

## Proverbs Chapter 11 -- John Karmelich

1. I call this lesson, "A Reputation Matters". Many, but not all the proverbs in this chapter deal with one's reputation in life. This is not the author's intended theme. Proverbs is all about biblical wisdom. As I read this chapter over and again, I noticed that many of these proverbs deal with one's reputation in life, and I thought that would be a good topic to smuggle in this lesson.
  - a) Let's start with the salvation issue. Living a godly life is not technically a requirement for salvation. I suppose one can truly believe Jesus died for their sins and never do much about it and still be saved. What God is looking for is for us to be effective witnesses for Him in all that we do. In that sense, if we call Jesus "Lord", we should obey what He commands us to do. That involves changing our behavior in a way pleasing to God.
  - b) How do we specifically change our behavior? That is what the proverbs teach us. Yes, the whole bible is full of commands, advice and patterns for us to follow. Proverbs gives us examples of how to live a life in a way that is pleasing to God in all that we do.
  - c) This leads us to the topic at hand: Reputation. A (not the) purpose of living a life pleasing to God is for us to be a good witness to those around us. In other words, it is about developing a good reputation. Most adults know that one's reputation is bigger than one's personality. Having a good reputation does not mean we are perfect all the time, but it does mean we strive to live a life that is pleasing to God on a regular basis.
  - d) What some of the proverbs in this chapter teach us is that having a good reputation benefits those around us and ourselves. People often treat us based on our reputation. One can live a happier and more fulfilled life based on having a good reputation.
  - e) The flipside of this discussion is a bad reputation. We're going to deal a lot in this chapter with proverbs that warn what happens to people who don't have good reputations.
2. OK John, that's pretty basic stuff and logical. Why should I read this lesson?
  - a) Remember that reading the bible is teaching us what God wants and desires for our lives. The point is not about having a good reputation, but how to achieve a good reputation.
  - b) Having that reputation also requires constant work. Let's face it; our heads often grow in proportion to the compliments we receive. One aspect of living a life pleasing to God is about humility. Another point, which we'll get into in this lesson, is that we tend to sin the most when our egos get out of line. The point is one can never rest in living a life pleasing to God. It requires constant prayer and effort. Many of the proverbs in this chapter give us illustrations and examples of how to have a good reputation.
3. Let's quickly review where we are in the book. We are now ankle deep in the actual proverbs. ☺
  - a) Remember what a "proverb" is: A biblical proverb is a two-part "saying". It is short so it is easy to remember. It is designed to teach us something about biblical wisdom.
  - b) This style of writing in Proverbs is of two-part "thoughts". This will continue for many chapters. The general topic is wisdom. Over and above that, there is no logical sense to how the proverbs are organized. Grant it, there are often a handful of proverbs clustered together with the same theme, but there are no specific themes where say, "the next ten proverbs all deal with theft or adultery. Often, if you want to just study a specific topic within proverbs, one has to collect them from all over the book.
  - c) Again, the main topic is wisdom. The purpose for studying Proverbs is that these two part "sayings" help us learn the way God wants us to live a life pleasing to Him.
  - d) With that said, its time to make all of us better people. ☺
4. Chapter 11, Verse 1: The LORD abhors dishonest scales, but accurate weights are his delight.
  - a) If you were a butcher and sell meat by the pound, it would be cheating if your scale was less than a pound when the scale reads "one pound". The proverb is about honesty in weights and measures. The underlying point is about honesty in one's dealings.

- b) The point of this proverb is in effect, "No one else may know you are cheating, but God knows you are cheating".
  - c) This leads me back to my theme for this chapter: A good reputation matters! In the business world, if one has the reputation as a cheater, no one would want to deal with them. I have found most successful people are honest, if no other reason that it is good for business. Those same people could be rotten people at home, but they understand that success means being honest in one's dealings. Occasionally I come across someone who will try to cheat or lie about something. I can usually smell them coming. ☺ My advice to younger people is one never wins in cheating.
    - i) Yes, this proverb is about God being aware one is cheating. I'll also add to the fact one will usually lose out in the end. We'll talk about this more in future proverbs.
  - d) This is also a good proverb to see in context of the last few in Chapter 10. The last few proverbs say in effect, if you do what is right, it is pleasing to God. It would naturally follow about a warning against cheating in Verse 1.
5. Verse 2: When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.
- a) This is something I talked about in the introduction. The best of people are most likely to make mistakes when their (ok, our ☺) big fat heads get in the way.
  - b) Let's describe "pride". The idea is not so much a big ego as much as it is the desire to put one's own will as a priority over God's will. For example, if a sin is tempting us, if we give in to that sin, we are putting our will to fulfill that desire over God's will for our life. Remember that sin always starts with a desire on the inside and then the body follows. For example, our right arm doesn't steal; our arm is just following orders from the brain. The idea is what is inside of us is giving orders to the "outside".
