

PROVERBS

Chapter 12

Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid. 2 A good man obtains favor from the LORD, but a man of evil devices he condemns. 3 No one is established by wickedness, but the root of the righteous will never be moved. 4 An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, but she who brings shame is like rottenness in his bones. 5 The thoughts of the righteous are just; the counsels of the wicked are deceitful. 6 The words of the wicked lie in wait for blood, but the mouth of the upright delivers them. 7 The wicked are overthrown and are no more, but the house of the righteous will stand. 8 A man is commended according to his good sense, but one of twisted mind is despised. 9 Better to be lowly and have a servant than to play the great man and lack bread. 10 Whoever is righteous has regard for the life of his beast, but the mercy of the wicked is cruel. 11 Whoever works his land will have plenty of bread, but he who follows worthless pursuits lacks sense. 12 Whoever is wicked covets the spoil of evildoers, but the root of the righteous bears fruit. 13 An evil man is ensnared by the transgression of his lips, but the righteous escapes from trouble. 14 From the fruit of his mouth a man is satisfied with good, and the work of a man's hand comes back to him. 15 The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice. 16 The vexation of a fool is known at once, but the prudent ignores an insult. 17 Whoever speaks the truth gives honest evidence, but a false witness utters deceit. 18 There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing. 19 Truthful lips endure forever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment. 20 Deceit is in the heart of those who devise evil, but those who plan peace have joy. 21 No ill befalls the righteous, but the wicked are filled with trouble. 22 Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD, but those who act faithfully are his delight. 23 A prudent man conceals knowledge, but the heart of fools proclaims folly. 24 The hand of the diligent will rule, while the slothful will be put to forced labor. 25 Anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad. 26 One who is righteous is a guide to his neighbor, but the way of the wicked leads them astray. 27 Whoever is slothful will not roast his game, but the diligent man will get precious wealth. 28 In the path of righteousness is life, and in its pathway there is no death.

12:1 *discipline* – *moo-sawr'* – properly *chastisement*; figuratively *reproof*, *warning* or *instruction*; also *restraint*:—bond, chastening, chastisement, check, correction, discipline, doctrine, instruction, rebuke. – This is another key concept in Proverbs. It is that quality of being able to follow through and apply our God-given wisdom. We might call it self-discipline. The ancient Jewish rabbis had a saying, “The wicked are under the control of their impulses, but the righteous have their impulses under their control.” - Self-discipline is especially important for us to keep in mind, since our society encourages just the opposite. In a thousand different ways we are told, “If it feels good, do it!” Proverbs does not deny emotions their due. Joy and self-satisfaction have their place. But they are fully realized only when kept within the limits of God’s Word. God sets up rules for living, not to make us unhappy, but to bring us real, lasting happiness.

Knowledge – *dah'-ath knowledge*:—cunning, know(-ledge), aware (wittingly). – It has been said that one’s love of knowledge is no greater than one’s love of correction. Although correction goes against the grain of our sinful pride, it is necessary if we are to grow in wisdom. (PBC)

hates reproof is stupid. Hbr root of this word is closely related to the Hbr term for cattle. One who rejects correction is like a beast. (TLSB)

The word “stupid” actually means animal-like, like a dumb beast. (PBC)

12:2 *obtains favor.* Solomon has already talked about the wise man having God’s favor (3:4;8:35). When the angel announced to Mary that she would be the mother of Jesus, the angel said, “You have found favor with God” (Luke 1:30). Whatever favor we enjoy comes as a gift from our gracious God. (PBC)

a man of evil devices he condemns. The Lord condemns the crafty. Those who would scheme and seek wisdom apart from God are not going to get the genuine product. They may have a worldly form of wisdom, but not the real thing. God says, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate” (1 Corinthians 1:19) (PBC)

