

### Wisdom in Study

#### Proverbs 25:1-14

**Proverbs 25: 1-14** - *“These also are proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied: It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings is to search out a matter. As the heavens for height and the earth for depth, so the heart of kings is unsearchable.*

*Take away the dross from silver, and it will go to the silversmith for jewelry.*

*Take away the wicked from before the king, and his throne will be established in righteousness.*

*Do not exalt yourself in the presence of the king, and do not stand in the place of the great, for it is better that he say to you, “Come up here,” than that you should be put lower in the presence of the prince,*

*What you have seen with your eyes, do not bring hastily to court; for what will you do in the end when your neighbor has put you to shame?*

*Debate your case with your neighbor, and do not disclose the secret to another, lest he who hears it expose your shame, and your reputation be ruined.*

*A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver. Like an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold is a wise rebuke to an obedient ear.*

*Like the cold of snow in time of harvest is a faithful messenger to those who send him, for he refreshes the soul of his masters.*

*Whoever falsely boasts of giving is like clouds and wind without rain.”*

#### Background Notes

Proverbs 22:17 through the end of chapter 24 is a section of Proverbs known as the “Sayings of the Wise.” In those chapters we saw that other wise authors, besides Solomon, had contributed to the collection. In chapter 25 we return to the proverbs of Solomon that were copied by scribes during the reign of King Hezekiah (v1).

According to 1 Kings 4:32, Solomon spoke three thousand proverbs, but only about 900 of them are in the Book of Proverbs. Apparently King Hezekiah set up an editorial committee to go through a number of Solomon’s proverbs and select some to be included in the Book of Proverbs. (Solomon lived about 250 years before King Hezekiah’s time.) So in Proverbs 25-29, we have about 130 of Solomon’s proverbs that were collected and copied by King Hezekiah’s scribal committee, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit they were included in this book of Scripture.

#### Doctrinal Point

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

**Verse 2:** *“It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings is to search out a matter.”* God has not revealed everything about Himself or His creation to us, but we should search out and study what He has revealed. Deuteronomy 29:29 says, *“The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.”*

In the context of Proverbs 25, it seems that kings are to search out information and insights that will help them make proper judgments and policy decisions for their kingdoms. But of course this proverb has plenty of wider application, and we will come back to it for our practical application.

**Verse 3:** *“As the heavens for height and the earth for depth, so the heart of kings is unsearchable.”* This proverb is not only telling us the way it is (because rulers don’t tell their subjects everything involving the decisions they make), but it also informs us that a lot is going on behind the scenes with high level decisions. Leaders are dealing with big issues, and we’re not always aware of all the complications – sometimes they’re as high as heaven and as deep as earth.

So in application, let’s keep this proverb in mind before we criticize or speak out against the decisions of the governing authorities or church leaders, as if we know all there is to know about every factor in a leader’s decision. We certainly could extend this application to the wise decisions of the King of all kings, the Lord Himself. How dare we question the sovereign ways of the Lord in this world, or in our personal lives? He knows all the facts - and we don’t.

**Verses 4-5:** *“Take away the dross from silver, and it will go to the silversmith for jewelry. Take away the wicked from before the king, and his throne will be established in righteousness.”* These verses obviously go together. They’re an example of “emblematic parallelism” in Hebrew poetry. Verse 4 is a word picture about removing dross from silver, and verse 5 is in parallel structure to the word picture, as it illustrates the removal of the wicked from the kingdom.

The meaning of this proverb is pretty obvious. If the dross is not removed from the precious silver, the silversmith cannot make beautiful jewelry. In the same way, if the wicked, especially wicked counselors, are not removed from a kingdom (and especially from the king’s court), the throne cannot be established in righteousness.

Think of this proverb in reference to the return of our Lord to set up His kingdom here on earth. In Matthew 25 the Lord taught that He will separate the righteous from the unrighteous in the nations, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. That’s an illustration similar to separating the dross from the valuable and useable silver.

