

CHAPTER 22

Pro 22:1-31:31 A sterling reputation is better than striking it rich; a gracious spirit is better than money in the bank. (2) The rich and the poor shake hands as equals-- GOD made them both! (3) A prudent person sees trouble coming and ducks; a simpleton walks in blindly and is clobbered. (4) The payoff for meekness and Fear-of-GOD is plenty and honor and a satisfying life. (5) The perverse travel a dangerous road, potholed and mud-slick; if you know what's good for you, stay clear of it. (6) Point your kids in the right direction-- when they're old they won't be lost. (7) The poor are always ruled over by the rich, so don't borrow and put yourself under their power. (8) Whoever sows sin reaps weeds, and bullying anger sputters into nothing. (9) Generous hands are blessed hands because they give bread to the poor. (10) Kick out the troublemakers and things will quiet down; you need a break from bickering and griping! (11) GOD loves the pure-hearted and well-spoken; good leaders also delight in their friendship. (12) GOD guards knowledge with a passion, but he'll have nothing to do with deception. (13) The loafer says, "There's a lion on the loose! If I go out I'll be eaten alive!" (14) The mouth of a whore is a bottomless pit; you'll fall in that pit if you're on the outs with GOD. (15) Young people are prone to foolishness and fads; the cure comes through tough-minded discipline. (16) Exploit the poor or glad-hand the rich--whichever, you'll end up the poorer for it. (17) Listen carefully to my wisdom; take to heart what I can teach you. You'll treasure its sweetness deep within; (18) you'll give it bold expression in your speech. (19) To make sure your foundation is trust in GOD, I'm laying it all out right now just for you. (20) I'm giving you thirty sterling principles--tested guidelines to live by. (21) Believe me--these are truths that work, and will keep you accountable to those

who sent you. (22) Don't walk on the poor just because they're poor, and don't use your position to crush the weak, (23) Because GOD will come to their defense; the life you took, he'll take from you and give back to them. (24) Don't hang out with angry people; don't keep company with hotheads. (25) Bad temper is contagious-- don't get infected. (26) Don't gamble on the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, hocking your house against a lucky chance. (27) The time will come when you have to pay up; you'll be left with nothing but the shirt on your back. (28) Don't stealthily move back the boundary lines staked out long ago by your ancestors. (29) Observe people who are good at their work-- skilled workers are always in demand and admired; they don't take a back seat to anyone.

CHAPTER 23

(23:1) When you go out to dinner with an influential person, mind your manners: (2) Don't gobble your food, don't talk with your mouth full. (3) And don't stuff yourself; bridle your appetite. (4) Don't wear yourself out trying to get rich; restrain yourself! (5) Riches disappear in the blink of an eye; wealth sprouts wings and flies off into the wild blue yonder. (6) Don't accept a meal from a tightwad; don't expect anything special. (7) He'll be as stingy with you as he is with himself; he'll say, "Eat! Drink!" but won't mean a word of it. (8) His miserly serving will turn your stomach when you realize the meal's a sham. (9) Don't bother talking sense to fools; they'll only poke fun at your words. (10) Don't stealthily move back the boundary lines or cheat orphans out of their property, (11) For they have a powerful Advocate who will go to bat for them. (12) Give yourselves to disciplined instruction; open your ears to tested knowledge. (13) Don't be afraid to correct your young ones; a spanking won't kill them. (14) A good spanking, in fact, might save them from something worse than death. (15) Dear child, if you become wise, I'll be one happy

