

# PROVERBS

## Chapter 22

**A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold. 2 The rich and the poor meet together; the LORD is the Maker of them all. 3 The prudent sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on and suffer for it. 4 The reward for humility and fear of the LORD is riches and honor and life. 5 Thorns and snares are in the way of the crooked; whoever guards his soul will keep far from them. 6 Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it. 7 The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is the slave of the lender. 8 Whoever sows injustice will reap calamity, and the rod of his fury will fail. 9 Whoever has a bountiful eye will be blessed, for he shares his bread with the poor. 10 Drive out a scoffer, and strife will go out, and quarreling and abuse will cease. 11 He who loves purity of heart, and whose speech is gracious, will have the king as his friend. 12 The eyes of the LORD keep watch over knowledge, but he overthrows the words of the traitor. 13 The sluggard says, “There is a lion outside! I shall be killed in the streets!” 14 The mouth of forbidden women is a deep pit; he with whom the LORD is angry will fall into it. 15 Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him. 16 Whoever oppresses the poor to increase his own wealth, or gives to the rich, will only come to poverty.**

**22:1** *good name*. Its value is recognized also in 3:4; 10:7; Ecc 7:1. (CSB)

The name of a person is who he/she is and the reputation that goes with the name. It is that person. A good reputation is priceless. In Ecclesiastes, Solomon declares, “A good name is better than fine perfume” (Ecclesiastes 7:1). The good name of which he speaks is not that of the hypocrite, who keeps up a façade of goodness. It is the reputation that comes from selfless service to God and man. (PBC)

Hbr *chen*, “approval,” “affection.” Here, human favor. (TLSB)

*better than silver or gold*. Like the possession of wisdom. (CSB)

Wisdom is also compared to silver and gold (2:4; 3:14; 8:10, 19; 16:16). (TLSB)

The good name of a person is priceless because it opens to its owner channels of love and communication that money cannot buy. (PBC)

**22:2** *Maker of them all*. Does not directly address the question of who is responsible for differences in economic standing, only that all people share a common Creator. The implications here include respect for those of a different economic class. (TLSB)

Someone remarked that the rich are just like the rest of us, except that they have more money. Before God, the rich and the poor have much in common. He made both of them. Both depend on their Creator for life and breath. Both must die and meet their Maker. When they die the rich take no more with them than the poor. Job said, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart” (Job 1:21). Both are lost without the Savior. (PBC)

These facts should keep us from treating rich or poor people differently. “If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers” (James 2:8,9). (PBC)

**22:3** *prudent man ... hides himself.* To be prudent is not to be blindly optimistic, but sensible; foolishness equates optimism with faith. (TLSB)

*aw-room'* ; *cunning* (usually in a bad sense):—crafty, prudent, subtil. (QV)

Wisdom helps us avoid physical and spiritual dangers. (PBC)

*the simple.* The person who has not grown in God’s Word doesn’t see dangers and ends up suffering. This is why it’s foolish for people to think they can resist temptations and make godly decisions in life, when they never grow in the Word. The person who has never advanced beyond an eighth-grade understanding of Scripture, won’t be up to facing the challenges of marriage, raising children, witnessing, being a good steward of possessions, and generally avoiding spiritual pitfalls. He won’t see them coming! (PBC)

**22:4** *Humility and fear of the LORD.* Humility goes naturally with fear of the Lord, since such fear is simply standing before God in humble respect and trust. (PBC)

*riches and honor and life.* Benefits for those who seek wisdom.. (CSB)

Cf 3:16, where these gifts are the reward for wisdom. Throughout Pr, wisdom is to be thought of as the life of faith in Christ, who is Wisdom Incarnate. Wisdom leads one to be humble before God and to fear Him above all things. God may reward this faith with temporal goods, such as wealth, honor, and life. However, the godly are not to sin when they see the wicked prosper (cf 23:17–18). (TLSB)

Matthew 6:33, “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

**22:5** *thorns and snares.* Evil. (CSB)

Ancient roads could become overgrown at times with thorns. Snares were often placed on paths to capture animals and even people. Here, thorns and snares refer to the problems that result from sin. (TLSB)

The thorns and snares in the wicked’s way are the problems that sins creates in life. Think of the snares the dishonest makes for himself...or the murderer, the adulterer, the thief, the liar. We avoid all that by guarding our soul with God’s Word. (PBC)

*keep far from them.* By taking the “highway of the upright” (16:17). (CSB)

Psalm 1:1, “Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers.”