**Verses 6-7:** *“Do not exalt yourself in the presence of the king, and do not stand in the place of the great; for it is better that he say to you, “Come up here,” than that you should be put lower in the presence of the prince, whom your eyes have seen.”* Does this proverb remind you of anything the Lord Jesus taught in His parables? How about Luke 14:7-11: “So

*He told a parable to those who were invited, and when He noted how they chose the best places, saying to them: "When you are invited by anyone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in the best place, lest one more honorable than you be invited by him; and he who invited you and him come and say to you, 'Give place to this man,' and then you begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place, so that when he who invited you comes he may say to you, 'Friend, go up higher.' Then you will have glory in the presence of those who sit at the table with you. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."*

The point of this proverb, and the point that our Lord was making, is that it is far wiser to humbly take a lower place and wait to be promoted rather than to promote yourself - only to be humiliated by being told to go to the proverbial "end of the line." Did this ever happen to you? It's embarrassing, to say the least, and it happens to people who push themselves forward in all areas of life – politics, athletics, social events, the academic world, and even the ministry.

This doesn't mean that we should hide our gifts and talents, but let's not be proud self-promoters! Let's serve faithfully and humbly, waiting on the Lord, and allowing Him to promote us in His sovereign way and at the right time. *"Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time"* (1 Peter 5:6)

**Verses 8-10:** *"Do not go hastily to court, for what will you do in the end when your neighbor has put you to shame? Debate your case with your neighbor, and do not disclose the secret to another lest he who hears it expose your shame and your reputation be ruined."* The New Testament teaches that believers are not to go to secular courts to solve their differences or settle their cases against one another (1 Corinthians 6:1-7). It's better to be wronged than to take a fellow believer to court. But what about a dispute with an unbeliever? This proverb tells us that even when you think an unbeliever has wronged you, it's wise to restrain yourself, and not rush into court. But if you decide to proceed, make sure you have all your ducks in a row. Better yet - settle the situation out of court.

This is essentially what the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 5:25-26, *"Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. Assuredly, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny."*

**Verse 11:** *"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver."* What better setting for golden apples than a silver bowl? And what could be better than the right words spoken in the right place at the right time? That's the idea here. How often a well-chosen selection of Scripture on the occasion of a tragic circumstance or joyous event provides just the right words!

**Verse 12:** *"Like an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold is a wise rebuke to an obedient ear."* The timely word of verse 11 may be a rebuke, depending on the occasion. If the rebuke or correction falls on a listening ear that responds well, it's a beautiful thing to behold - like the glistening of a gold earring or a gold pendant (v12).

**Verse 13:** *“Like the cold of snow in time of harvest is a faithful messenger to those who send him, for he refreshes the soul of his masters.”* Can you think of anything more refreshing at harvest time, when you’re sweating from hard work, to receive a welcome drink of cold water from a creek of melting mountain snow? (Remember – barley harvest in Israel was in the spring.) How refreshing!

In the same way, how comforting and refreshing it is to the soul and spirit to know that a faithful messenger has delivered an important message. (Remember, this proverb was written well before the days of cell phones and emails!) Safe delivery of an important message might mean the difference between life and death in situations of war or illness.

**Verse 14:** *“Whoever falsely boasts of giving is like clouds and wind without rain.”* When you see clouds moving your way and the wind picks up, you naturally think rain is on its way. It’s especially disappointing if there’s no rain when you need rain. The same is true of a man who boasts of his giving, either his financial or spiritual gifts. If he doesn’t deliver, he’s nothing but hot air. Big wind, but no rain. Big talk, but no substance. How disappointing - but all too often true.

The proverbs are wise advice for everyday living.

## Practical Application

### Dig it out!

**Verse 2:** *“It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings is to search out a matter.”* In His sovereign ways, God has chosen to conceal many things, both in the material world that He’s created, and in the written Word that He’s given us. Our response to this aspect of the glory of God should be awe and worship! Our response should also be to study and search out of these hidden things. God is pleased when, through **good** science, we gain understanding and appreciation of the material universe He has created. Like kings in God’s royal family, we can use this knowledge to help mankind - and thus serve our Creator.

And God is pleased when we dig into His Word, to find the hidden treasures in the depths of Scripture. Coming to the proper interpretation of prophecies and parables, for example, may not be easy, but God wants us to search and study the Scriptures to find the gems of truth that He has hidden in His Word. So let’s get moving and get motivated to dig it out!