

PROVERBS 23:1-35, GOD'S INSTRUCTION MANUAL

In this chapter, Solomon gets down to intricate subjects that his soon-to-graduate son will surely encounter in the real world.

Proverbs 23:1-3: *When you sit down to dine with a ruler, consider carefully what is before you; ^[2] and put a knife to your throat, if you are a man of great appetite. ^[3] Do not desire his delicacies, for it is deceptive **food**.*

➤ **In my years as a salesperson, I was often invited out to dine in a setting that I, and most of the group that accompanied us, were unaccustomed to. The food served was truly gourmet and very expensive. Consuming delicious food that was very rich in quality, as well as calories, sometimes bode badly at night's end. The temptation, when confronted by delicacies such as the afore-mentioned, was to over-indulge. Solomon, instructing his son, knowing that he would often be exposed to foreign _____ used a hyperbole to illustrate his point, being, that neither he nor we, are to make pigs of ourselves; it would be better to die than overeat. We are to use moderation and self-control at all times. Philippians 4:5: *Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.* ^[KJV]**

Proverbs 23:4-5: *Do not weary yourself to gain wealth, cease from your consideration of it. ^[5] When you set your eyes on it, it is gone. For wealth certainly makes itself wings, like an **eagle** that **flies** toward the heavens.*

➤ **Is there anything wrong with being rich or seeking to accumulate wealth? Certainly not, if you don't make it the goal of your life. Our stay here on God's campus is but for a short time, and during this period it is our only opportunity to store up treasure in heaven, rewards that will last an eternity, not one that moths and rust will destroy. That wealth will not be like the _____ on our dollars that _____ away all too easily. To some, the quest for material wealth becomes much more important than service to our Lord. Our quest for money should not be solely for personal gain; rather, our goal should be to see how much we can lay at the feet of Jesus, to**

be used for the advancement of His kingdom. Rev. 4:10-11: *the twenty-four elders fall down and worship the one who lives forever and ever. And they lay their crowns before the throne and say, ^[11] "You are worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power. For you created everything, and it is for your pleasure that they exist and were created."* [NLT]



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Proverbs 23:6-8: *Do not eat the bread of a selfish man or desire his delicacies; ^[7] for as he **thinks** within himself, so he is. He says to you, "Eat and drink!" But his heart is not with you. ^[8] You will vomit up the morsel you have eaten and waste your compliments.*

➤ **Don't make yourself a burden to any person, but especially to one**

whose only interest is in personal benefit and gain, rather than being a benefit for others. Some folks go to church only to make personal contacts that can be used during the week to promote their business or power agendas. They may _____ of themselves as "righteous," but our God looks upon their hearts. Jesus expresses His attitude toward this type of person in Rev. 3:15-16: *"I know all the things you do, that you are neither hot nor cold. I wish you were one or the other! [16] But since you are like lukewarm water, I will spit you out of my mouth!"* [NLT]

Our God has prepared a seat at His table, among His people, and we are called by to His feast, where we can let our souls delight themselves; a place that we may safely partake of the Bread of life. Isaiah 55:1-3: *"Is anyone thirsty? Come and drink—even if you have no money! Come, take your choice of wine or milk—it's all free! [2] Why spend your money on food that does not give you strength? Why pay for food*

that does you no good? Listen and I will tell you where to get food that is good for the soul! ^[3] "Come to me with your ears wide open. Listen, for the life of your soul is at stake. I am ready to make an everlasting covenant with you. I will give you all the mercies and unfailing love that I promised to David. [NLT]

Proverbs 23:9: *Do not speak in the hearing of a **fool**, for he will despise the wisdom of your words.*

- Since the Spirit of Christ was writing through the pen of Solomon, it should come as no surprise that Jesus confirmed this principle in Matthew 7:6: **"Don't give what is holy to unholy people. Don't give pearls to swine! They will trample the pearls, then turn and attack you. [NLT] If you recall, God considers any person that would refuse the free gift of salvation as a _____.**

Compiler's note: Although a word of caution is in order here, words once spoken are not retrievable, refrain from quick judgment. Here is a good rule for those who use the Word as a reprovor; first reform yourself. On the farm, one would say, "be sure you have milked your own cow first."

Proverbs 23:10: *Do not move the **ancient** boundary or go into the fields of the **fatherless**; ^[11] For their Redeemer is strong; He will plead their case against you.*

- We have been over boundary markers before, but the picture may be different here. Have you considered the faith that you will be passing on to your children as an inheritance? Have we moved the _____ boundaries of faith that were passed on to us by our forbearers? Have we spent enough time reaching the _____ to share the inheritance made possible by the cross? If not, consider that God is their strong Redeemer and He will hold us accountable for our actions here on Earth's campus.