  - c) Here's the important part: If we learn to deal with what is "in" us, it helps control the outside behavior. The idea is to deal with the pride first.
    - i) OK, how do we do that? Why can't we just throw away our pride? The answer is it keeps us close to God. Let's face it, if we never sinned, we wouldn't stay in such close communication with God. The secret is to rely upon God's power to work within us, to change us moment by moment for the better. It doesn't mean we can be perfect, but it certainly means we can "generally" live a life pleasing to God if we make a concerted effort to please God in all that we do.
  - d) Now let's talk about humility. There is a false idea that humility is thinking lowly of oneself. To say, "I am a no good nothing" is not humility. Humility is about not thinking about oneself at all. Humility is about putting the needs of others before oneself.
  - e) Moses was called the most humble man on the face of the earth (Numbers 12:3). It didn't mean Moses never sinned. The reason for his humility is he put the needs of the Israelites as a priority over his own needs.
  - f) So how does humility bring wisdom? Remember wisdom is the application of biblical knowledge. If one is trying to please others, humility is a way of showing love to others. That type of love is pleasing to God, and therefore, it is wisdom.
6. Verse 3: The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity.
- a) OK, we're back to my topic of the day, one's reputation. This proverb is saying in effect, if one has a good reputation, it guides them. If one is unfaithful to their commitments, it will eventually caught up with them and destroy their reputation.
  - b) Let's talk about "the integrity of the upright" and how it works: If one understands one is accountable to God, and one wants to live a life pleasing to Him, our actions will follow. It is understanding our accountability that guides us and gives us that good reputation.
  - c) Let's talk about "The unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity". The term "duplicity" means one acts in two different ways. Let's say one is guilty of adultery. One is then living a dual life as one is lying to their spouse and family.

- d) I'd like to distinguish between a "duplicity" lifestyle and a hypocrite.
    - i) A hypocrite is one who believes everyone else should live up to a certain standard, but not them. If a person preaches "we have to live this way" and fails to live up to that standard, he or she may have sinned, but that doesn't make them a hypocrite. A hypocrite is one that says it is ok for me to do "this or that" but it is wrong for you to do it.
    - ii) Someone guilty of "duplicity" would be like person who tells a bunch of lies in order to cover up their sins. The idea is they are not honorable to their commitments. One has to separate an honorable person who fails, confesses and moves on, versus one who doesn't care whether or not they are accountable to God and then simply tells lies in order to cover up their reputation.
7. Verse 4: Wealth is worthless in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death.
- a) To sum this one up, "You can't buy your way into heaven".
  - b) OK, most of us know that one. Even people who don't take Christianity too seriously understand you can't buy your way into heaven. Is that all there is to this proverb? No.
  - c) The idea is to remind us about what is important in life. Yes, work is necessary and one should work hard to support oneself and one's family. The underlying point is to get our priorities straight in life. Eternity lasts a lot longer than a lifetime. The other point is we are all going to die one day. Working extra hours to make more money isn't going to change that fact. Only one's righteousness delivers one from death.
  - d) It's time to define "righteousness". The basic idea is "right with God". That means we trust in Jesus' payment for our sins. We are perfectly forgiven as the perfect punishment for our sins has been paid. Out of gratitude for that fact, we live a life of obedience to God. We tell God His ways are right and ours is wrong. When we mess up, we confess we were wrong and move on. That is the general idea of righteousness.
    - i) Suppose we have some unconfessed sins and then are hit by a truck. ☺ Does that mean we go to hell for that sin? Not if one is trusting in Jesus for payment of those sins. His blood covers all of our sins, past, present and future. Unconfessed sins make us a bad witness to those around us. Unconfessed sins make our own life miserable. The idea of "righteousness delivers from death" is about salvation, but it also about living a life that is pleasing to God in all that we do.
8. Verse 5: The righteousness of the blameless makes a straight way for them, but the wicked are brought down by their own wickedness.
- a) One of the most famous proverbs is 3:5-6, which says in effect, "Trust in God and He will make your paths straight." Here in Chapter 10, Verse 5, the first part says that God will make a "straight way" for the righteousness.
  - b) So what does "straight way" mean? Is God going to direct traffic for us? ☺ No. The idea is that God will guide us in the way we should go in life. It doesn't mean angels navigate our lives and yell out "turn here". It means that if we use godly wisdom, we can make the right decisions in life.
    - i) Let me give an example: If someone asks you or me to do something, "a little illegal", we say no as we are accountable to God. If we say yes, we may go down the wrong path covering up that sin.
    - ii) The idea of a path is not a specific highway in our town, but the idea of living a life pleasing to God in all that we do.
  - c) On to the second part of this verse. It says, "The wicked are brought down by their own wickedness." To paraphrase, "whatever sins or crimes they commit, those actions will be their own downfall." This is a generalization. It is generally true that a wicked person is more likely to be "brought down" by some sin they committed than by some innocent person who accidentally hits them on the head with a hammer. ☺

- i) Yes, this verse refers to salvation, but I believe the idea is also that a wicked person will end up in jail or have a "low life" directly because of their wickedness.
