It's not easy to be told, "You're wrong, and you need to get your act together" - even though it may be true. Can you handle that knowledge, and correction, and instruction, and discipline? If so, you are wise. But if you always try to justify yourself by blaming others, or finding fault with those who are trying to help you, then you're hung up with your own pride. And as far as God is concerned, you are stupid.

Verse 2: *"A good man obtains favor from the LORD, but a man of wicked intentions He will condemn."* Whether we like it or not, this is the way God's moral universe works - just as much as the law of gravity works in God's physical universe. The "good man" here of course are the godly people who are trying to do what is right. God Himself will bless them. But God will judge whoever has wrong and sinful intentions and actions. Any apparent exceptions to this moral law are not exceptions - they are only temporary delays! In the end, all evil and evil agendas and intentions will be judged.

Verse 3: *"A man is not established by wickedness, but the root of the righteous cannot be moved."* This proverb has many applications. Let me ask you: do you want a strong, solid, stable, and blessed family life? What about the business you're building or the ministry you're leading? Do you want these important areas to be strong and stable and blessed? Then **always do the right thing!** That's the point. Never cheat or cut corners or deal "under the table." Always bring God's approval into your formulas for living.

Verse 4: *"An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, but she who causes shame is like rotteness in his bones."* Several years ago a Christian man said to my wife, Margie, "You must get bored, having to listen to your husband preach all the time." I found out later that she told him I'm her favorite preacher! That illustrates the phrase, *"an excellent wife is the crown of her husband."* Unfortunately, the second phrase is also true. Some wives shame their husbands by openly talking to others about their husbands' faults.

Verse 5: *"The thoughts of the righteous are right, but the counsels of the wicked are deceitful."* When another person joins your circle of friends, do you think to yourself, "How can I be kind and helpful to that person?" Or do you think, "How can that person help me?" It's all too true - your agenda for yourself and others is a reflection of your character. Have you ever been the target of someone's selfish agenda? It's not very pleasant, is it? The next question would be: "Have I ever had a selfish agenda for someone else - even a good friend?" We all need to be careful here.

Verse 6: *"The words of the wicked are, 'Lie in wait for blood,' but the mouth of the upright will deliver them."* Here's a further elaboration on the proverb of verse 5. Hidden agendas not only involve actions - they involve words as well. And words are powerful. Words can be used to make false accusations, to entrap the innocent, for slander, for gossip, and for revising history to be politically correct, etc, etc. But words can also be used to tell the truth, and to defend and rescue people who are attacked by lies, and for setting the record straight. Writing truthful editorials that expose evil, for example, can be very powerful words that are used for righteousness.

Verse 7: *"The wicked are overthrown and are no more, but the house of the righteous will stand firm."* Notice - in this proverb, a righteous foundation for the *"house of the righteous"* gives stability to the entire family.

This proverb reminds us of the Lord's parable about the two houses with different foundations: *"Whoever hears My sayings, and does them, is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears My sayings, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall"* (Matthew 7:24-27).

Verse 8: *"A man will be commended according to his wisdom, but he who is of a perverse heart will be despised."* This principle is to be carried out in church discipline. *"Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned"* (Titus 3:10-11).

Verse 9: *"Better is the one who is slighted but has a servant, than he who honors himself but lacks bread."* The main idea in this proverb is to live modestly and within your means - even it means that you have a smaller home and you do your own home repairs. In the long run, that's so much better than living beyond your means and making a lavish show, but ending up in poverty.

Verse 11: *"He who tills his land will be satisfied with bread, but he who follows frivolity is devoid of understanding."* This proverb is very practical as to priorities. Get your work done first, before relaxation and hobbies and trivial pursuits. How many of us need to hear that proverb today?

Verse 12: *"The wicked covet the catch of evil men, but the root of the righteous yields fruit."* A contemporary application of this proverb would be this investment ad: "We make money the old fashioned way. We earn it!" In other words: no wheeling and dealing, no scheming, and never using unscrupulous methods for selfish gain.

Verse 13: *"The wicked is ensnared by the transgression of his lips, but the righteous will come through trouble."* Truth is like a jigsaw puzzle. All the pieces fit together. So when you tell the truth, your story fits together, and it proves you are right and righteous. But if you lie, your lie doesn't fit the truth. It's like a piece out of place in the jigsaw puzzle. You have to tell another lie, and then another lie to try and make your story fit together. Eventually you're so entangled that you're caught in a web of your own making. Many teenagers have experienced this by trying to cover up wrongdoing when their parents start to question them.

Verse 14: *"A man will be satisfied with good by the fruit of his mouth, and the recompense of a man's hands will be rendered to him."* We usually apply the biblical principle "you reap what you sow" to actions, whether good or bad. The same is true of words, as we see in this proverb. If we sow good words of kindness and respect and justice and gentleness, we will reap the fruit and reward of respect and favor. That is a general truth that you'll find in life.

The proverbs are wise advice for everyday living.

Practical Application

Widen your circles of care!

Verse 10: *“A righteous man regards the life of his animal, but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.”*

In biblical times, everyday life was much more dependent on animals than it is today, and the way a man treated his oxen, donkeys and other “beasts of burden” was a good indication of his character.

A good man not only cared for the needs of his family, his close friends, and his neighbors, but he took good care of his animals as well. He didn’t overwork them, or lose patience with them. He made sure they had enough food, water, and rest, and he gave them special care when they were sick. He didn’t just “use” his animals. On the other hand, a cruel man displayed his true character by the fact the way he mistreated his animals. His *“tender mercies”* were neither tender nor merciful.

How does that apply to us? Do we care only for our own families, our own interests, and ourselves? If so, that’s a good indication of selfish character. But if our care extends to wider circles - beyond family and friends to neighbors, people we work with, and people in need – that’s a good indication of righteous character.

In the light of God’s Word, where are we in our care and kindness? Are we kind? Do we care about the welfare of others? Let’s not be guilty of just “using” people who are outside our inner circle.

Widen your circles of care!