Proverbs 23:12: *Apply your **heart** to discipline, and your **ears** to words of knowledge.*

- In these next few passages, we find Solomon, as the concerned parent, instructing his child to apply his mind to the **Scriptures**. His focus is on the _____, the home of our attitudes. God, our heavenly Father, is also very much concerned with our heart. He has placed in our hearts a whole new nature, with a new set of Godly attitudes, along with the *Helper*, His Holy Spirit as our guide. The task laid out before all Christians is to allow His indwelling Spirit to renew our minds in such a way that the mind comes into agreement with God's Spirit, and our new nature. He does this as we study His Word of knowledge and give _____ to the course correcting voice of His Spirit.

Proverbs 23:13: *Do not hold back **discipline** from the child, although you beat him with the rod, he will not die. ^[14] You shall beat him with the rod and deliver his soul from Sheol.*

- **Proverbs 23:13** is one that will put a knot in the knickers of our modern child psychologist. However, in their defense, too often a parent will punish a child rather than _____ the youngster. Many times, they will do this in a fit of anger, which certainly does not help to develop the character of the child; rather it works the opposite, builds resentment and strengthens the natural rebellious attitude within. The Spirit writes through Paul, Ephes. 6:4: *And now a word to you fathers. Don't make your children angry by the way you treat them. Rather, bring them up with the discipline and instruction approved by the Lord.* ^[NLT]

Compiler's note: When you must discipline your child with corporal punishment, send the child to his/her room to wait until your anger has dissipated. Then, when you administer the board of education to the seat of knowledge, you will find that you will cry as hard as they do, for different reasons.

Proverbs 23:15-16: *My son, if your heart is wise, my own heart also will be glad; ^[16] and my inmost being will **rejoice**, when your lips **speak** what is right.*

- A human father's delight is found in the wisdom of his offspring, just as our heavenly Father _____s_ as we yield to the course correcting voice of His Holy Spirit and begin to _____ and act in a godly fashion; speech that is according to our renewed mind, following the dictates of our new nature. Romans 12:2: *Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect his will really is.* [NLT]

Proverbs 23:17: *Do not let your heart envy sinners but live in the fear of the Lord always. [18] Surely there is a future, and your hope will not be cut off.*

- Like Solomon's son, we are to trust our God for provision and hold Him in great awe, with _____ and trembling. We need to learn to feed our faith and let our doubts starve to death. Hebrews 10:39: *But we are not like those who turn their backs on God and seal their fate. We have faith that assures our salvation.* [NLT]

Proverbs 23:19-21: *Listen, my son, and be wise, and direct your heart in the way. [20] Do not be with heavy drinkers of wine, or with gluttonous eaters of meat; [21] for the heavy drinker and the glutton will come to poverty and drowsiness will clothe a man with rags.*

- Solomon cautions his son to be _____ and keep his _____ on the right course by following the wisdom of the Scriptures. God has placed in each true believer the Fruit of His Spirit. If you don't want the fruits of sin, stay out of the devil's orchard.

Proverbs 23:22-23: *Listen to your father who begot you, and do not despise your mother when she is old. [23] Buy truth, and do not sell it, get wisdom and instruction and understanding.*

- Here we have an earnest call to young people, (we can extrapolate this to mean immature Christians) to attend to the advice of their godly parents. If our minds are yielded to the call of our heart, our steps will follow suit. Solomon's advice to buy the truth and _____ sell it may seem insipid unless we couple it with an understanding that because of Christ, the gift of His indwelling Counselor is free to us today; we must be willing to part with anything that keeps us from retaining His truth. 1st Cor. 1:30: *But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,* ^[NASB] Do not part with it for pleasures, honors, riches, or anything in this world. A clean heart is what our God desires. We must not think it acceptable to divide the heart between God and the world. James writes in 1:8, *that being a double-minded man,* [makes us] *unstable in all his ways.* ^[NASB] He continues in 4:8, that when we "*Draw near to God and He will draw near to [us] you.*" We are to cleanse our hands, repent of our sins; and reject our double-mindedness by the renewal of our minds through His course correcting Holy Spirit.