parent. (16) My heart will dance and sing to the tuneful truth you'll speak. (17) Don't for a minute envy careless rebels; soak yourself in the Fear-of-GOD-- (18) That's where your future lies. Then you won't be left with an armload of nothing. (19) Oh listen, dear child--become wise; point your life in the right direction. (20) Don't drink too much wine and get drunk; don't eat too much food and get fat. (21) Drunks and gluttons will end up on skid row, in a stupor and dressed in rags. (22) Listen with respect to the father who raised you, and when your mother grows old, don't neglect her. (23) Buy truth--don't sell it for love or money; buy wisdom, buy education, buy insight. (24) Parents rejoice when their children turn out well; wise children become proud parents. (25) So make your father happy! Make your mother proud! (26) Dear child, I want your full attention; please do what I show you. (27) A whore is a bottomless pit; a loose woman can get you in deep trouble fast. (28) She'll take you for all you've got; she's worse than a pack of thieves. (29) Who are the people who are always crying the blues? Who do you know who reeks of self-pity? Who keeps getting beat up for no reason at all? Whose eyes are bleary and bloodshot? (30) It's those who spend the night with a bottle, for whom drinking is serious business. (31) Don't judge wine by its label, or its bouquet, or its full-bodied flavor. (32) Judge it rather by the hangover it leaves you with-- the splitting headache, the queasy stomach. (33) Do you really prefer seeing double, with your speech all slurred, (34) Reeling and seasick, drunk as a sailor? (35) "They hit me," you'll say, "but it didn't hurt; they beat on me, but I didn't feel a thing. When I'm sober enough to manage it, bring me another drink!"

CHAPTER 24

(24:1) Don't envy bad people; don't even want to be around them. (2) All they think about is causing a disturbance; all they talk about is making trouble. (3) It takes wisdom to build a house, and understanding to set it

on a firm foundation; (4) It takes knowledge to furnish its rooms with fine furniture and beautiful draperies. (5) It's better to be wise than strong; intelligence outranks muscle any day. (6) Strategic planning is the key to warfare; to win, you need a lot of good counsel. (7) Wise conversation is way over the head of fools; in a serious discussion they haven't a clue. (8) The person who's always cooking up some evil soon gets a reputation as prince of rogues. (9) Fools incubate sin; cynics desecrate beauty. (10) If you fall to pieces in a crisis, there wasn't much to you in the first place. (11) Rescue the perishing; don't hesitate to step in and help. (12) If you say, "Hey, that's none of my business," will that get you off the hook? Someone is watching you closely, you know-- Someone not impressed with weak excuses. (13) Eat honey, dear child--it's good for you-- and delicacies that melt in your mouth. (14) Likewise knowledge, and wisdom for your soul-- Get that and your future's secured, your hope is on solid rock. (15) Don't interfere with good people's lives; don't try to get the best of them. (16) No matter how many times you trip them up, God-loyal people don't stay down long; Soon they're up on their feet, while the wicked end up flat on their faces. (17) Don't laugh when your enemy falls; don't crow over his collapse. (18) GOD might see, and become very provoked, and then take pity on his plight. (19) Don't bother your head with braggarts or wish you could succeed like the wicked. (20) Those people have no future at all; they're headed down a dead-end street. (21) Fear GOD, dear child--respect your leaders; don't be defiant or mutinous. (22) Without warning your life can turn upside-down, and who knows how or when it might happen? (23) It's wrong, very wrong, to go along with injustice. (24) Whoever whitewashes the wicked gets a black mark in the history books, (25) But whoever exposes the wicked will be thanked and rewarded. (26) An honest answer is like a warm hug. (27) First plant your fields; then build your

barn. (28) Don't talk about your neighbors behind their backs-- no slander or gossip, please. (29) Don't say to anyone, "I'll get back at you for what you did to me. I'll make you pay for what you did!" (30) One day I walked by the field of an old lazybones, and then passed the vineyard of a lout; (31) They were overgrown with weeds, thick with thistles, all the fences broken down. (32) I took a long look and pondered what I saw; the fields preached me a sermon and I listened: (33) "A nap here, a nap there, a day off here, a day off there, sit back, take it easy--do you know what comes next? (34) Just this: You can look forward to a dirt-poor life, with poverty as your permanent houseguest!"