**22:6** *Train.* Or “Dedicate,” as in 1Ki 8:63. Instruction (1:8) and discipline (22:15) are primarily involved. (CSB)

Hbr term has the sense of “dedicate.” (Cf LC I 75–77.). (TLSB)

*way he should go.* The right way, the way of wisdom. (CSB)

Scholars debate whether this phrase refers to the moral route or to the child’s career path. The child’s training as a whole is in view. (TLSB)

It is the way that God wants him to go. One’s childhood training in the Bible is never entirely forgotten. It’s always there as a reminder, a corrective, and directive on the path to heaven. (PBC)

*old.* Or “grown.” (CSB)

**22:7** *The rich.* “Rich” is singular and “poor” plural, since the wealthy are fewer in number and have power over many people. This verse does not argue that the wealthy are better or more pleasing to God. Nor does it justify any oppression on the part of a lender. It simply states a fact of economic life, one that a potential borrower would do well to heed. (TLSB)

*the borrower is servant to the lender.* One of the reasons why putting up security for someone else (v. 26) was frowned upon (cf. Ne 5:4–5). (CSB)

Money gives people power over others. When Solomon states a bare fact such as this, we can apply it to our Christian life. Although many might use money to control other human beings, with God’s help we won’t. Rather, should we be blessed and with material riches, we will use them to benefit those in need. (PBC)

**22:8** *sows injustice will reap calamity.* The Bible often speaks of reaping and sowing as a metaphor for cause and effect. Cf Ps 126:5; Ec 11:4; Hos 8:7; 10:12; 2Co 9:6; Gal 6:7–8. (TLSB)

In their wickedness, they are sowing the seeds of their own destruction. In the words of the Prophet Hosea, “They sow the wind and reap the whirlwind” (Hosea 8:7) (PBC)

*rod of his fury.* His ability to oppress others (see Ps 125:3; Isa 14:5–6). (CSB)

The unjust will be unable to inflict punishment on those whom they seek to harm. (TLSB)

**22:9** *generous man will ... be blessed.* Lit, “good eye.” Generous people not only give bountifully with their hand, but their eye is always eager to see those in need. The eye directs the body (cf Lk 11:34). (TLSB)

Generosity does not come easily. We tend to fear that if we are generous, we won’t have enough left over for ourselves. The Lord assures us that won’t happen. At the time of Moses (about 1400 B.C.), the Lord promised His people, “Give generously to him [the poor] and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the Lord you God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to” (Deuteronomy 15:10). God continues to bless the generous – just as He promises. (PBC)

**22:10** *Drive out a scoffer.* Scoffers can stir up trouble out of nothing. Because they mock everything and do not fear God, they are always discontent. Scoffers stir up dissensions even among people who would otherwise have been at peace. (TLSB)

*strife will go out.* When the mocker leaves the room, wisdom is able to get a hearing. It is difficult to converse with some people about important, spiritual topics. With the mocker, it's impossible. While we wouldn't use force, there are times when we might have to ask a mocker to leave so we can talk. (PBC)

**22:11** *purity of heart.* Cf. Ps 24:4. (CSB)

Scoffers may stir up trouble, but people who are pure of heart and of gracious speech will be well-liked by kings. Truthful speech that is also gracious is rare. (TLSB)

That is honest motives. (PBC)

*whose speech is gracious.* Characteristic of the wise man in Ecc 10:12. (CSB)

An ability to express oneself in kind and gentle manner. (PBC)

*king as his friend.* The Bible gives several examples of righteous people who rose to high government positions. Among them are Joseph in Egypt and Daniel in Babylon. Having an earthly king for a friend is an honor. An even greater honor is to be called "God's friend," as Abraham was (James 2:23). This friendship is ours by faith. (PBC)