Proverbs 23:24: *The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice, and he who begets a wise son will be glad in him.* ^[25] *Let your father and your mother be glad and let her rejoice who gave birth to you.*

- *The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice;* we have read this twice before and will see it once again in Proverbs 29, so it must be very important to God, as it should be to us, His children. Here we have an earnest call to young people to attend to the advice of their godly parents and yield to the will of our heavenly Father, who gave _____ to our soul as we were being formed in our mother's womb.
- He placed us there with a plan and purpose. As we surrender our will to His Holy Spirit, we will be able to determine His will for our lives. Romans 12:2: . . . *by changing the way you think. . . you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect his will really is.* ^[NLT]

Proverbs 23:26: *Give me your heart, my son, and let your eyes delight in my ways.*

- **Written to Solomon's son by a father that loved him deeply, it is apropos to the way our heavenly Father feels about those of us who are His. When we accept the forgiveness that He offered through the cross of Christ, He wants us to put to death our old nature and receive a new godly Nature, one that He can have companionship with; when we give Him our _____s_ and yield to His _____, He is pleased. As we are baptized with His Spirit, He will inaugurate the fruit of His Spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, longsuffering and self-control. Our lifelong job and God's will for us is to so meditate on these things so that our minds begin to accept them, supplanting our old ways of thinking, which will lead to our daily actions conforming to our new natures.**

Proverbs 23:27-28: *For a harlot is a deep pit and an adulterous woman is a narrow well. ^[28] Surely, she lurks as a robber, and increases the faithless among men.*

- **It seems that our Lord knows the greatest weakness among men, and apparently, the wayward woman is quite aware of it also, using it as a snare to capture her prey. The adulterous woman is treacherous. She hides and waits like a _____, looking for another victim who will be unfaithful to his wife, spreading her sin like a cancer. Romans 1:32 is specifically addressing homosexuality, but contextually it agrees with God's attitude toward those who would practice the sin of prostitution and adultery. "They are fully aware of God's death penalty for those who do these things, yet they go right ahead and do them anyway. And, worse yet, they encourage others to do them, too. ^[NLT]**

Proverbs 23:29-30: *Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaining? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes?*

^[30] *Those who linger long over wine, those who go to taste mixed wine.*

- **Today we may refer to this as “crying in your beer.” It seems that too much alcohol causes a relaxing of our self-conscious inhibitions. Bar songs are generally known as “tear jerkers.” I know this from experience, having spent many years as an alcoholic, languishing in the bars, _____ing_ in the melancholy atmosphere of self-pity. I thank God for His prevenient grace.**

Proverbs 23:31-35: *Do not look on the wine when it is red when it sparkles in the cup when it goes down smoothly;^[32] at the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper. ^[33] Your eyes will see strange things, and your mind will utter perverse things. ^[34] And you will be like one who lies down in the middle of the sea, or like one who lies down on the top of a mast. ^[35] “They struck me, but I did not become ill; they beat me, but I did not know it. When shall I awake? I will seek another drink.”* [NASB]

Compiler’s conclusion: 40 years ago, I found myself in an odd situation. I was about to covenant with a church that held tea-totaling as a primary doctrine. I had prepared all of the necessary Scriptural arguments as to why I should be allowed to join and still not have to give up my alcohol. Verses like Proverbs 31:6-7: *Liquor is for the dying, and wine for those in deep depression. ^[7] Let them drink to forget their poverty and remember their troubles no more.* [NLT] After all didn’t Jesus turn water into wine, and didn’t Paul tell Timothy; *don’t drink only water. You ought to drink a little wine for the sake of your stomach because you are sick so often.* [1st Tim. 5:23 [NLT]]

All of this had little or nothing to do with my situation, I was an addict: Our God is a covenant keeper and I was about to take a covenant that I would willingly break. Jesus warns us in Matthew 5:37: *But let your statement be, ‘Yes, yes’ or ‘No, no’; and anything beyond these is of evil.* [NASB]

Because we represent Jesus, as His ambassador, our word must be our bond. That very day, God delivered me from any desire for strong drink. I said all of this to say two things.

First: There may be nothing wrong with having a glass of wine or beer, the problem is drunkenness or over indulgence. Paul addresses this in Ephes. 5:18: *Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, let the Holy Spirit fill and control you.* ^[NLT] And the second is, yes, we are our brother's keeper. Be sure you know your guest, nothing wrong with having a glass of wine with your meal but be careful that you don't cause an alcoholic guest to stumble. Paul writes in Romans 14:21; *Don't eat meat or drink wine or do anything else if it might cause another Christian to stumble.* ^[NLT] 1st Cor. 8:9: *But you must be careful with this freedom of yours. Do not cause a brother or sister with a weaker conscience to stumble.* ^[NLT] Here are two more passages that indicate the spirit of the dialog with an opening to discussion and exception.

- ✓ 1st Cor. 8:13: *If what I eat is going to make another Christian sin, I will never eat meat again as long as I live—for I don't want to make another Christian stumble.* ^[NLT]
- ✓ Hebrews 12:13: *Mark out a straight path for your feet. Then those who follow you, though they are weak and lame, will not stumble and fall but will become strong.* ^[NLT]

Christianity is not restrictive, only considerate, compassionate, and protective of our immortal souls