  - ii) The idea of this verse is to think of the long-term consequences of one's actions.
- 9. Verse 6: The righteousness of the upright delivers them, but the unfaithful are trapped by evil desires.
  - a) Let's take the first half: "The righteousness of the upright delivers them". This verse is saying one is "delivered" based on one's righteousness. The question becomes "delivered from what? The clue to this question is in the second half of this proverb: "The unfaithful are trapped by evil desires". It means those who don't put their trust in God get trapped by falling into temptation of their "evil desires".
    - i) It means the "righteous" are somehow delivered from evil desires.
    - ii) Let's get practical about this: Does this mean Christians never get tempted or never fall into temptation? No. It means that those who trust in God know right from wrong. We want to please God and therefore we make every effort to resist temptation. Christians pray for God's strength to help us pass on such sins.
  - b) Let me put it this way: If we are chosen as of one of God's people, His desire is to see us mature and grow closer to Him. If that's the case, God must provide us with a way to escape from sin and turn to Him. (See 1st Corinthians 10:13).
  - c) At the same time, to those who willfully choose to turn from God, He says in effect, "OK, if that's what you want, I won't force you to love Me." Those who turn from God steadily grow worse and worse based on that choice to turn from Him. Eventually, one can become "trapped by evil desires".
  - d) Does that mean the "wicked" can never repent? Of course not. Again, we can't know who is saved and who is not. Our job is only to judge behavior. We can watch people become consumed by some sinful desire and know that this person does not care whether or not they are accountable to God. We can still try to reach out to that person or pray for them. Only God knows whether or not that person is saved.
- 10. Verse 7: When a wicked man dies, his hope perishes; all he expected from his power comes to nothing.
  - a) It might be best to define the word "wicked" as it is used in this section. It is describing a person who doesn't think twice about sinning in order to accomplish something. They may lie and cheat in order to gain wealth and power. If it is God's desire for us to put the needs of others before ourselves, the wicked put themselves first to the point of not caring whether or not they hurt other people.
  - b) The point of this verse is to think about the long-term consequences of this action. God is saying in effect, "Such people may gain some power, but it only lasts a lifetime. Eternity is a whole lot longer than anything and everything one acquires in this lifetime. Eventually, that wicked person is going to die, and all the hope he or she has, dies with them.
    - i) The main point is again, to think about the long-term consequences of living this type of life. The other point is to know that such evil people will be punished by God. One does not get away with it forever. The judgment day is for all.
  - c) This is a good verse to remind us again, what is important in life. If we have some aspect of our lives that is hurting others in order for us to gain some sort of wealth or power, we should give that up in order to please God.
- 11. Verse 8: The righteous man is rescued from trouble, and it comes on the wicked instead.
  - a) Does this mean if a truck is about to hit us, God is going to move that truck in the next lane so it will hit the wicked person instead? No. ☺
  - b) From our perspective, we "rescue ourselves" from trouble. Let me explain further.
  - c) When we choose not to sin as to please God, then we rescue ourselves from danger.

- d) The opposite is true for the wicked. Since they don't care whether or not something is a sin, the "trouble" comes upon them when they act out that sin.
- e) This verse can be seen another way. The verse says, "The righteous man is rescued from trouble". If one is struggling with an addiction, one can take comfort in that sentence. It is a promise from God that he or she will be rescued. God promises to help us recover from sinful activities. That too, is a form of "rescue". It doesn't mean one's recovery is instantaneous, but that God can work in one's life to make one better.
12. Verse 9: With his mouth the godless destroys his neighbor, but through knowledge the righteous escape.
- a) I was thinking, how does one destroy a neighbor with their mouth? Is it by telling lies that it is "ok to sin a little"? Would it be asking one's neighbor to join in their sin? Would it be by telling one's neighbor in effect that going to church and pleasing God isn't necessary to enjoy life? Those would all be examples.
- b) The idea is those who don't fear God still talk and influence others. We have to consider the source of information. We have to have discernment over what a neighbor tells us.
- i) That is the idea of the second half of this verse. Those that trust in God have the discernment to say, "What my neighbor is telling me or asking me to do is not pleasing to God, therefore, I'll just say no." That is the "escape" of this verse.
13. Verse 10: When the righteous prosper, the city rejoices; when the wicked perish, there are shouts of joy.
- a) To paraphrase this verse, when a good person is doing well, people may say "way to go". When a wicked person dies, there is partying and parades in the streets. The idea is there is more celebration over the wicked person's death than the good person's success.
- b) Most historians will tell you this is true. When some cruel dictator has been killed, there is often a celebration in the street over the guy being killed.