**22:12** *The eyes of the LORD keep watch.* See Job 31:4; 34:21; Jer 16:17; Heb 4:13. (CSB)

The King of kings sees everything. "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account" (Hebrews 4:13). No matter how clever and deceitful the wicked might be, the Lord knows. When He sees fit, He will bring their plans to ruin. But He watches over and protects those who know Him as their God. (PBC)

*over knowledge.* God protects those who have knowledge (cf. Ps 1:6; 34:15). (CSB)

Human beings cannot always discern the truth of the situation, but God knows all things. (TLSB)

*dah'-ath knowledge:*—cunning, know(-ledge), awares (wittingly). (QV)

*overthrows... the traitor.* Overrules their plans and desires. (CSB)

God makes sure that those who would lie to or betray their neighbor will not succeed in the end. (TLSB)

**22:13** The sluggard creates excuses to avoid work.

He grasps at any reason, no matter how far-fetched, to avoid work. When we put off a task, getting at it becomes harder and harder until it takes on almost monstrous proportions. (PBC)

"*There is a lion outside!*" Asian lions would not be found on a city street but in the remote wooded areas of Israel; the excuse is ridiculous. Lazy people will use the most unreasonable fears to excuse their behavior. (TLSB)

*I shall be killed.* Lit, “I will be murdered”—as if a person who asked him to go to work had criminal intent. These words further undercut the sluggard’s credibility. (TLSB)

**22:14** *mouth of forbidden women.* Her seductive words. (CSB)

Chs 1–9 were full of admonitions to avoid them (cf 2:16; 5:3; 5:20; 7:5). (TLSB)

The adulteress’s mouth with its kisses and smooth talk is the entrance to death and hell itself. To fall prey to her is a judgment of God upon the wicked. (PBC)

*deep pit.* Perhaps a well or a hunter’s trap. (CSB)

One would fall in but be unable to climb out. So too those who commit adultery can end up trapping themselves. (TLSB)

**22:15** *folly is bound up in the heart of a child* – By nature we are all foolish – that is, turned away from God and toward our own sinful desires. Children also are given to silly and foolish behavior. Christian parents will keep this in mind and apply loving but firm discipline in training their children. (PBC)

We tend to think of children as morally neutral at worst. The Bible does not. It knows that we are born with a sinful nature—folly, in other words. Godly education means not merely bringing the child’s good talents to light but also driving out the bad. (TLSB)

### **Fools in Proverbs**

God often teaches the way of wisdom by using contrast. As a skilled artist sets his or her subject matter against a contrasting background, so the Lord, through His inspired writers, sets the bright gem of wisdom against the dismal backdrop of foolishness.

When the Bible in general—and Proverbs in particular—speaks of foolishness, the first and most important point to remember is that it describes a moral and *spiritual* condition. We should not confuse foolishness with lack of academic prowess or a low IQ. Some people who are brilliant may, in God’s eyes, be fools. For example, Ps 14:1 and 53:1 state, “The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God.’” In Proverbs, the fool is one who does not have a proper fear of the Lord. Consequently, such a person is likely to deny God’s Word.

The Hebrew language in which Proverbs was originally written makes a distinction among different kinds of foolishness or fools. Awareness of these differences will help you more fully appreciate the message of Proverbs.

**The simple**Hbr *pethi*, the person who is easily lured or deceived; gullible. Of the various types of fools, this one is the least hardened in his or her foolishness. These naive and inexperienced people drift along aimlessly, until they fall easy prey to temptation (14:15). Such gullibility, of course, is not an excuse for sinning. Gullible people are responsible for their actions and may even end up killing themselves (1:32). In Pr 7, Solomon observes the gullible people and notes

one who is drifting along aimlessly, ripe for a prostitute's picking. If they are to escape their ways "and live," the gullible need wisdom (9:4–6). Indeed, wisdom invites them by calling out, "Whoever is gullible, turn in here!"