CHAPTER 25

(25:1) There are also these proverbs of Solomon, collected by scribes of Hezekiah, king of Judah. (2) God delights in concealing things; scientists delight in discovering things. (3) Like the horizons for breadth and the ocean for depth, the understanding of a good leader is broad and deep. (4) Remove impurities from the silver and the silversmith can craft a fine chalice; (5) Remove the wicked from leadership and authority will be credible and God-honoring. (6) Don't work yourself into the spotlight; don't push your way into the place of prominence. (7) It's better to be promoted to a place of honor than face humiliation by being demoted. (8) Don't jump to conclusions--there may be a perfectly good explanation for what you just saw. (9) In the heat of an argument, don't betray confidences; (10) Word is sure to get around, and no one will trust you. (11) The right word at the right time is like a custom-made piece of jewelry, (12) And a wise friend's timely reprimand is like a gold ring slipped on your finger. (13) Reliable friends who do what they say are like cool drinks in sweltering heat--refreshing! (14) Like billowing clouds that bring no rain is the person who talks big but never produces. (15) Patient persistence pierces through indifference; gentle speech

breaks down rigid defenses. (16) When you're given a box of candy, don't gulp it all down; eat too much chocolate and you'll make yourself sick; (17) And when you find a friend, don't outwear your welcome; show up at all hours and he'll soon get fed up. (18) Anyone who tells lies against the neighbors in court or on the street is a loose cannon. (19) Trusting a double-crosser when you're in trouble is like biting down on an abscessed tooth. (20) Singing light songs to the heavyhearted is like pouring salt in their wounds. (21) If you see your enemy hungry, go buy him lunch; if he's thirsty, bring him a drink. (22) Your generosity will surprise him with goodness, and GOD will look after you. (23) A north wind brings stormy weather, and a gossipy tongue stormy looks. (24) Better to live alone in a tumbledown shack than share a mansion with a nagging spouse. (25) Like a cool drink of water when you're worn out and weary is a letter from a long-lost friend. (26) A good person who gives in to a bad person is a muddied spring, a polluted well. (27) It's not smart to stuff yourself with sweets, nor is glory piled on glory good for you. (28) A person without self-control is like a house with its doors and windows knocked out.

CHAPTER 26

(26:1) We no more give honors to fools than pray for snow in summer or rain during harvest. (2) You have as little to fear from an undeserved curse as from the dart of a wren or the swoop of a swallow. (3) A whip for the racehorse, a tiller for the sailboat-- and a stick for the back of fools! (4) Don't respond to the stupidity of a fool; you'll only look foolish yourself. (5) Answer a fool in simple terms so he doesn't get a swelled head. (6) You're only asking for trouble when you send a message by a fool. (7) A proverb quoted by fools is limp as a wet noodle. (8) Putting a fool in a place of honor is like setting a mud brick on a marble column. (9) To ask a moron to quote a proverb is like putting a scalpel in the hands of a drunk. (10) Hire a fool or a drunk and you shoot yourself in the

foot. (11) As a dog eats its own vomit, so fools recycle silliness. (12) See that man who thinks he's so smart? You can expect far more from a fool than from him. (13) Loafers say, "It's dangerous out there! Tigers are prowling the streets!" and then pull the covers back over their heads. (14) Just as a door turns on its hinges, so a lazybones turns back over in bed. (15) A shiftless sluggard puts his fork in the pie, but is too lazy to lift it to his mouth. (16) Dreamers fantasize their self-importance; they think they are smarter than a whole college faculty. (17) You grab a mad dog by the ears when you butt into a quarrel that's none of your business. (18) People who shrug off deliberate deceptions, saying, "I didn't mean it, I was only joking," (19) Are worse than careless campers who walk away from smoldering campfires. (20) When you run out of wood, the fire goes out; when the gossip ends, the quarrel dies down. (21) A quarrelsome person in a dispute is like kerosene thrown on a fire. (22) Listening to gossip is like eating cheap candy; do you want junk like that in your belly? (23) Smooth talk from an evil heart is like glaze on cracked pottery. (24) Your enemy shakes hands and greets you like an old friend, all the while conniving against you. (25) When he speaks warmly to you, don't believe him for a minute; he's just waiting for the chance to rip you off. (26) No matter how cunningly he conceals his malice, eventually his evil will be exposed in public. (27) Malice backfires; spite boomerangs. (28) Liars hate their victims; flatterers sabotage trust.