12:3 *righteous will never be moved.* Human theories and systems of philosophy are constantly being overturned and replaced with newer ones. That is a judgment of God upon those who seek to be wise without Him. It is also expressed in this verse, that aside from God’s blessings no one has a firm foundation. In our century, the Nazis and Communists tried to build systems of government on evil foundation, involving atheism and methodical destruction of masses of people. Those systems could not stand. What holds true for governments applies also to individuals. (PBC)

Righteous are rooted in God and in His promises fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Cf Ps 1:3; Is 61:3. (TLSB)

The righteous are “like a tree planted by streams of water” (Psalm 1:3). Their roots go deep into God’s Word. They will live forever. (PBC)

12:4 *an excellent wife is the crown of husband.* Someone like Ruth (Ru 3:11). Such a woman is fully described in 31:10–31. Moving from great general truths of life to a particular application, Solomon speaks of how a wife’s character can affect her husband. The man with a noble wife is truly blessed. She is his crown, his honor. The closing verses of the Book of Proverbs are devoted to the rare and treasured wife of noble character (31:10-31). (CSB)

his bones. A disgraceful wife is like a bone cancer. Whether as an unfaithful wife (Proverbs 7) or a nag (19:13), eventually she’ll be the ruin of her husband. (PBC)

12:5 *thoughts of the righteous are just* – Honesty, justice, and forthrightness are characteristics of God’s people. Their plans are aboveboard. (PBC)

counsels of the wicked are deceitful. See Ps 1:1. (CSB)

The plans of the wicked are self-serving and have ulterior motives. Their advice is not to be trusted, because they are probably manipulating you for some gain for themselves. (PBC)

12:6 *lie in wait for blood.* Words of the wicked are likened to a band of murderers, waiting to ambush the unsuspecting. (TLSB)

Wicked people use words as traps. With words they try to put down, embarrass, discredit, and, if necessary, do away with the upright. In the four Gospels we see many examples of how Jesus’ enemies tried to trap him with words. One example comes from Matthew 22:15-22, where we read, “Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap Him in His words.” (PBC)

12:7 *house ... will stand.* Cf Mt 7:24–27. (TLSB)

They “are no more” alludes to their descendants’ being cut with them. Among the Jews, one’s hose included the entire family. For one’s house to stand forever, then meant that the family would live on generation after generation. (PBC)

12:8 *commended according to his good sense. say'-kel ; intelligence;* by implication *success:—* discretion, knowledge, policy, prudence, sense, understanding, wisdom, wise.

One of twisted mind is despised. See Dt 32:5; Tit 3:11. (CSB)

The unbelieving world always seems to have a mixed attitude toward godly people. On the one hand, it doesn’t like them, yet on the other hand, it must acknowledge their valuable contributions. Those with warped minds, who bring destruction and dissension, are despised by everyone. (PBC)

12:9 *have a servant.* Even people of moderate means had servants (see Jdg 6:15, 27). (CSB)

Describes someone of moderate means who could afford a servant. (TLSB)

than play the great man. (CSB)

Some people are so enthralled with being “somebody” that they’ll put on a false front of wealth simply for the sake of appearances. (PBC)

12:10 *regard for the life of his beast.* Compassion of the righteous extends even to animals. Our heavenly Father also cares for all living things. Cf Mt 6:26. (TLSB)

The Mosaic law called for kindness to animals: “Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain” (Deuteronomy 25:4). This injunction allowed for an ox to eat some grain while it was working. A godly man takes better care of his animals than an evil man does of his family. (PBC)

mercy of the wicked is cruel. Probably to both man and beast. (CSB)

12:11 *follows worthless pursuits.* Schemes for making easy money. (CSB)

Stick to the task at hand is what this verse is telling us. Working your land will make you sweat, but reaping the harvest will make it worthwhile. This is unlike the get-rich-quick approach. Winning the lottery or hooking up on some super business deal appeals to the fantasies of some. (PBC)