- c) Why is that? Why is there more celebration over the wicked person's death than over the accomplishments of a good person? Part of it is the effects of a wicked person are more noticeable than the good done by a righteous person.
- d) This leads back to the topic of one's reputation. When one does what is right in life, one is admired. When one is wicked, there is celebration in the streets when the wicked is dead.
14. Verse 11: Through the blessing of the upright a city is exalted, but by the mouth of the wicked it is destroyed.
- a) Verse 11 goes well with Verse 10. This verse is saying a city is blessed by the actions of the righteousness and a city is destroyed by the mouth of the wicked.
- b) OK, what does that mean? I'll argue it is about the reputation of the city (there's that word again! ☺). Do people want to do business with a city that has a wicked reputation? Do people want to move to a city that is known for say, crime and sin? I'll argue that if the wicked are allowed dominate a city, it ends up destroying itself from within.
- c) The righteousness refers to those that desire to do what's right. They "bless" a city by giving it a reputation for being honorable. Other cities will want to trade with that city. Other people will want to move into that city.
- d) This is one of those proverbs that teach us, "This is the way life works". It has happened throughout history. Once a city has a bad reputation, it eventually goes further and further downhill to a point is not a healthy benefit to society.
15. Verse 12: A man who lacks judgment derides his neighbor, but a man of understanding holds his tongue.
- a) It's best to explain this one with an illustration. Imagine your neighbor is doing something to bother you, or let's say you know of some issue that neighbor has to deal with. Instead of approaching them gently, we lash out at them. The neighbor is going to think, "Well, who put you in charge? What are you, some holier than thou person?"

- i) The problem is, at the end of the day, we are still going to have to live next to that neighbor. The point is God wants us to use wisdom when we approach our neighbor on an issue. The word "tact" is important here too.
  - b) Jesus said one of the most important commands in the bible is to love our neighbor as ourselves. (Ref.: Matthew 22:39, Leviticus 19:18) Essentially, that means to support the needs of others as much as our own needs. That principal fits in well with this verse. There are times when it is best to "hold our tongue" with our neighbor. The point is not to ignore sin, but to have tact when we deal with those around us.
  - c) This gets me back to my theme of "reputation matters". If we have a reputation in our neighborhood as one who complains at the first sign of a problem, our neighbors are going to lock the doors when we come around. If we have a reputation of being loving and caring for those around us, our neighbors are more likely to invite us in, especially when the opportunity arises to share with them about what is important in life.
16. Verse 13: A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy man keeps a secret.
- a) Gossip is passing on information about a person that is not true or an exaggeration.
  - b) If I had to pick the one sin that does the most damage to a church, it is gossip. A sin like murder may do more physical damage, but it is rare to see a murder in a church setting. Gossip is more common and again, it causes far more damage. I have personally seen church splits and large groups leave a church over a false accusation.
  - c) Gossip is often subtly passed around. A Christian guilty of gossip might say, "Let me tell you who we have to pray for today."
  - d) Let's suppose someone approaches you with some sort of gossip about another person. Suppose Mary says, "Did you hear what John did?" Your response should be, "What did John say when you confronted him on that issue?" Gossip is making accusations about a person when that person is not around.
  - e) There is an old joke that says, "A secret is something you only tell one person at a time as opposed to broadcasting it openly". Verse 13 says, "A trustworthy man keeps a secret". Sometimes wisdom is about keeping one's mouth shut, especially when it can hurt someone's reputation.
  - f) In my profession, I am required to keep secrets as I deal with financially sensitive information. Again, we are back to "reputation matters". If one cannot be trusted to keep certain information a secret, one will rarely succeed in life.
17. Verse 14: For lack of guidance a nation falls, but many advisers make victory sure.
- a) What this verse says in effect that if the leaders of a nation don't have good counselors (advisors), that nation falls, as in they are conquered or they socially fall apart from within. If they have good counselors, they will have a victory.
  - b) I also want to give the King James Version: "Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety" Going by this translation, the idea is more than just warfare, it is about having good consulting in life.
  - c) Here is how to apply this verse: Do you have a big decision to make? Talk it over with a handful of wise people. It is best to talk to someone who has been in a similar situation. Once you've done that, one makes the best decision they can, given the information at hand. Sometimes God allows "bad results" in order to teach us what to do next.
    - i) For what it is worth, this is one of my favorite proverbs to practice. When it comes to big decisions, I talk it over with a few people, and then make a decision. I have found this proverb to be very true in life.
  - d) Back to the verse, it reads as if one is guaranteed a victory if one has many advisors. Again, one has to read this as a generalization. It is generally true if one has good godly counsel, a group (city, nation, a church) should succeed. Are there exceptions? Of course. Sometimes God allows failure for some greater purpose. The point is to get good advice, pray it through, then make some decision and go forward.

18. Verse 15: He who puts up security for another will surely suffer, but whoever refuses to strike hands in pledge is safe.