CHAPTER 27

(27:1) Don't brashly announce what you're going to do tomorrow; you don't know the first thing about tomorrow. (2) Don't call attention to yourself; let others do that for you. (3) Carrying a log across your shoulders while you're hefting a boulder with your arms Is nothing compared to the burden of putting up with a fool. (4) We're blasted by anger and swamped by rage, but who can survive jealousy? (5) A spoken reprimand is better than approval that's

never expressed. (6) 'The wounds from a lover are worth it; kisses from an enemy do you in. (7) When you've stuffed yourself, you refuse dessert; when you're starved, you could eat a horse. (8) People who won't settle down, wandering hither and yon, are like restless birds, flitting to and fro. (9) Just as lotions and fragrance give sensual delight, a sweet friendship refreshes the soul. (10) Don't leave your friends or your parents' friends and run home to your family when things get rough; Better a nearby friend than a distant family. (11) Become wise, dear child, and make me happy; then nothing the world throws my way will upset me. (12) A prudent person sees trouble coming and ducks; a simpleton walks in blindly and is clobbered. (13) Hold tight to collateral on any loan to a stranger; be wary of accepting what a transient has pawned. (14) If you wake your friend in the early morning by shouting "Rise and shine!" It will sound to him more like a curse than a blessing. (15) A nagging spouse is like the drip, drip, drip of a leaky faucet; (16) You can't turn it off, and you can't get away from it. (17) You use steel to sharpen steel, and one friend sharpens another. (18) If you care for your orchard, you'll enjoy its fruit; if you honor your boss, you'll be honored. (19) Just as water mirrors your face, so your face mirrors your heart. (20) Hell has a voracious appetite, and lust just never quits. (21) The purity of silver and gold is tested by putting them in the fire; The purity of human hearts is tested by giving them a little fame. (22) Pound on a fool all you like-- you can't pound out foolishness. (23) Know your sheep by name; carefully attend to your flocks; (24) (Don't take them for granted; possessions don't last forever, you know.) (25) And then, when the crops are in and the harvest is stored in the barns, (26) You can knit sweaters from lambs' wool, and sell your goats for a profit; (27) There will be plenty of milk and meat to last your family through the winter.

CHAPTER 28

(28:1) The wicked are edgy with guilt, ready to run off even when no one's after them; Honest people are relaxed and confident, bold as lions. (2) When the country is in chaos, everybody has a plan to fix it-- But it takes a leader of real understanding to straighten things out. (3) The wicked who oppress the poor are like a hailstorm that beats down the harvest. (4) If you desert God's law, you're free to embrace depravity; if you love God's law, you fight for it tooth and nail. (5) Justice makes no sense to the evilminded; those who seek GOD know it inside and out. (6) It's better to be poor and direct than rich and crooked. (7) Practice God's law--get a reputation for wisdom; hang out with a loose crowd--embarrass your family. (8) Get as rich as you want through cheating and extortion, But eventually some friend of the poor is going to give it all back to them. (9) God has no use for the prayers of the people who won't listen to him. (10) Lead good people down a wrong path and you'll come to a bad end; do good and you'll be rewarded for it. (11) The rich think they know it all, but the poor can see right through them. (12) When good people are promoted, everything is great, but when the bad are in charge, watch out! (13) You can't whitewash your sins and get by with it; you find mercy by admitting and leaving them. (14) A tenderhearted person lives a blessed life; a hardhearted person lives a hard life. (15) Lions roar and bears charge--and the wicked lord it over the poor. (16) Among leaders who lack insight, abuse abounds, but for one who hates corruption, the future is bright. (17) A murderer haunted by guilt is doomed--there's no helping him. (18) Walk straight--live well and be saved; a devious life is a doomed life. (19) Work your garden--you'll end up with plenty of food; play and party--you'll end up with an empty plate. (20) Committed and persistent work pays off; get-rich-quick schemes are ripoffs. (21) Playing favorites is always a bad thing; you can do great harm in seemingly harmless ways. (22) A miser in a hurry to get rich doesn't know

that he'll end up broke. (23) In the end, serious reprimand is appreciated far more than bootlicking flattery. (24) Anyone who robs father and mother and says, "So, what's wrong with that?" is worse than a pirate. (25) A grasping person stirs up trouble, but trust in GOD brings a sense of well-being. (26) If you think you know it all, you're a fool for sure; real survivors learn wisdom from others. (27) Be generous to the poor--you'll never go hungry; shut your eyes to their needs, and run a gauntlet of curses. (28) When corruption takes over, good people go underground, but when the crooks are thrown out, it's safe to come out.