12:12 *whoever is wicked covets the spoil of evildoers.* To have a sinful desire for someone or something that belongs to one’s neighbor. Coveting is forbidden by both the Ninth and Tenth Commandments. (TLSB)

root of the righteous bears fruit. They bear fruit, like firmly rooted trees (see vv. 3, 7; 11:30; Ps 1:3. (CSB)

12:14 A man who speaks with wisdom will reap a harvest from his words, just as a farmer enjoys the crops he planted. (CSB)

What we do is to match what we say. Our words and actions are to work together and not be at odds with each other. (PBC)

12:15 *is right in his own eyes.* But ends in death (see 1:25, 30). (CSB)

Have you ever had this happen: you are sure you are driving in the right direction, or you remember just where you put something, or you have some “fact” straight; but as it turns out, you were mistaken? The fool lives his life like that. (PBC)

wise man listens – The difference between the fool and the wise man is that the fool won’t listen to anyone. (PBC)

12:16 *vexation of a fool is known at once* – Perhaps because he is so set on his way, the fool is easily annoyed. He doesn’t have time for the advice of others, or their problems. Whatever or whoever gets in his way annoys him. (PBC)

Fools lack a calm, measured response to insults. Prudent people are more skilled at managing their emotions when attacked. (TLSB)

ignores an insult. Has good self-control (see 29:11; 2Sa 16:11–12). (CSB)

The prudent, sensible person does more than listen to advice. He listens even to insults without letting them get the better of him. “When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly” (1 Peter 2:23) (PBC)

12:17 *false witness utters deceit.* “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor,” declares the Eighth Commandment (Exodus 20:16). (PBC)

12:18 *Rash words.* Cf. Ps 106:33. (CSB)

Sometimes we express it this way, “Those words cut into my heart!” The wise use of the gift of speech differently. “Speaking the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15, they try to heal with their words. (PBC)

are like sword thrusts. Thoughtless, reckless words have the power to wound others, even if they are not intended to cause harm. (TLSB)

tongue of the wise brings healing. By soothing, comforting words (see 4:22; 15:4). (CSB)

Because those who are wise know God through faith, their words can be a source of healing and life. (TLSB)

12:19 *truthful lips endure forever* – Think about it. Through the centuries, God’s Word has been assailed by scoffers, “proved false” by scientists, misused and twisted by heretics and false prophets and cult leaders, disobeyed by people who claim to believe it, ignored by those who want to go their own way, considered weak and insignificant by the haughty, and contradicted by other “holy books.” Yet its prophecies have been fulfilled precisely in Jesus Christ; its assessment of human nature continually proves accurate, while psychologists go on changing their opinions; its historical record stands fast, while historians dig through desert sands for more

evidence; its observations about nature remain correct, while scientific theories shift with each new generation; its good news of grace is Jesus continues to save, while other “holy books” offer the same old tired message that never works, namely, you’ve got to save yourself. Those who hold to the Bible and whose lips recite its truth are standing on an everlasting foundation.(PBC)

but for a moment. The lies will be refuted and the liar punished (see 19:9; Ps 52:4–5). (CSB)

12:20 *deceit in the hearts.* Because they are outside the Word, the wicked can plan nothing that’s really good. The natural condition of the heart is deceitful and evil. (PBC)

those who plan peace have joy. “Blessed are the peacemakers” (Mt 5:9). (CSB)

Could refer either to joy in the heart or to the anticipatory joy that accompanies plans for peace. (TLSB)

Those whose hearts God has changed can come up with something better than the self-serving plans of the wicked. (PBC)

12:21 *No ill.* The righteous do suffer. But for them even long-term earthly suffering will eventually resolve into eternal joy in the presence of the Lord. The righteous are guarded from the ultimate ill—eternal separation from God (Jn 10:28). (TLSB)