**The fool**Hbr *kesil*; if the gullible person doesn't learn, he or she may well move to the next level of foolishness and become a regular fool. This Hbr word is used 50 times in Proverbs and is the Book's most common term for fool. In the end, "fools die for lack of sense" (10:21).

**Stubborn fool**Hbr *'ewil*, occurs 20 times in Proverbs. What can be said about the "generic fool" can also be said about this fool. As the term "stubborn" implies, however, the individual at this level of foolishness is more hardened and persistent. "Fools mock at the guilt offering, but the upright enjoy acceptance" (14:9). This category of fool is connected to the word for foolishness and stupidity, or folly. Sadly, it's a trait often found in children: "Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him" (22:15). As the child becomes a grown-up, the trait is even more difficult to correct: "Crush a fool in a mortar with a pestle along with crushed grain, yet his folly will not depart from him" (27:22).

**The godless fool**Hbr *nabal*, appears only three times in Proverbs. This is the word used in the psalms quoted earlier in this article. Those people who say to themselves, "There is no God." Their mind is closed; they have rejected the Lord. This word is used in Pr 30:21–23, which states that one of four things under which the earth trembles is "a fool when he is filled with food." Once such a person's physical needs are satisfied, who knows what havoc he or she will bring to others? We find the epitome of this boorish and domineering fool in the man named Nabal (1Sm 25). He was "harsh and badly behaved" (v 3), and one of his own servants said of him, "He is such a worthless man that one cannot speak to him" (v 17).

### Scripture and the Fool

As we look closely at the fool in Proverbs and the rest of Scripture, we come face-to-face with sinful human beings and with the "natural man." In other words, we see ourselves. The believer

realizes, “There but for the grace of God go I.” Even the author and compiler of Proverbs, wise King Solomon, became such a fool that he fell into idolatry (1Ki 11:4–11). As long as we are in this world, we will struggle against giving in to our sinful, foolish tendencies.

The remedy for foolishness is for God’s Word to remain our daily companion (Pr 2:1). The foolishness of the world is overcome by the foolishness of Christ. As the apostle Paul says, “If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise” (1Co 3:18). It comes down to this: to know Christ and Him crucified is to know God’s wisdom (1Co 1:23–25). His forgiveness destroys our sinful foolishness. Through the Savior, we become truly wise and able to offer that wisdom to others as well. (TLSB)

*rod of discipline.* Parents are encouraged to apply the rod of punishment to drive out folly (22:15) so that the child will not follow a path of destruction (19:18; 23:13–14). The rod “imparts wisdom” (29:15) and promotes a healthy and happy family (29:17). Discipline is rooted in love. (CSB)

*rod.* Probably a figure of speech for discipline of any kind. (CSB)

The Bible approves of corporal punishment. However, as 23:13 makes clear, it does not envision the sort of abuse that would maim or kill a child, but rather it promotes discipline that instructs. (TLSB)

The rod is not to be confused with child abuse. Nor should parents be so strict as to “exasperate” their children (Ephesians 6:4). (PBC)

**22:16** *gives to the rich.* Perhaps bribes (see 17:8; 18:16; 19:6). (CSB)

Bribes them. (TLSB)

*poverty.* The Lord denounces oppression of the poor and bribery of the rich. Both are sinful attempts to take advantage of others for one’s personal gain. God detests both. Solomon has given us many encouragements to help the poor, and we are to deal impartially with the rich. (PBC)

**10:1–22:16** Folly is more than mere stupidity. It is an act of rebellion against God. It not only brings bad consequences in this life but also damns us for eternity. True wisdom does not come from studying hard in school or even from having much life experience. True wisdom flows out of trust in the Lord (“the fear of the LORD”). By putting our trust in God and in His Son—Jesus Christ, Wisdom in human flesh—we are delivered from the consequences of our folly and we grow in the righteous behavior marked by wisdom. • Dear heavenly Father, forgive us for the many ways that we have shown the folly of our hearts. Drive from us the folly that results whenever we fear, love, and trust idols rather than You. Strengthen our trust in You and in Your Son’s death and resurrection so that we will grow in wisdom, grace, and the knowledge of our Savior. Amen. (TLSB)