CHAPTER 29

(29:1) For people who hate discipline and only get more stubborn, There'll come a day when life tumbles in and they break, but by then it'll be too late to help them. (2) When good people run things, everyone is glad, but when the ruler is bad, everyone groans. (3) If you love wisdom, you'll delight your parents, but you'll destroy their trust if you run with whores. (4) A leader of good judgment gives stability; an exploiting leader leaves a trail of waste. (5) A flattering neighbor is up to no good; he's probably planning to take advantage of you. (6) Evil people fall into their own traps; good people run the other way, glad to escape. (7) The good-hearted understand what it's like to be poor; the hardhearted haven't the faintest idea. (8) A gang of cynics can upset a whole city; a group of sages can calm everyone down. (9) A sage trying to work things out with a fool gets only scorn and sarcasm for his trouble. (10) Murderers hate honest people; moral folks encourage them. (11) A fool lets it all hang out; a sage quietly mulls it over. (12) When a leader listens to malicious gossip, all the workers get infected with evil. (13) The poor and their abusers have at least something in common: they can both see--their sight, GOD's gift! (14) Leadership gains authority and respect when the voiceless poor are treated fairly. (15) Wise discipline imparts wisdom; spoiled

adolescents embarrass their parents. (16) When degenerates take charge, crime runs wild, but the righteous will eventually observe their collapse. (17) Discipline your children; you'll be glad you did-- they'll turn out delightful to live with. (18) If people can't see what God is doing, they stumble all over themselves; But when they attend to what he reveals, they are most blessed. (19) It takes more than talk to keep workers in line; mere words go in one ear and out the other. (20) Observe the people who always talk before they think-- even simpletons are better off than they are. (21) If you let people treat you like a doormat, you'll be quite forgotten in the end. (22) Angry people stir up a lot of discord; the intemperate stir up trouble. (23) Pride lands you flat on your face; humility prepares you for honors. (24) Befriend an outlaw and become an enemy to yourself. When the victims cry out, you'll be included in their curses if you're a coward to their cause in court. (25) The fear of human opinion disables; trusting in GOD protects you from that. (26) Everyone tries to get help from the leader, but only GOD will give us justice. (27) Good people can't stand the sight of deliberate evil; the wicked can't stand the sight of well-chosen goodness.

CHAPTER 30

(30:1) The skeptic swore, "There is no God! No God!--I can do anything I want! (2) I'm more animal than human; so-called human intelligence escapes me. (3) "I flunked 'wisdom.' I see no evidence of a holy God. (4) Has anyone ever seen Anyone climb into Heaven and take charge? grab the winds and control them? gather the rains in his bucket? stake out the ends of the earth? Just tell me his name, tell me the names of his sons. Come on now-- tell me!" (5) The believer replied, "Every promise of God proves true; he protects everyone who runs to him for help. (6) So don't second-guess him; he might take you to task and show up your lies." (7) And then he prayed, "God, I'm asking for two things before I die; don't refuse me-- (8) Banish lies from my lips and liars from my