Someone might argue, “But the righteous often do suffer harm!” Certainly Solomon knew enough about life in this sinful world to realize that the righteous suffer. He speaks of this at length in the book of Ecclesiastes. His point here seems to be that no lasting harm befalls the righteous. While the righteous may suffer for a lifetime, even long-term trouble on earth resolves into eternal joy with God. (PBC)

filled with trouble. While the wicked may prosper for a time, their troubles far outweigh their passing pleasures, and they face an eternity without God. (PBC)

12:22 *those who act faithfully.* As far as God is concerned, honesty isn’t merely the best policy. It’s the only policy. (PBC)

12:23 *conceals knowledge.* Stores up knowledge (see 10:14). (CSB)

Prudent people are capable managers of their words and emotions (v 16). They are able to distinguish between “a time to keep silence, and a time to speak” (Ec 3:7). (TLSB)

Being honest, however, does not mean that we blurt out whatever we know to anyone who will listen. There is a time for everything. (PBC)

proclaims folly. The fool is always speaking his mind, which is filled with foolishness. (PBC)

12:24 *hand of the diligent ... slothful.* Contrasted also in 10:4. (CSB)

This phrase represents the whole person. The thought here is similar to Proverbs 10:4. Solomon wrote elsewhere: “Whatever your hands find to do, do it with all your might” (Ecclesiastes 9:10). (PBC)

12:25 *anxiety...heart.* See Ps 94:19. (CSB)

Luth: “We should let God do the worrying. Your labor and effort are not contrary to faith; they are useful for the curbing of the flesh. But worrying is opposition to God” (WLS § 5003). Cf 1Pt 5:6–7. (TLSB)

Anxiety puts tremendous stress on the heart and wears people down. (PBC)

good word makes him glad. Esp when that “good word” expresses the “good news” of God’s promises. (TLSB)

A thoughtful word of kindness can do wonders toward alleviating that stress. We might direct the anxious person to Scripture’s promises, such as, “Cast all your anxiety on God because he cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7). (PBC)

12:26 *righteous is a guide to his neighbor.* He chooses his friends with care. (CSB)

One cause of anxiety might be a person’s circle of friends. Getting into the wrong crowd can be disastrous. “Bad company corrupts good character” (1 Corinthians 15:33). Therefore, the righteous are cautious before forming deep friendships. (PBC)

leads them astray. The wicked have no compunctions. They find their own kind and go astray together. (PBC)

12:27 *will not roast his game.* And is too lazy to lift the food from the dish to his mouth (19:24). (CSB)

He is too lazy to prepare the game he has successfully hunted. Cf 19:24. (TLSB)

The word translated “roast” occurs only here in the entire OT. Some conjecture that it should be translated “hut” or “catch.” One might wonder how the lazy man would have enough energy to hunt and catch his prey, much less roast it. However one renders that particular word, the idea is clear. A person can be so lazy that he doesn’t even take care of life’s basic necessities. Luther quoted with irony a proverb of his day: “Wait until a fried chicken flies into your mouth.” (PBC)

prizes his possessions. Cf. Eccl 5:19. (CSB)

The godly prize their possessions as gifts from the Lord. We want to be faithful stewards of what God gives into our care during our earthly life. (PBC)

12:28 *righteous is life.* Cf. 3:2; 11:4. (CSB)

The way of righteousness that leads to life is God’s way. (PBC)

no death. The way or path of righteousness does not lead to death. Cf. the identification of wisdom with the “tree of life.” (CSB)

Christ’s righteousness becomes ours by faith. (PBC)

Chs 11–12 Pr teaches the wisdom of living by righteousness as taught by the Lord. Worldly logic tells us that we become wealthy by hoarding what we have. But God’s Word tells us that true riches come to those who give generously. We should always return a portion of our income to the service of God (who gives us all things) and support our neighbors according to their need. After all, this is God’s wonderful way of dealing with His children. He has generously given us all that we need, including the life of His one and only Son for our salvation. • Lord, we rejoice in the great blessings You have given us. Lead us to believe that with You as our God, we will never suffer want. Amen. (TLSB)