- a) This is an issue that was discussed back in Chapter 6. The issue has to do with "cosigning" a loan. It means if someone else is getting a loan, the cosigning person also agrees to be liable for those loan payments. It was a common custom in the Middle East for a second person to guarantee a loan if the first person didn't have good credit.
  - b) What the proverb is saying in effect is, "Don't put up security for another. You know you are on safe grounds if you say no to that request."
  - c) The underlying point is to make good decisions on which friends to choose and which people to go into partnership arrangements.
  - d) Think about this verse in context of the previous verse: The previous proverb was about getting good counseling. Here, it is saying to avoid partnerships with someone who shouldn't be trusted. Verse 15 can be thought of as an application of good counseling.
  - e) We're back to "reputation" again. The danger is about getting involved with someone who we don't know their reputation. One's own reputation and finances could be hurt by this deal. Going back to the previous proverb, getting counsel by people with good reputations can help one make a decision like this. The second half of the proverb says in effect, "When in doubt, don't do it. Don't co-sign on that agreement!"
19. Verse 16: A kindhearted woman gains respect, but ruthless men gain only wealth.
- a) Let me summarize the key points of this proverb:
    - i) In the first half, we have a woman. If she is kind, she gains respect.
    - ii) In the second half, we have a man. If he is ruthless, he gets only wealth.
    - iii) The point is that gaining respect is greater than wealth. Again, we are back to the "reputation" issue. One can be greedy and get a lot of wealth, but in the end, that is all that one has and usually ends up miserable.
  - b) I can't read this proverb and not think of a cute joke I heard many years ago: A young rabbi was walking along with a senior rabbi. The young rabbi asked, "Rabbi, what do I have to do to be rich? The old rabbi responded, "Well, for the first 15 years, you have to be a greedy bastard." The two rabbis kept walking. Finally, the young rabbi asked, "What happens after 15 years?" The older rabbi shrugged his shoulders and responded, "Well, after 15 years, you get used to it." ☺
    - i) While that joke is cute, I don't believe it is necessary to be greedy or ruthless in order to be financially rich. That is not the point of this proverb. The point is if one is ruthless and rich, then "rich" is all that he or she has.
20. Verse 17: A kind man benefits himself, but a cruel man brings trouble on himself.
- a) This proverb reminds me of the expression, "What goes around comes around". In other words, if you are kind to others, others will be kind to you. If one is cruel to others, one can expect others to be cruel to you.
  - b) Most people want others to be kind to them. Personally, I'm fond of the idea. ☺ The proverb is another reminder to treat others as we want to be treated. It is a reminder that there is a personal benefit to "loving your neighbor as yourself".
  - c) Let's get back to the "good reputation" concept: If one has a reputation for being kind, I promise that others will treat you and me kindly.
21. Verse 18: The wicked man earns deceptive wages, but he who sows righteousness reaps a sure reward.
- a) Let me give "The Living Bible's" paraphrase of this one: "The evil man gets rich for the moment, but the good man's reward lasts forever." This is about salvation. The rewards we get with salvation is far greater than the wicked person's rewards in this lifetime.

- b) Jesus said in effect if one does a charitable deed in public and say, one gets a big round of applause that is all the reward one gets. Jesus then encourages us to give secretly and God the Father will reward us openly. (Ref. Matthew 6:2-3). What is implied by that statement is there are rewards in heaven based on one's service to God.
    - i) My point here is when Verse 18 says "a sure reward" it is referring to some sort of reward that last for eternity. I'm not positive what that means, but I suspect it's much greater than that round of applause. ☺
  - c) Now let's look at the first part again: "The wicked man earns deceptive wages". How are they "deceptive"? Again, the best way to interpret a proverb is to look at the other half. The other half says the righteous gets a "sure" reward. The point is the wages are deceptive in that they only last for this lifetime.
22. Verse 19: The truly righteous man attains life, but he who pursues evil goes to his death.
- a) The verse is implying that one who is righteous (i.e. "right with God") gets "life". That refers to eternal life. The contrast is those who pursue evil are working their way to hell.
  - b) I'll also argue that it as a general rule, it applies to this life as well. I will argue that those who try to live a life pleasing to God, have more internal joy than those who pursue evil. The latter type of person has to deal with guilt. That guilt eats away at one's health.
23. Verse 20: The LORD detests men of perverse heart but he delights in those whose ways are blameless.
- a) Is it possible to make God happy or angry? This verse implies that it is. It says God detests those who have a perverse heart and God delights in those who are "blameless".
  - b) First, let's talk about God a little. I don't think He minds. ☺ If God is perfect, God would know all things. If He knows all things, He cannot learn. If God knows all things, why would he be delighted or angry based on our actions? The answer is God judges us based on our actions. What we do may not be a surprise to God, but come judgment day, we may see God take delight in us or detest our actions.