presence. Give me enough food to live on, neither too much nor too little. (9) If I'm too full, I might get independent, saying, 'God? Who needs him?' If I'm poor, I might steal and dishonor the name of my God." (10) Don't blow the whistle on your fellow workers behind their backs; They'll accuse you of being underhanded, and then you'll be the guilty one! (11) Don't curse your father or fail to bless your mother. (12) Don't imagine yourself to be quite presentable when you haven't had a bath in weeks. (13) Don't be stuck-up and think you're better than everyone else. (14) Don't be greedy, merciless and cruel as wolves, Tearing into the poor and feasting on them, shredding the needy to pieces only to discard them. (15) A leech has twin daughters named "Gimme" and "Gimme more." Three things are never satisfied, no, there are four that never say, "That's enough, thank you!"-- (16) hell, a barren womb, a parched land, a forest fire. (17) An eye that disdains a father and despises a mother-- that eye will be plucked out by wild vultures and consumed by young eagles. (18) Three things amaze me, no, four things I'll never understand-- (19) how an eagle flies so high in the sky, how a snake glides over a rock, how a ship navigates the ocean, why adolescents act the way they do. (20) Here's how a prostitute operates: she has sex with her client, Takes a bath, then asks, "Who's next?" (21) Three things are too much for even the earth to bear, yes, four things shake its foundations-- (22) when the janitor becomes the boss, when a fool gets rich, (23) when a whore is voted "woman of the year," when a "girlfriend" replaces a faithful wife. (24) There are four small creatures, wisest of the wise they are-- (25) ants--frail as they are, get plenty of food in for the winter; (26) marmots--vulnerable as they are, manage to arrange for rock-solid homes; (27) locusts--leaderless insects, yet they strip the field like an army regiment; (28) lizards--easy enough to catch, but they sneak past vigilant palace guards. (29) There are three solemn dignitaries, four that are

impressive in their bearing-- (30) a lion, king of the beasts, deferring to none; (31) a rooster, proud and strutting; a billy goat; a head of state in stately procession. (32) If you're dumb enough to call attention to yourself by offending people and making rude gestures, (33) Don't be surprised if someone bloodies your nose. Churned milk turns into butter; riled emotions turn into fist fights.

CHAPTER 31

(31:1) The words of King Lemuel, the strong advice his mother gave him: (2) "Oh, son of mine, what can you be thinking of! Child whom I bore! The son I dedicated to God! (3) Don't dissipate your virility on fortune-hunting women, promiscuous women who shipwreck leaders. (4) "Leaders can't afford to make fools of themselves, gulping wine and swilling beer, (5) Lest, hung over, they don't know right from wrong, and the people who depend on them are hurt. (6) Use wine and beer only as sedatives, to kill the pain and dull the ache (7) Of the terminally ill, for whom life is a living death. (8) "Speak up for the people who have no voice, for the rights of all the down-and-outers. (9) Speak out for justice! Stand up for the poor and destitute!" (10) A good woman is hard to find, and worth far more than diamonds. (11) Her husband trusts her without reserve, and never has reason to regret it. (12) Never spiteful, she treats him generously all her life long. (13) She shops around for the best yarns and cottons, and enjoys knitting and sewing. (14) She's like a trading ship that sails to faraway places and brings back exotic surprises. (15) She's up before dawn, preparing breakfast for her family and organizing her day. (16) She looks over a field and buys it, then, with money she's put aside, plants a garden. (17) First thing in the morning, she dresses for work, rolls up her sleeves, eager to get started. (18) She senses the worth of her work, is in no hurry to call it quits for the day. (19) She's skilled in the crafts of home and hearth, diligent in homemaking. (20) She's quick to assist anyone in need, reaches out to help the poor. (21) She

doesn't worry about her family when it snows; their winter clothes are all mended and ready to wear. (22) She makes her own clothing, and dresses in colorful linens and silks. (23) Her husband is greatly respected when he deliberates with the city fathers. (24) She designs gowns and sells them, brings the sweaters she knits to the dress shops. (25) Her clothes are well-made and elegant, and she always faces tomorrow with a smile. (26) When she speaks she has something worthwhile to say, and she always says it kindly. (27) She keeps an eye on everyone in her household, and keeps them all busy and productive. (28) Her children respect and bless her; her husband joins in with words of praise: (29) "Many women have done wonderful things, but you've outclassed them all!" (30) Charm can mislead and beauty soon fades. The woman to be admired and praised is the woman who lives in the Fear-of-GOD. (31) Give her everything she deserves! Festoon her life with praises!

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