

### Sayings of the Wise – Wisdom in Hope

#### Proverbs 23:17-35

**Proverbs 23:17-35** - *“Do not let your heart envy sinners, but be zealous for the fear of the LORD all the day, for surely there is a hereafter, and your hope will not be cut off.*

*Hear, my son, and be wise, and guide your heart in the way.*

*Do not mix with winebibbers or with gluttonous eaters of meat, for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and drowsiness will clothe a man with rags.*

*Listen to your father who begot you, and do not despise your mother when she is old.*

*Buy the truth, and do not sell it, also wisdom and instruction and understanding.*

*The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice, and he who begets a wise child will delight in him.*

*Let your father and your mother be glad, and let her who bore you rejoice.*

*My son, give me your heart, and let your eyes observe my ways. For a harlot is a deep pit, and a seductress is a narrow well. She also lies in wait as for a victim, and increases the unfaithful among men.*

*Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaints? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who linger long at the wine and those who go in search of mixed wine.*

*Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly. At the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper. Your eyes will see strange things, and your heart will utter perverse things. Yes, you will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, or like one who lies at the top of the mast, saying: ‘They have struck me, but I was not hurt. They have beaten me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake, that I may seek another drink?’”*

#### Background Notes

From Proverbs 22:17 to chapter 24 is a section of the Book of Proverbs known as the “Sayings of the Wise.” Solomon, along with other wise believers, wrote these sayings. We saw that Proverbs 22:20 could be translated “Excellent Sayings” or “Thirty Sayings,” as some translations indicate.

We’ve looked at twelve of these sayings in the second half of chapter 22 and the first half of chapter 23. In the second half of chapter 23, we have the next six wise sayings.

#### Doctrinal Point

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

**Verses 19-2:** *“Hear, my son, and be wise, and guide your heart in the way. Do not mix with winebibbers, or with gluttonous eaters of meat, for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and drowsiness will clothe a man with rags.”* Drunkards and gluttons are the epitome of no discipline. If you can’t discipline your own consumption of food and wine, what can you discipline? Overeating and overdrinking can lead to drowsiness, and thus to laziness, and then to poverty. So the point of this saying is: Be wise! Don’t hang out with food addicts and heavy drinkers.

However, that doesn’t mean we shouldn’t befriend people with addiction problems if we can help them, and share the gospel with them. Remember, the legalistic and self-righteous Pharisees accused the Lord Jesus of eating and drinking too much because He associated with needy people who had those problems.

In Luke 7:33-34, we have our Lord’s comments to the self-righteous Pharisees. *“John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, ‘He has a demon.’ The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, ‘Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’”* So if we can help them, we should befriend people with these problems, just as the Lord did. But be very careful! If you make these kinds of people your closest friends, they will drag you down.

**Verse 22:** *“Listen to your father who begot you, and do not despise your mother when she is old.”* When your folks get old, you should honor them. This is one of the Ten Commandments. *“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God has given you”* (Exodus 20:12).

Honoring your parents as they get older doesn’t mean you have to obey them and do everything they say, as you did when you were a child, but you should certainly listen to them and honor what they say. Don’t despise and look down on them, or place them in a nursing home and then simply forget about them.

**Verse 23:** *“Buy the truth, and do not sell it; also wisdom and instruction and understanding.”* The point of this proverb is: spare no expense in order to acquire truth, wisdom, self-discipline and understanding. Obviously you’re going to spend a lot of time in the Bible if you’re going to follow the wisdom of this proverb.

A person once asked me, Is it financially justified to spend money on a Holy Land tour? I answered, if you want to learn and appreciate God’s Word, an efficient way to spend your money is to go on a **study** tour to the Holy Land. You’ll see and learn and study the Bible right at the sites where so many of the biblical events took place!

**Verses 24-25:** *“The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice, and he who begets a wise child will delight in him. Let your father and your mother be glad, and let her who bore you rejoice.”* Notice how this wise saying starts as a general statement, but then moves to a direct address to the children. Teens, do you want your parents to be glad and rejoice? Then follow the way of wisdom. Love the Lord and obey His Word as a lifestyle. You will bring joy to your parents!

**Verses 26-28:** *“My son, give me your heart, and let your eyes observe my ways. For a harlot is a deep pit, and a seductress is a narrow well. She also lies in wait as for a victim, and increases the unfaithful among men.”* What chance of escape do you think you’d have if you fell into a well so narrow that you couldn’t even move your arms? That’s the idea here. There’s not much chance of escape from sexual sin once you’re caught and trapped - especially when the wayward woman who’s out to seduce you is successful (v28). So the point of this wise saying is: “Don’t even risk it!”

How do you avoid getting caught in sexual sin? First, understand the process. It starts with the thoughts in the heart, moves to the eyes, and then to the act. Remember what the Lord Jesus said: *“Whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart”* (Matthew 5:28). So guarding your eyes and your heart is very important. Remember - in light of this biblical proverb, what you choose to view on the internet is very serious.

**Verses 29-35:** *“Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaints? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who linger long at the wine and those who go in search of mixed wine. Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly. At the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper. Your eyes will see strange things, and your heart will utter perverse things. Yes, you will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, or like one who lies at the top of the mast, saying: ‘They have struck me, but I was not hurt. They have beaten me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake, that I may seek another drink?’”*

These verses are a classic description of an alcoholic. A person who is addicted to alcohol is not a happy person. He rants and raves and complains about his troubles. He starts needless arguments. He quarrels and fights. His eyes are bloodshot. He spends too much time talking about, experimenting with, and consuming alcoholic beverages.

The alcoholic becomes confused. He imagines things. He loses control of his mind and his tongue. He hallucinates. He staggers and reels as if he were being tossed around on the sea, or perched on the top of a ship’s mast in rough seas. The drunkard can fall or be injured in a fight and not feel it. His main interest in life is when and where he can have another drink, not realizing that it is poison. And like a viper’s bite, it will lead to death.

Is drunkenness a medical problem or a moral problem? Answer: it is both. Some people are genetically more prone to alcoholism than others, and it’s very difficult to recover from alcohol addiction, but it’s also a moral problem because it involves moral choices.

Don’t excuse an addiction to alcohol on genetics. Make the right moral choice. Talk to your pastor or church leader. Seek help in a 12-step program or a treatment center. Stay away from places that serve alcohol. In fact, don’t even look at an alcoholic beverage if you have a problem in this area.

The proverbs are wise advice for everyday living.

## Practical Application

### Look up - and look ahead.

**Verses 17-18:** *“Do not let your heart envy sinners, but be zealous for the fear of the LORD all the day; for surely there is a hereafter, and your hope will not be cut off.”*

Suppose you wanted to take all the lessons in the Bible for living a life that’s pleasing to God and boil them all down to one concise catchy phrase, could you do it? Our practical application is a good suggestion: **look up - and look ahead!**

That’s the wise saying of Proverbs 23:17-18.

**Verse 17 - Look up!** *“Do not let your heart envy sinners, but be zealous for the fear of the Lord all the day.”* Don’t look around - look up! Live your life in line with verse 17.

In this world, it’s very easy to get discouraged with problems and trials. There are so many attractive things and so many temptations. It’s easy to look around and envy sinners who seem to have it made in life, and who seem to be having a great time. It’s all too easy to be totally involved emotionally with the here and now. So look up, and be thankful for your many blessings!

**Verse 18 - Look ahead!** *“For surely there is a hereafter, and your hope will not be cut off.”* Don’t forget the future! Look ahead! Think of the amazing future we have as believers! No one and nothing can take that away. There’s a wonderful future for us, and *“our hope will not be cut off!”*

So look up - and look ahead!