

PROVERBS

Chapter 19

Better is a poor person who walks in his integrity than one who is crooked in speech and is a fool. 2 Desire without knowledge is not good, and whoever makes haste with his feet misses his way. 3 When a man's folly brings his way to ruin, his heart rages against the LORD. 4 Wealth brings many new friends, but a poor man is deserted by his friend. 5 A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who breathes out lies will not escape. 6 Many seek the favor of a generous man, and everyone is a friend to a man who gives gifts. 7 All a poor man's brothers hate him; how much more do his friends go far from him! He pursues them with words, but does not have them. 8 Whoever gets sense loves his own soul; he who keeps understanding will discover good. 9 A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who breathes out lies will perish. 10 It is not fitting for a fool to live in luxury, much less for a slave to rule over princes. 11 Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense. 12 A king's wrath is like the growling of a lion, but his favor is like dew on the grass. 13 A foolish son is ruin to his father, and a wife's quarreling is a continual dripping of rain. 14 House and wealth are inherited from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the LORD. 15 Slothfulness casts into a deep sleep, and an idle person will suffer hunger. 16 Whoever keeps the commandment keeps his life; he who despises his ways will die. 17 Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will repay him for his deed. 18 Discipline your son, for there is hope; do not set your heart on putting him to death. 19 A man of great wrath will pay the penalty, for if you deliver him, you will only have to do it again. 20 Listen to advice and accept instruction, that you may gain wisdom in the future. 21 Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand. 22 What is desired in a man is steadfast love, and a poor man is better than a liar. 23 The fear of the LORD leads to life, and whoever has it rests satisfied; he will not be visited by harm. 24 The sluggard buries his hand in the dish and will not even bring it back to his mouth. 25 Strike a scoffer, and the simple will learn prudence; reprove a man of understanding, and he will gain knowledge. 26 He who does violence to his father and chases away his mother is a son who brings shame and reproach. 27 Cease to hear instruction, my son, and you will stray from the words of knowledge. 28 A worthless witness mocks at justice, and the mouth of the wicked devours iniquity. 29 Condemnation is ready for scoffers, and beating for the backs of fools.

19:1 *poor person.* Poor people who refuse to violate their integrity are better than those who stoop to deception in order to get rich. Poverty itself is no virtue, but neither is it to be abhorred. Poverty is preferable to a life of sin (16:19; 19:22). One may be honorable in poverty; God's people may demonstrate faithfulness and generosity with their wealth (2Co 8:2). Our Lord's parents were both godly and poor (Lk 2:24; cf Lv 12:8), and it is out of His poverty in expending Himself completely for our sake on the cross that we are rich in God's mercy (2Co 8:9). (TLSB)

is a fool. Even if he becomes rich (see 28:6). (CSB)

Remember that when the Bible's wisdom literature speaks of the fool, it does not necessarily mean a person of lower intelligence. Rather, it refers to the moral and spiritual condition one who rejects God. Given this, fools often get ahead in the world. (PBC)

19:2 *zeal without knowledge.* Cf. Ro 10:2. (CSB)

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

All the emotion and energy in the world can't make up for a lack of knowledge. Paul lamented the condition of his fellow Jews: "They did not know the righteousness that comes from God [through Christ] and sought to establish their own" (Romans 10:2,3). In spiritual matters and in every area of life, before we throw ourselves into something, it's best to know which way we're headed. (PBC)

make haste. Haste can lead to poverty (21:5) or folly (29:20). (CSB)

misses his way. The Hebrew for this expression often refers to sin. (CSB)

19:3 *his heart rages against the LORD*. He blames God for his troubles (see Ge 4:5; Isa 8:21; cf. La 3:39). (CSB)

We may blame God for the disaster we foolishly bring on ourselves. We may ask, "Why is God doing this to me?" when we should learn to repent of our own folly and look to Him for forgiveness. Augustine: "Whenever you read in the Scriptures of Truth, that men are led aside, or that their hearts are blunted and hardened by God, never doubt that some ill deserts of their own have first occurred, so that they justly suffer these things" (NPNF 1 5:463). However, note well that not all suffering is the result of a particular sin. (TLSB)

We human beings make a mess of things, and then we blame God! James wrote, "When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me...but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed'" (James 1:13,14). Picking up the pieces of a ruined life begins with the humble recognition that it's our own fault, and that we need God's forgiveness and help. (PBC)

19:4 Another sinful reality of life is that money can and does buy friends. When the money is gone, so are the friends. Aware of this, we will want to follow the words of our Savior, rather than the ways of the world. (PBC)

Cf 18:24. Wealth has its earthly advantages, and the money of the rich often gains them many associates (14:20; 19:6). However, since the poor are abandoned by fair-weather friends (19:7), this proverb warns against relying too heavily on friendships gained by wealth. (TLSB)

19:5 This verse and verse 9 are almost identical. The former says that the false witness "will not go free" – that is, he won't escape judgment. Verse 9 says that he "will perish" – that is, will be punished. In both cases, it ultimately comes down to the judgment of God, since in this world perjurer often seems to get away with it. We think of the false witnesses against Naboth (1 Kings 21) and against our Savior (Matthew 26:59-63). (PBC)

19:6 *seek a favor*. Cf. Job 11:19. (CSB)

