

# PROVERBS

## Chapter 11

A false balance is an abomination to the LORD, but a just weight is his delight. 2 When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with the humble is wisdom. 3 The integrity of the upright guides them, but the crookedness of the treacherous destroys them. 4 Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death. 5 The righteousness of the blameless keeps his way straight, but the wicked falls by his own wickedness. 6 The righteousness of the upright delivers them, but the treacherous are taken captive by their lust. 7 When the wicked dies, his hope will perish, and the expectation of wealth perishes too. 8 The righteous is delivered from trouble, and the wicked walks into it instead. 9 With his mouth the godless man would destroy his neighbor, but by knowledge the righteous are delivered. 10 When it goes well with the righteous, the city rejoices, and when the wicked perish there are shouts of gladness. 11 By the blessing of the upright a city is exalted, but by the mouth of the wicked it is overthrown. 12 Whoever belittles his neighbor lacks sense, but a man of understanding remains silent. 13 Whoever goes about slandering reveals secrets, but he who is trustworthy in spirit keeps a thing covered. 14 Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety. 15 Whoever puts up security for a stranger will surely suffer harm, but he who hates striking hands in pledge is secure. 16 A gracious woman gets honor, and violent men get riches. 17 A man who is kind benefits himself, but a cruel man hurts himself. 18 The wicked earns deceptive wages, but one who sows righteousness gets a sure reward. 19 Whoever is steadfast in righteousness will live, but he who pursues evil will die. 20 Those of crooked heart are an abomination to the LORD, but those of blameless ways are his delight. 21 Be assured, an evil person will not go unpunished, but the offspring of the righteous will be delivered. 22 Like a gold ring in a pig's snout is a beautiful woman without discretion. 23 The desire of the righteous ends only in good, the expectation of the wicked in wrath. 24 One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want. 25 Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered. 26 The people curse him who holds back grain, but a blessing is on the head of him who sells it. 27 Whoever diligently seeks good seeks favor, but evil comes to him who searches for it. 28 Whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like a green leaf. 29 Whoever troubles his own household will inherit the wind, and the fool will be servant to the wise of heart. 30 The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and whoever captures souls is wise. 31 If the righteous is repaid on earth, how much more the wicked and the sinner!

**11:1** *false balance is an abomination to the Lord.* Similar denunciation is found in the law and the prophets (Am 8:5; Mic 6:11). See also 16:11; 20:10, 23. (CSB)

Using dishonest weights and measures to commit fraud, a prevalent form of theft in ancient Israel. (TLSB)

Obviously, not all Israelites paid attention to those laws. Hence, five centuries after Moses' time, Solomon had to remind the Jews of God's will. Later in Proverbs, Solomon returns to the topic (16:11; 20:23). Some two centuries after Solomon, the Prophet Amos warned against "skimping the measure, boosting the price and cheating with dishonest scales" (8:5). And the prophet Micah took up the same refrain (6:11). There is nothing new under the sun. The Lord still abhors

dishonest scales, but delights in honesty. While some might appear to get away with dishonesty, God sees everything. There will be a day of reckoning. (PBC)

*just weight.* Silver was weighed on scales balanced against a stone weight. Weights with dishonest labels were used for cheating. (CSB)

**11:2** *When pride comes, then comes disgrace.* Along with destruction (see 16:18; cf. the humbling of proud Assyria in Isa 10:12; cf. also Isa 14:13–15). (CSB)

Elevation of self over God, breaking the First Commandment. (TLSB)

Just as false scales are wrong, so is a false, inflated sense of oneself. Whatever talents we have and whatever success we meet with – it’s all a gift from God. (PBC)

*with the humble is wisdom.* Along with honor. (CSB)

True humility recognizes our total dependence on God. He is our Creator; without Him we would not exist. He is our Redeemer; without Him we are lost and condemned. He is our Sanctifier; without Him we can do nothing good and have no hope of salvation. That’s humility... and wisdom. (PBC)

**11:3** *integrity ... guides them.* Cf. the actions of Joseph in Ge 39:6–12. (CSB)

Integrity does not ensure the absence of trouble or hardship in one’s life, but it does guide one away from the ultimate destruction that awaits the wicked. (TLSB)

With godly honesty toward God, self and other people, the upright can keep their bearings. Meanwhile, lacking guidance, the unfaithful resort to dishonesty, false pride, and duplicity – all of which lead to their destruction. (PBC)