  - c) With that said, let's discuss "blameless". The idea implies perfection. Remember that Christians are not perfect, just perfectly forgiven. In that sense, we become blameless. That is not an excuse to sin, but the realization of what we become when we are saved.
    - i) If we are saved, God "delights" in us. Take comfort in that. Take comfort in that especially when the world is falling apart around us.
    - ii) It doesn't mean life will be perfect for now on all the time. If God wants to save us, then He wants to prepare us for eternity. That means He is "working on us" to make us more like the person He wants us to be. In that sense, He "delights" in us.
24. Verse 21: Be sure of this: The wicked will not go unpunished, but those who are righteous will go free.
- a) Let me paraphrase this verse: "I, God will judge everyone one day! Count on it! Those who are wicked may appear to be getting away with it, but they will be punished. Those who are righteous may be suffering today, but they will be set free one day".
  - b) The point is that promises are being made. God is promising a judgment day is coming for all people. When we see good people suffer and when we see bad people get away with stuff, we can rest assured all people will be resurrected and judged based on how they lived their lives. (Yes, there is also an age of accountability, that's a separate issue.)
25. Verse 22: Like a gold ring in a pig's snout is a beautiful woman who shows no discretion.
- a) Whenever I have doubts that God has a sense of humor, I read verses like this. ☺
  - b) The idea that gold ring in a pig's nose is ridiculous. The pig doesn't appreciate it and it doesn't make the pig any better looking. Also remember pigs are not kosher!
  - c) The real point is like the ridiculousness of the pig, so is a woman who doesn't have discretion. What does discretion mean? The ability to discern right from wrong. Notice the woman is called beautiful in this proverb. That gift of beauty is a waste (like the gold ring) when someone doesn't apply biblical wisdom to their lives.

26. Verse 23: The desire of the righteous ends only in good, but the hope of the wicked only in wrath.
- a) Here is another verse that says in effect good people go to heaven and bad people go to hell. This is similar to Verse 21.
  - b) Before I discuss this verse, let's go back to the pig's nose ring and the beautiful woman. Notice that proverb (Verse 22) is sandwiched between two other proverbs on the salvation issue. It makes the "beautiful but foolish woman" stand out even more when one puts that in context of Verses 21 and 23. Another point of Verse 22 is that beauty is wasted when one does not have a heart for God. How is it wasted? That beauty will only last a number of years. God's grace lasts an eternity for all those who seek it.
  - c) Back to Verse 23: Notice the words "desire and hope". They are synonyms. The underlying point of the first half is those who seek God will not be disappointed. It is worth the effort to make the lifetime commitment to God. Yes, there is some denial of what appears to be pleasure, but the point is, it is worth it for entrance to heaven.
    - i) Remember that proverbs are generalizations. I'll also add it is generally true that good things happen in this lifetime for those who seek God. Spend some time with seniors who have sought God all of their lives. I usually find them to be a happy bunch. I've also met many bitter seniors who turn their backs on God.
27. Verse 24: One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty.
- a) Here is another proverb that is a generalization. It is generally true that when a person is a "giver", that is, they give a lot to charity, give a lot of their time, and give a lot of their income, they end up with even more "stuff" than they gave away. The opposite is true of a miser, who holds on to his or her stuff tightly. The often end up in poverty.
  - b) There is an interesting word picture of this in Israel: There are two seas: The Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. The Sea of Galilee is the source of the Jordan River. The Sea of Galilee just "gives and gives" to the Jordan River and it still thrives. The Dead Sea just "dies there" (the water just evaporates). It takes from the Jordan, but doesn't give. The Sea of Galilee is full of fish. The Dead Sea has only salt and no significant fish life.
    - i) The point of the "two seas" is God calls us to be like the first, and not the second. If we give of our lives, God promises to replenish what we give, and then some.
  - c) Let's talk about what this verse is not saying: It is not saying give away every last dollar you own to the first person that comes along and God will make you richer. The bible never calls on one to take a vow of poverty. The point is one's attitude. God wants us to have generous hearts. That refers to both our resources and our time. If we give of what we have, God promises us more.
  - d) It is also a matter of trust. If we give to God of the first of our increase (e.g., part of our net income or net profit), we are trusting in God to provide for us in the future.
  - e) Notice the second half of this verse says, "Another withholds unduly". A point is this miser holds back what is due to another person in order to keep more for Himself. Another point of this proverb is God doesn't let people get away with such actions.
  - f) To get self-indulgent for a moment, ☺ I apply this proverb to this bible study ministry. The proverb says, "One man gives freely, yet gains even more.
    - i) One way God called me to "give" is to write these bible studies. My "gain (of) even more" includes my growth in God. The best way to learn the bible is to teach it.
    - ii) I also "gain even more" as I watch people being blessed by these studies.
28. Verse 25: A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.
- a) This verse continues the same theme of the previous proverb. In Verse 24, we had a good person vs. bad person comparison. In Verse 25, two points made about a good person.
