

### Wisdom in the Family

#### Proverbs 15:18-33

**Proverbs 15:18-33** - *“A wrathful man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger allays contention.*

*The way of the lazy man is like a hedge of thorns, but the way of the upright is a highway.*

*A wise son makes a father glad, but a foolish man despises his mother.*

*Folly is joy to him who is destitute of discernment, but a man of understanding walks uprightly.*

*Without counsel, plans go awry, but in the multitude of counselors they are established.*

*A man has joy by the answer of his mouth. A word spoken in due season, how good it is!*

*The way of life winds upward for the wise, that he may turn away from hell below.*

*The LORD will destroy the house of the proud, but He will establish the boundary of the widow.*

*The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the LORD, but the words of the pure are pleasant.*

*He who is greedy for gain troubles his own house, but he who hates bribes will live.*

*The heart of the righteous studies how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours forth evil.*

*The LORD is far from the wicked, but He hears the prayer of the righteous.*

*The light of the eyes rejoices the heart, and a good report makes the bones healthy.*

*The ear that hears the rebukes of life will abide among the wise. He who disdains instruction despises his own soul, but he who heeds rebuke gains understanding.*

*The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom, and before honor is humility.”*

#### Background Notes

For our Background Notes, let's read verse 19 and talk about hedges. *“The way of the lazy man is like a hedge of thorns, but the way of the upright is a highway.”*

What do you think about when you hear the word “hedge”? Do you think of a hedge as a barrier or an obstacle blocking your way? Or do you think of a hedge as a protection guarding you from people or forces that might hurt you?

Depending on the context, the Bible uses the concept of hedges in both ways - as a barrier, or as a protective wall.

Remember the story of Job? God placed a protective hedge around Job that Satan could not penetrate. Because of God's protective hedge around Job, Satan was permitted to affect Job's life only as much as God allowed. And the same is true today. If you are a believer, God's protective hedge is around you.

However, the “hedge” in Proverbs 15:19 is not a protective hedge. It's an obstacle. It is a hedge of thorns. The hedge as a barrier and obstacle is also found in Hosea 2. God said that He would put obstacles in their way as discipline, because the people of Israel had gone away from the Lord. The point in verse 19 is that lazy people will find all kinds of difficulties

in life (many of their own making!), and will usually use them as an excuse for laziness.

As a Bible college teacher, I would assign my students to write papers. The lazy students invariably found innumerable excuses – “obstacles” that prevented them from completing the assignment on time. But for students who were not lazy, there were no obstacles to getting the paper done on time.

That’s the way it is in life. The way of the upright is not filled with potholes and thorns and obstacles. But those obstacles always seem to “find” the lazy person! The way of the upright is a straightforward highway. So don’t be lazy!

## Doctrinal Point

### **The proverbs are wise advice for everyday living.**

Verse 18: *“A wrathful man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger allays contention.”* When a hot-tempered person is part of a family, or a fellowship, or a ministry, or any operation, there’s bound to be strife. It can’t be avoided. It’s only a matter of time until a hot-tempered person flares up or explodes about something. So pray that you won’t have a hot-tempered boss or spouse.

In contrast is the person who is “slow to anger.” They are the peacemakers, and many times they have to undo and smooth out the bad fallout from hot-tempered people. James 1:19-20 says, *“So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.”*

Verse 20: *“A wise son makes a father glad, but a foolish man despises his mother.”* What a contrast we have here on the scale of moral character. A son who pleases a good father is at the high end. Generally speaking, fathers look for perfect scores in their sons. At the low end of the character moral scale is a man, no longer a child, who looks down on the mother who raised him. How low can you go?

Think of the perfection of our Lord here. He pleased His Heavenly Father in everything, and was concerned about the well being of His mother, even on the day of His death.

Verse 21: *“Folly is joy to him who is destitute of discernment, but a man of understanding walks uprightly.”* I think the New International Version captures the full meaning of the proverb: *“Folly delights a man who lacks judgment, but a man of understanding keeps a straight course.”*

Foolish people don’t set a course in life. They wander from folly to folly, trying to find happiness. But people who have wisdom and understanding set good goals in life and walk accordingly.