**11:4** *day of wrath.* The day of judgment (see Isa 10:3; Zep 1:18). (CSB)

Wealth is a blessing from God, unless, of course, it is ill-gotten wealth. Yet earthly riches have severe limitations. All the wealth of the world is of no value in the hour of death and judgment. (PBC)

*righteousness...keeps his way straight.* Righteousness is a priceless commodity. It delivers one. (PBC)

Unfortunately, because of sin no one is righteous before the holy God. Solomon says in Ecclesiastes, probably written toward the end of his life: “There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins” (7:20). What then, does Solomon mean when he speaks of the righteousness that holds up in the day of wrath and that delivers from death? He can be referring only to a righteousness that comes from God Himself. Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation and also known as the father of believers, had that righteousness. “[He] believed the Lord, and He credited it to him as righteousness” (Genesis 15:6).

**11:5** *keeps his way straight.* Enables them to reach their goals. (CSB)

**11:7** *his hope will perish.* Wealth or other worldly power and influence have no effect for those who die in their sin. Cf Heb 9:27. (TLSB)

What a gloomy future awaits those who live and die without God! Like a puff of smoke, everything they put their trust in comes to nothing in the hour of their death. (PBC)

**11:8** Cf. the rescue of Mordecai and the execution of Haman in Est 5:14; 7:10. (CSB)

**11:9** *destroy his neighbor*. By spreading slander (cf. 10:18). (CSB)

Highlights the powerfully destructive force of words; forbidden by Jas 3:5 and the Eighth Commandment. (TLSB)

This verse discusses the evil that the wicked can do with their mouths. They can destroy others emotionally and spiritually by deceit, enticement, lying, slander, and other evil uses of the tongue. (PBC)

*by knowledge*. Perhaps the knowledge of the schemes and distortions of the godless (cf. Jn 2:25). (CSB)

The righteous know God's word, follow that word, and escape. (PBC)

**11:10** *city rejoices*. See 28:12; 29:2. Thus life in the city is itself a teacher of wisdom (see note on 1:21). (CSB)

Even civil society is often able to distinguish between the righteous and the wicked. God also uses civic leaders as His servants to punish evildoers and to commend those who do what is right. Cf Rm 13:1–7. (TLSB)

A city contains both righteous and unrighteous people. All of them rejoice when the righteous prosper. At first this might seem strange. But when we think about it, it makes sense. Even the ungodly would rather have good people in positions of influence, because even the wicked can't trust their own kind of people in power. Similarly, even the wicked are happy to see their own kind perish. In mob wars, for example, the gangsters fight against one another. (PBC)

*shouts of gladness*. Cf. the joy at the fall of Assyria (Isa 30:32; Na 3:19; cf. 2Ch 21:20). (CSB)

**11:11** *blessing of the upright*. Their good influence and desire for justice as well as their prosperity (v. 10) bring honor to the city. (CSB)

*mouth of the wicked*. Their deceit, dishonesty and sowing of discord (see v. 9; 6:12–14). (CSB)

Character of public discourse can either edify a society or tear it down by inciting strife and violence. (TLSB)

**11:1–11** The distinction between the righteous and the wicked is not confined to the private or spiritual realms of life but also manifests itself in public words and actions. As you seek to live with integrity that reflects the righteousness we have received, express your righteousness in public ways—among your neighbors, in matters of commerce, and in your community. Although we may sometimes feel reluctant or unqualified to do this, by grace Jesus calls us the “salt of the

earth” and the “light of the world” (Mt 5:13–16). • Lord Jesus, give us courage to shine the light of Your truth in every area of our lives. Amen. (TLSB)

**11:12** *lacks sense...understanding – labe The heart*; also used (figuratively) very widely for the feelings, the will and even the intellect; likewise for the *centre* of anything:— understanding, well, willingly, wisdom. (PBC)

*belittles his neighbor*. Shows his contempt openly (see 10:18; 14:21). (CSB)

*understanding – to-boo-naw' – intelligence*; by implication an *argument*; by extension *caprice*:—discretion, reason, skillfulness, understanding, wisdom (QV)

*remains silent*. Cf 10:19. Merciful silence concerning the faults and sins of one’s neighbor fulfills the Eighth Commandment. (TLSB)

“If you can’t say anything nice, don’t say anything at all” is a modern paraphrase of verses 12 and 13. Sometimes we need to bite our lip, when tempted to destroy someone’s reputation. And when we’ve been told something in confidence, it should remain that way. OT law forbade slander: “Do not go about spreading slander among your people” (Leviticus 19:16). In the NT it is placed with other sins we are to rid ourselves of: “Therefore rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander of every kind (1 Peter 2:1). (PBC)