    - i) Both halves of this verse say in effect, "What goes around comes around". If one is generous to others, that person will be treated well. God will somehow "replenish" what that person has given away.

- b) We're back to having a good reputation. If one has the reputation of being a "giver", there is a promise that this person will be prosperous by God.
  - c) I make a living by being self-employed. In times when work is slow, I ponder verses like this. I will wonder, "Am I being punished for something like not being generous enough?" One has to look at this verse as a possibility, and not an all-consuming rule. In other words, if one is generous, one cannot count on being financially successful during a recession. Again, this proverb is a generalization, and is not true 100% of the time.
  - d) One has to see this verse as applying to salvation. A sign that one has wisdom is that one has a generous heart. The only time Jesus ever used the term "new commandment" was for us to love one another. (Ref. John 13:34). To love one another is to put the needs of others as a priority over one one's needs. If one does that, one has a generous heart.
  - e) The second part of this verse says, "He who refreshes others will himself be refreshed". That is similar to the idea of being blessed for being generous. To "refresh" others is to do things for others to make them happy. It gives one joy to perform such an act.
29. Verse 26: People curse the man who hoards grain, but blessing crowns him who is willing to sell.
- a) Remember that when Proverbs was written, most of the world's economy was based on farming. The Israelites were primarily farmers and animal herders.
    - i) With that said, this proverb is about one who won't sell their grain until the "price is just right". The idea is they watch the market, try to create artificial shortages and then only sell when the price is peaking.
    - ii) Would not this be "good business" to maximize one's profits? Yes, it would be and it's also not "biblical". The idea is one is a farmer and one has grain to sell, one should sell at a fair market price when the buyers come around.
  - b) Notice in the second part of this proverb is that one is blessed if they are "willing to sell".
    - i) My point is God does not call the farmer to give away all that one owns. The bible never requires a vow of poverty nor even communism. If God says, "Do not steal", then God is condoning the private ownership of things.
    - ii) At the same time, this is not a call to ignore taxes. When Jesus says, "Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's" (Matthew 22:22, et. al.), Jesus is condoning paying taxes.
  - c) Another point is when we have the means to help others, we should when we could, and that includes, but is not exclusive to things we can sell to others.
30. Verse 27: He who seeks good finds goodwill, but evil comes to him who searches for it.
- a) Here is a promise by God if we seek good things in life, one will be blessed ("goodwill" means finding God's "favor" in life). If we seek evil (that is, willfully sin), evil will come upon that person.
  - b) What this promise is saying in effect is, "God promises to "notice" if we seek to do good things in life, and God promises to "notice" if we seek to do evil things."
    - i) This is another verse that shows we are accountable to God. Part of obedience is to love one another put other's needs over one's own.
  - c) Let's get back to the topic of a good reputation: Think about this proverb this way: If someone is approaching you, and that person has a reputation of doing good things, we are more likely to cooperate with a person with a good reputation. What about when an evil person comes around? At the least, we either run for it or have our defenses up.
    - i) My point is one will be blessed or "cursed" by others based on our reputation.
31. Verse 28: Whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will thrive like a green leaf.
- a) Let's start with the first half: "Whoever trusts in his riches will fall". Obviously if one has bills to pay, one "needs" those riches. This proverb is not talking about paying the bills.
  - b) This proverb is about is 1) salvation and 2) the danger of trusting money over wisdom.
  - c) As to salvation, the issue again, is one cannot buy one's way into heaven.
  - d) The main point is there are those who think they can buy their way out of any situation. They are trusting in their money and not God.

- e) Personally, I have found God works best in our lives when we run out of options. If we are in trouble, often our first reaction is to use whatever financial resources we have to get out of that situation. Usually there is nothing wrong with that. One reason God blesses us with money so we can use it in an emergency. My point here is I've often seen God work best when only He gets the glory. When all of our other options have run out, God often works miracles so that only He (and not our money) get the credit!
  - f) The second part says, "The righteous will thrive like a green leaf". One has to read this in comparison to the first part that says, "Whoever trusts in his riches will fall." In other words, those that seek God are seen by Him as "thriving like a green leaf".
    - i) How does a green leaf thrive? By sticking to the tree! Think about this proverb in comparison to what Jesus said, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15:5 NIV)
32. Verse 29: He who brings trouble on his family will inherit only wind, and the fool will be servant to the wise.
- a) Let's start with the first half: "He who brings trouble on his family will inherit only wind". Let's say you or I are a really evil parent. Our kids grow up and resent us for how badly we treat them. For that reason, they take off and ignore us forever. That is the word picture of "inherit the wind" in that the "wind carries our family away from us".
    - i) The word picture of "inherit the wind" means one's family will leave if we bring trouble on them. Obviously, this is not about disciplining a child. The idea is we are cruel to our children or commit such evil acts that we are not respected by our children and they leave us.