*Words of the Wise*

**17 Incline your ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply your heart to my knowledge, 18 for it will be pleasant if you keep them within you, if all of them are ready on your lips. 19 That your trust may be in the LORD, I have made them known to you today, even to you. 20 Have I not written for you thirty sayings of counsel and knowledge, 21 to make you know**

**what is right and true, that you may give a true answer to those who sent you? 22 Do not rob the poor, because he is poor, or crush the afflicted at the gate, 23 for the LORD will plead their cause and rob of life those who rob them. 24 Make no friendship with a man given to anger, nor go with a wrathful man, 25 lest you learn his ways and entangle yourself in a snare. 26 Be not one of those who give pledges, who put up security for debts. 27 If you have nothing with which to pay, why should your bed be taken from under you? 28 Do not move the ancient landmark that your fathers have set. 29 Do you see a man skillful in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before obscure men.**

**22:17–23:14** Since the “Wisdom of Amenemope” was discovered in Egypt in 1922, scholars have noted a number of parallels between Amenemope’s sayings and these verses of Pr. More recently it has become clear that Amenemope’s work was written at least a century before Solomon lived. This would imply that Solomon borrowed from the Egyptian, rather than the other way around. Moreover, Solomon seems to have structured 22:17–24:22 into 30 sayings. Amenemope had structured his work with 30 divisions. Does this mean that this portion of Holy Scripture is but a copy of pagan Egyptian thought? Not at all. Solomon did not slavishly copy the “Wisdom of Amenemope.” In fact, only 22 of the 63 verses have any parallel with a statement found in “Amenemope” and all are to be found in the first section of the 30 sayings (22:17–23:14). Even the thoughts Solomon quoted have been altered significantly. Solomon had urged his readers to learn from other wise people (1:6). (TLSB)

**22:17–24:22** A new section that returns more to the style of chs. 1–9. Verses 17–21 form the introduction to these 30 sayings. (CSB)

**22:17** *of the wise*. A title, like “proverbs of Solomon” in 10:1. (CSB)

Hbr noun is plural here and in 24:23. Solomon himself had stated that we can learn from other wise people (1:6). In putting together these sayings of the wise, Solomon’s primary concern is to teach his readers to trust the Lord (v 19). The verses most heavily influenced by the “Wisdom of Amenemope” are filled with commands such as “do not” (cf 22:22, 24, 26, 28; 23:3, 4, 6, 9, 10, 13)—a clear exposition of God’s Law. (TLSB)

*khaw-kawm’* (that is, intelligent, skilful or artful):—cunning (man), subtil, ([un-]), wise ([hearted], man). (QV)

This indicates that Solomon is now getting into more advanced instruction, for those who are further along in wisdom. (PBC)

**22:18** *it will be pleasant*. This verse sounds much like a pastor assigning a list of Bible passages for his confirmation class to memorize and recite. (PBC)

*within you ... on your lips*. Lit, “in your heart, on your lips.” Biblical way of saying “both inwardly and outwardly.” (TLSB)

*ready on your lips*. Able to recite them and explain the connections between them. (TLSB)

**22:19** *that your trust may be in the LORD*. The purpose is not merely to learn them mechanically and then mindlessly recite them. Rather, taking these truths into one’s heart will lead to a deeper trust in the Lord. (PBC)

**22:20** *thirty sayings*. There are 30 units in 22:22–24:22. Most of them are two or three verses long, but see 23:29–35. The Egyptian “Wisdom of Amenemope” also contains 30 sections. (CSB)

A spelling variance in the Hbr has confused translators over the centuries. Some see the words as a reference to repetition or excellence (e.g., see KJV). However, as Amenemope had written a book with 30 chapters of proverbs, Solomon may have liked the idea of collecting 30 sayings here. He used some of Amenemope’s ideas, but he also incorporated the sayings of other wise people (cf v 17) and has reworked these sayings to apply to the Israelites. E.g., Amenemope warns against oppressing the poor, but Solomon adds that the Lord will defend the poor against their oppressors (v 23). (TLSB)