**11:13** *keeps a thing covered*. By holding one’s tongue. “There is a great difference between these two things: judging sin and knowing about sin. You may indeed know about it, but you are not to judge it (Matthew 7:1–5). I can indeed see and hear that my neighbor sins. But I have no command to report it to others. Now, if I rush in, judging and passing sentence, I fall into a sin that is greater than his. But if you know about it, do nothing other than turn your ears into a grave and cover it, until you are appointed to be judge and to punish by virtue of your office” (LC I 266). (TLSB)

**11:14** *guidance*. See 2Sa 16:23; Isa 1:26. (CSB)

Holding one’s tongue when proper and keeping a secret do not rule out giving good advice when called for. At the governmental and military level, guidance and advice are musts. We could apply that to many other levels as well. In our homes, churches, and at work, we should seek out the advice of good people. It’s the wise thing to do. (PBC)

**11:15** *puts up security*. Taking responsibility for the debt of another. (TLSB)

This verse cautions against taking on financial responsibility for another (literally, for a stranger”). The practice of “striking hands” was equivalent to our handshake, demonstration that the deal was sealed. (PBC)

**11:16** Assumes that “a good name is more desirable than great riches” (22:1) and insightfully observes that a woman, if she is kindhearted, will be accorded more respect than wealthy men if they are ruthless. (CSB)

*violent men get riches*. Riches can be acquired through any number of means, including violence. But honor comes to those who are gracious, i.e., kind and forgiving. (CSB)

This verse contrasts a gentle, kindhearted woman with ruthless men. While these men's ruthless business techniques might gain them some financial success, the kindhearted woman is the one who gains people's respect. This truth from God's Word should give men pause who think they have to act tough, "macho," in order to win respect. (PBC)

**11:17** *benefits himself*. True toughness can lie in being kind, in being willing to show love to those in need and those close to us. The kind (Hebrew, "merciful") man will benefit himself by winning the love and respect of his family and other people. "Blessed are the merciful," says Jesus, "for they will be shown mercy" (Matthew 5:7). In our day of abusive fathers, boyfriends, and husbands, these verses are especially timely. (PBC)

**11:18** *deceptive wages*. The wicked man's earnings are deceptive, both because they were earned dishonestly and because they bring him only a false security. (PBC)

*gets a sure reward*. Gal 6:8–9; Jas 3:18. (CSB)

As for reaping a reward from sowing righteousness, St Paul has this to say: "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Those who live by faith will receive the benefits of their faith. (PBC)

**11:19** *will live ... will die*. Unlike those who sow righteousness and receive a sure reward (v 18), those who pursue evil will find the very thing they seek to evade, that is, death. (TLSB)

This verse contrasts the end of the righteous with that of the evil – life versus death. This judgment often comes to fruition here on earth, and always in the world to come. (PBC)

**11:20** *those of crooked heart*. Anyone who thinks that God is indifferent to sin and to sinners, should read this verse. The word that the NIV translates "detests" is in the KJV "abomination." The New Evangelical Translation has "disgusting." What should terrify the ungodly all the more is that all-knowing God looks into everyone's heart. No one can fool God. (PBC)

*blameless*. No one can be blameless before Him, except the Savior Jesus Christ. (PBC)

**11:21** *will not go unpunished*. Although in this world the wicked often appear to prosper, we can be sure that God's justice will have its day. (PBC)

While the righteous often suffer, it is equally sure that their day will also come. The righteous (literally "the seed of the righteous") and their children who follow them will enjoy complete and eternal deliverance from the sorrows of this life. (PBC)

**11:22** *gold ring*. Commonly worn by women on their noses (see Ge 24:47; Eze 16:12). (CSB)

Worn by women on the finger, ear, or nose (25:12; Gn 24:22; Is 3:21). (TLSB)

At first this verse seems to be unrelated to verse 21. Yet both have a common theme, namely, the frequent contradiction between outward appearance and inner reality. In OT times, women often wore nose rings. For example, we read that the beautiful Rebekah was given such a gold ring (Genesis 24:22,47).