  - b) I can't leave "Inherit the Wind" without commenting on a famous movie that came out in 1960 with that title. This was a movie based on a famous court trial when the teaching of Darwinism was first debated. In the movie those who defended the biblical view of creation were treated like religious zealots that didn't know any facts about science. My point here is if one ever reads the actual transcripts of that trial, it was a lot different than as portrayed in the movie.
  - c) OK, back to the verse. ☺ The second part says, "The fool will be servant to the wise".
    - i) Here is another proverb that is generally true. The idea is that one who doesn't care about God's principals of their lives is called a fool. In some way, shape or form, they will be a servant to the wise. Maybe their end up in jail. Maybe their face a wise person sometime in an argument and lose.
  - d) What about the fool who is rich and powerful? How do they serve the wise? At the least, it refers to the salvation issue and the moment of judgment. Revelation 3:9 gives a statement that the unsaved will worship God at the feet of the saved.
33. Verse 30: The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise.
- a) Let's discuss the phrase "a tree of life". Back in the Garden of Eden, two trees were mentioned. One tree was the forbidden tree that caused the fall of Adam and Eve. The other tree was the "tree of life". We're not sure what it is, but after Adam and Eve's fall, they were forbidden to eat of the tree of life. (See Genesis 3:22; 3:24).
    - i) The "tree of life" also is mentioned as a promise to the resurrected believer in the Book of Revelation (Ref.: 2:7, 22:4, 22:14 and 22:19). The tree could be symbolic. Personally, I believe it is literal. The point is the tree of life somehow sustains life so one can live forever.
  - b) Which leads back to this proverb: "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life".
    - i) The idea (to those who know their bible) is that the "fruit" of living a life pleasing to God is "like" a tree of life in that it sustains our life. I'll also argue that it is a "hint" of salvation as the tree of life is associated with living forever.

- c) The second half of the verse says, "He who wins souls is wise".
    - i) How do we "win souls"? When we share the Gospel message with others and they accept Jesus in their hearts, we do "win souls". When we pray for someone's salvation and they eventually turn to God, we win souls.
    - ii) There is a false notion that we get "points" in heaven for every person that is saved. Our job as Christians is to spread the message (see Matthew 28:19), but the credit for the actual conversion process goes to the Holy Spirit.
    - iii) Some people have a special gift of evangelism. We could give the same speech as say, Billy Graham and he will get more converts. God gives some a special gift to win souls. That is not an excuse not to try. Again, it is not about "numbers", but about taking and making the time to make a difference in other people's lives.
    - iv) Back to this phrase: "He who wins souls is wise". A "sign" of wisdom is that one wins souls. Again, we're back to the topic of one's reputation. If others think, "You know, there is something special about that person and I want to be like them", that is also a way one is winning souls with their conduct.
34. Verse 31: If the righteous receive their due on earth, how much more the ungodly and the sinner!
- a) Let me paraphrase and expand upon this proverb, "If people who seek God get joy in their lives in good times and bad, can you imagine the misery that those who ignore God get no matter what the circumstances are in their lives?"
  - b) Think of it this way: God designed humans with a need to worship Him. Many people suppress that need by worshipping something else. Everybody worships something. Find out how a person spends their spare time and income and you will find their "god". As a general rule, those who ignore God and don't think twice about sin are in the end, miserable people. That promise of "misery" is the idea behind this proverb.
  - c) What this verse is implying is there is a promise by God to bless those who seek Him and a promise of a curse to those who ignore God in this lifetime.
    - i) Are there exceptions? Of course. There are many good Christians who die young and many who have been martyred. Again, this proverb is a generalization. There is a promise to the believer that one can have joy no matter what the situation as we know in the end, one has salvation and everlasting life. We can also have joy in knowing that God puts situations in our lives in order to mature us and draw us closer to Him.
35. Let me end this with one final mini-sermon on one's reputation.
- a) God does not expect us to be perfect. He does expect us to try. He does expect us to obey His commandments to the best of our ability. He does expect us to confess when we sin. If we have the discipline and the will to live this lifestyle, there is a promise of blessing in our lives "here and now". That is an underlying tone to many of these proverbs.
  - b) People judge us by our actions far more than anything we say. To use another common expression, "People don't care what you know until they know that you care". God calls us to be witnesses to others. That requires having a good reputation. A good reputation is earned, and not bestowed. To be a good witness to others, it is beneficial to have a reputation that one is trustable (again, not perfect, but trustable). No one is going to take you or me seriously about God if we are not practicing what we are preaching!
  - c) With that said, it can't be done without God's intervention and help in our lives. Since it is God's command for us to be witnesses to others, let's end this with a pray for His help.
36. Let's pray: Father, help us to develop a good reputation based on biblical wisdom. Help us and guide us as we live a life obedient to You. Help us to recognize how these proverbs to our life in whatever situations we face. Guide us, as we give You the glory. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.