This phrase might also be translated: “Have I not formerly written” or “Have I not written excellent sayings.” (PBC)

*counsel – mo-ay-tsaw’ a purpose:—counsel, device.* (QV)

*knowledge – dah'-ath knowledge:—cunning, know(-ledge), awares (wittingly).* (QV)

**22:21** *give true answers*. See 1Pe 3:15. (CSB)

Wise people will be able to do their tasks honestly and justly, whatever they might be. Solomon assumes that most of his readers will be under other people’s authority and need wisdom in the performance of their work. (TLSB)

*who sent you*. Possibly a parent or guardian. (CSB)

The pupil would return to him and show what he had learned. (PBC)

**22:22** *at the gate*. City walls were many feet thick—big enough to serve as homes for people (Jsh 2:15; 2Ki 18:26–27)—and the gates equally massive. When the powerful citizens would gather there, they might easily complain about the poor who would not typically attend a gathering of the wealthy and influential. (TLSB)

Given the sinfulness of human nature, there is a natural tendency to exploit whomever we can to our own advantage. (PBC)

**22:23** *the LORD will plead their cause*. See Ps 12:5; 140:12; Isa 3:13–15; Mal 3:5. (CSB)

God has never approved of man’s inhumanity toward man. Centuries ago He declared through the Prophet Isaiah, “Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case for the widow” (Isaiah 1:16-17). (PBC)

*rob of life those who rob them*. See Ex 22:22–24. (CSB)

**22:24–25** Angry people tend to exploit others; if we associate with them, we learn to think as they do. (TLSB)

**22:24** *wrathful man*. His characteristics are given in 14:16–17; 15:18; 29:22. (CSB)

If anyone has a tendency to exploit others, it’s such a man. (PBC)

**22:25** *learn his ways.* “Bad company corrupts good character” (1Co 15:33). (CSB)

The people we associate with influence us. (PBC)

*snare.* To toy with sins in the first place is to run the risk of hardening oneself to that grace. (PBC)

**22:26** To strike hands in pledge was equivalent to our handshake. Before you close a deal by shaking hands, think about what you are doing. The specific advice here is against agreeing to pay someone’s debt if he is unable to do so. (PBC)

**22:27** *your bed be taken from under you.* You will be reduced to poverty. (CSB)

God’s Law did not permit people’s cloaks (which doubled as bed linens) to be held overnight as collateral (Ex 22:26–27). However, not everyone would operate ethically. It would not be wise to put oneself at the mercy of unscrupulous lenders. (TLSB)

You may not be able to pay someone else’s debt either. Then you will lose everything you have. Such carelessness with one’s money could reflect a lack of concern for taking care of one’s own family. (PBC)

**22:28** *ancient landmark.* There were no title deeds or surveyors’ equipment in common usage in ancient Israel. Property boundaries were marked by stones. A dishonest neighbor could stealthily move the landmark farther and farther into his neighbor’s property, stealing farm ground that was the basis of their existence. Such dishonesty would be hard to prove in court. (TLSB)

Moving someone else’s boundary stone was wicked. The boundary stones marked property lines in ancient Israel. That property was passed down from one generation to the next within the same family. God forbade the moving of stones on someone else’s land in order to enlarge one’s own land: “Do not move your neighbor’s boundary stone set by your predecessors in the inheritance you receive in the land the Lord your God is giving you to possess” (Deuteronomy 19:14). (PBC)

*fathers have set.* Some rabbis later viewed such passages as referring to respect for traditions, not just to landmarks. (TLSB)

**22:29** *skilled in his work.* Craftsmen were considered to be wise. (CSB)

Lit, “quick in his work.” The competent individual is recognized and rewarded. (TLSB)

*stand before kings.* Like Joseph, an administrator (Ge 41:46); David, a musician (1Sa 16:21–23); and Hiram, a worker in bronze (1Ki 7:14). (CSB)

Solomon advocates a better way: Develop your God-given talents. As we use our gifts, the Lord will see to it that we will find a way to make a living. The motivation is not fame and fortune, but to glorify God and be useful to others. (PBC)