*in a pig's snout.* A vivid comparison designed to help both men and women distinguish between mere outward beauty (the gold ring) and an inner lack of discretion (the pig). In Israel, the pig was considered an “unclean” animal to be scrupulously avoided. (TLSB)

Solomon compares a beautiful woman without judgment to a pig, an unclean animal, with a gold ring in its snout. The most valuable beauty is not outward, but comes from within. (PBC)

*without discretion.* Abigail was praised by David for her display of “good judgment” (1Sa 25:33). (CSB)

The ability to make God-pleasing moral and ethical decisions. Cf 1Pt 3:3–5. (TLSB)

**11:23** *desire of the righteous* – This reminds us that our inner hopes and dreams will eventually come to fruition. When our hearts desire God and things of God, there is nothing but good ahead. (PBC)

A general promise that God is able to fulfill in specific ways. (TLSB)

*wrath.* Judgment (see Isa 10:3; Zep 1:18; Ro 2:8–9). (CSB)

The wicked place their hopes in everything but in God. For them, disappointment – the wrath of God – lies ahead. (PBC)

**11:24** Generosity is the path to blessing and further prosperity. By contrast, the stingy person does not make any friends and hurts himself in the long run (21:13). (CSB)

St Paul encourages the same generosity in 2Co 9:6–9. (TLSB)

**11:25** *whoever brings blessings will be enriched.* “For he shares his food with the poor” (22:9). “Whoever sows generously will also reap generously” (2Co 9:6; cf. Lk 6:38). (CSB)

*waters.* Reference to irrigation and its fruitfulness. The Kidron Valley, east of Jerusalem, was irrigated by the Gihon Spring. (TLSB)

**11:26** *holds back grain.* Probably in times of scarcity to raise the price. (CSB)

Selfishly hoarding it, perhaps intending to drive up the price. (TLSB)

Some might be tempted to hoard their grain to drive the price up. This was not the case with a devout man like Joseph. During the famine of his day, Joseph opened Egypt’s storehouses and sold the grain (Genesis 41:53-57). It certainly is not God’s way of dealing with us. He freely gives us all we have, including His Son who gave His life for our salvation. Knowing God’s love and continuing generosity, can we ourselves be anything other than generous? (PBC)

*who sells it.* Like Joseph during the famine in Egypt (Ge 41:53–57). (CSB)

**11:27** *He who seeks good.* Like the man in v. 25 (cf. Mt 7:12). (CSB)

When we seek good – that is, the good of others – we’ll find it for ourselves. The goodwill of others will come back to us. (PBC)

*evil comes to him who searches for it.* His wicked schemes will backfire. (CSB)

**11:28** *Whoever trusts in his riches.* Usually said of the wicked (Ps 49:6; 62:10; but see Mk 10:25; 1Ti 6:17). (CSB)

**11:29** *whoever troubles his own household will inherit only wind.* The inheritance of Levi and Simeon was affected because of their cruelty against Shechem (Ge 34:25–30; 49:7). See 15:27 and note. (CSB)

Never pursue money, power, or pleasure at the expense of the very families God has entrusted to you. By ending up with the wind we wind up with nothing of substance. (PBC)

*servant to the wise.* As the evil man serves the good (14:19; cf. 17:2). (CSB)

**11:30** *fruit of the righteous.* What a wise man produces (8:18–19). (CSB)

*tree of life.* As the righteous bear the fruit of good deeds, they become a source of life and blessing for all. Hippolytus: “The fruit of righteousness and the tree of life is Christ. He alone, as man, fulfilled all righteousness. And with His own underived life He has brought forth the fruits of knowledge and virtue like a tree” (ANF 5:173). (TLSB)

The last chapter of the Bible speaks of the tree of life in paradise (Revelation 22:2,14,19). This is the final inheritance of the righteous. Until then, God’s people will wisely do what they can to win other souls to God and to salvation (1 Corinthians 9:19-23). (PBC)

*captures souls.* Wins people over to wisdom and righteousness (see Da 12:3; 1Co 9:19–22; Jas 5:20). However, the Hebrew for this expression is unusual so that its translation is somewhat uncertain. (CSB)

Hbr *lakach*, “to pick or harvest fruit” when used in connection with a tree or plant. The righteous are not only passive instruments for blessing but are also active in leading other souls to receive the righteousness of God through faith. (TLSB)

**11:31** *the righteous is repaid on earth.* Even Moses and David were punished for their sins (see Nu 20:11–12; 2Sa 12:10). (CSB)

General observation; does not mean that the righteous can always expect to be repaid on earth. They will indeed be paid back according to God’s good pleasure in this life, and esp in the life to come. (TLSB)