Verse 23: *“A man has joy by the answer of his mouth. A word spoken in due season, how good it is!”* Saying the right thing at the right time is a blessing to all! It could be a word of encouragement, a word of exhortation, a word of rebuke, or a word of peace. Isaiah 50:4 says, *“The Lord God has given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary.”*

This proverb also reminds us of what we read about the men of the tribe of Issachar: *“The sons of Issachar who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do”* (1 Chronicles 12:32).

Verse 24: *“The way of life winds upward for the wise, that he may turn away from hell below.”* In the historical context of this proverb, once again we have the general truth that wise and upright living is a principle for living a longer life, and avoiding an early trip to the grave. However, this proverb certainly paves the way for the later New Testament revelation of the two ways and two ultimate destinies to life, heaven or hell.

Verse 25: *“The LORD will destroy the house of the proud, but He will establish the boundary of the widow.”* God has ways to bring down the rich and humble the proud. He also has ways to protect and take care of those who are poor and defenseless when they look to the Lord.

Verse 26: *“The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the LORD, but the words of the pure are pleasant.”* The implication in this verse is that as evil plans and thoughts and words are an abomination to the Lord, pure thoughts and plans and words are pleasing to the Lord. So the important question for us: Is the Lord pleased with my thought life, or do I need to practice more of the truth of 2 Corinthians 10:5? *“Casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.”* Am I destroying every obstacle that keeps me from obeying God? Am I turning from my sinful, rebellious thoughts to thoughts that are more like Christ’s thoughts? This one verse alone should determine the literature we read, and the movies and websites we allow ourselves to view.

Verse 27: *“He who is greedy for gain troubles his own house, but he who hates bribes will live.”* Do you hate bribes? Bribes can come in forms other than money. If you use false flattery for your own gain, or you’re involved any kind of shady under-the-table deals, you can be sure you will reap trouble.

Verse 28: *“The heart of the righteous studies how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours forth evil.”* “Don’t put your foot in your mouth” is not a Bible verse, but it captures the first part of this proverb. Think before you speak! The Lord expanded this proverb in Luke 6:45, when He taught about a tree being known by its fruit: *“A good person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart, and an evil person produces evil things from an evil heart. From the heart, the mouth speaks.”* Wicked people run off at the mouth with the garbage that is in their hearts.

Verse 29: *“The LORD is far from the wicked, but He hears the prayer of the righteous.”* James 5:16 reveals that this proverb could be taken as more than just a “general truth.” *“The effective fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.”*

Verse 30: *“The light of the eyes rejoices the heart, and a good report makes the bones healthy.”* Good news is not only good for your physical health because it minimizes worry and anxiety, but the relief and joy it brings can literally be seen on your face. And it’s contagious!

Verse 31: *“The ear that hears the rebukes of life will abide among the wise.”* Would you consider yourself as making wise choices in life? If not, maybe you’re unwilling to submit to counsel from wise and godly believers - counsel that rebukes or reproves your life choices and your lifestyle.

Verse 32: *“He who disdains instruction despises his own soul, but he who heeds rebuke gets understanding.”* I bet you never thought of discipline in this way, did you? Tell your teen, “You’re despising yourself” when he or she doesn’t want to listen to advice! It’s the truth. We learn and mature through paying attention to rebuke and discipline.

Verse 33: *“The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom, and before honor is humility.”* Just as pride goes before a fall (Proverbs 16:18), so humility goes before honor. And it is the fear of the Lord - trust and obedience and worship of the Lord - that will lead you to true humility.

The proverbs are wise advice for everyday living.

## Practical Application

### Don’t depend on only one human counselor.

Verse 22: *“Without counsel, plans go awry, but in the multitude of counselors they are established.”*

This proverb teaches us to do two things:

1. Get some wise counsel when you’re making a major decision in life.
2. Consult a number of godly counselors before you make a major decision.

Don’t depend on only one human counselor. Why not? That one counselor may have a worldly viewpoint, or a bias, or even a hidden agenda, and may give you advice that’s not from the Lord. And even if that person means well, he or she may not have a clear understanding of the will of the Lord. Or (admit it!) you may even subconsciously choose to ask for advice from a particular person you know will say what you want to hear! So - to be on safe biblical grounds, seek advice from more than one counselor. And remember to choose **godly** counselors - believers you know will have your best interests in view. Don’t depend on only one human counselor!