Verses 6 and 7 bring up a subject that Solomon deals with a number of times, the connection between wealth and friendship, and poverty and loneliness. (PBC)

friend to a man who gives gifts. Generosity (v. 4) or bribery (18:16) could be in view. (CSB)

One word in Hbr, also translated “prince” and “noble” (8:16; 17:7, 26; 25:7). Such a person can buy favor and allegiance with gift. (TLSB)

A powerful ruler and someone who can dole out gifts have many friends. On the other hand, even the family of the poor man shuns him. (PBC)

19:7 *poor man...hate him.* See Job 19:19; Ps 38:11. (CSB)

The line between being popular and unpopular in the world is often the same line that separates the rich from the poor. Material poverty is miserable, but not as bad as spiritual bankruptcy. (PBC)

People who constantly implore for help are not tolerated long. V 7 consists of three lines, whereas all other proverbs in this section are limited to two. (TLSB)

but does not have them. May be rendered “but they are not,” i.e., people flee to escape a person’s persistent begging. (TLSB)

19:8 *gets 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, wisdom. (QV)

Lit, “buys” or “seeks heart.” The heart was considered the organ of understanding. (TLSB)

To love godly wisdom is to love one’s own soul. We can find a deep and lasting satisfaction in God’s Word. This kind of prosperity stands in sharp contrast to the shaky grounds of relying on money and the things that money can buy. (PBC)

19:10 *not fitting for a fool to live in luxury.* Or have honor (26:1). (CSB)

Affluence only makes a more flamboyant display of a fool’s folly. (TLSB)

It is not fitting because it may confirm his foolishness. (PBC)

for a slave to rule over princes. Because of his lack of wisdom and tendency to become a tyrant (see 17:2; 29:2; Isa 3:4). (CSB)

Most slaves were uneducated and not accustomed to handling wealth, which was starkly different from the training and means available to princes. Scripture often refers to practices such as slavery without specifically advocating or condemning them. Headship and authority may be abused, but they are not evil in themselves. (TLSB)

When a slave gains power, it often leads to injustice. Filled with resentment, the former slave becomes a tyrant. When the czar lost power in Russia and the Communists took over, instead of uplifting the people, they made things even worse. (PBC)

19:11 *slow to anger.* See 14:29; 15:18; 16:32; Ecc 7:9; Jas 1:19. (CSB)

Patience is part of “the fruit of the Spirit” (Galatians 5:22). Patience will lead us to overlook offenses against us. (PBC)

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

If we follow through on every offense that comes along, we'd have time for nothing else. It is the natural, sinful thing to store up these offenses in feelings of resentment that eventually break forth in angry outbursts. It is the godly, glorious thing to overlook them. (PBC)

19:12 *A king's wrath is like the growling lion.* A king's wrath and a lion's growl both spell disaster, but a king's favor is as refreshing as the dew that waters the grass in the morning. Here, Law and Gospel, anger and mercy, are contrasted. (TLSB)

A raging lion can tear us apart. Such is the power of earthly rulers against those who rebel. (PBC)

his favor is like dew. Similarly, the Lord in His grace is like life-giving dew: "I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for my anger has turned away from them. I will be like the dew...(Hosea 14:4,5). (PBC)

17:25–19:12 The Eighth Commandment warns against false testimony against our neighbor. We should put a stop to gossip before it begins, not only by defending the reputation of the one spoken about but also by calling the gossiper to repentance and safeguarding ourselves from what may do irreparable damage. How have you been at keeping yourself from listening to the juicy tidbits sinners have to say about one another? What a difference between us and God! Our Lord has blessedly promised to put our sins as far from us as the east is from the west (Ps 103:12) and to remember our sins no more (Jer 31:34; Heb 8:12; 10:17). He will entertain no charge against us, now that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Rm 8:1). What joy it would be if we let our Lord's forgiveness teach us to be as silent about the sins and shortcomings of our neighbor as God is pleased to be toward ours for Jesus' sake! • Heavenly Father, teach us by Your Holy Absolution to keep both our lips and our ears from the evil that may be spoken of others. In Jesus' name. Amen. (TLSB)

19:13–20:30 Warns about a foolish son, esp how fools bring ruin to themselves and others. (TLSB)

19:13 *foolish son.* Family relations can be the source of life's greatest joy...or life's greatest miseries. (PBC)

wife's quarreling. Also denounced in 21:9, 19; 25:24; 27:15. Stirring up dissension is condemned throughout Proverbs. (CSB)

continual dripping. Cf Ec 10:18. (TLSB)

19:14 *prudent wife.* A man may get much from his parents, but he gets something even more precious from the Lord when he gets a wise and reasonable wife. Pr 31:10–31 teaches us about a godly wife's prudence. A godly and devout husband is equally a treasure from the Lord. Ultimately, the husband-wife relationship is a reflection of that between the Lord and His people (Eph 5:22–33). (TLSB)

Those who are married will want to seek the guidance of God's Word in becoming better spouses. By God's power, foolish sons and quarrelsome wives have been transformed into dutiful sons and loving wives. The Book of Proverbs directs most of its attention to fathers, husbands and son. As heads of households and future leaders in ancient Israel, males received the

focus of this piece of wisdom literature. We must remember, of course, that much of what Solomon says applies to both sexes. Husbands, just as much as wives, can be quarrelsome, they, too, need God's guidance and correctives. (PBC)

19:15 Laziness breeds more laziness. Perhaps you've had it happen on occasion that you've gotten more sleep than usual and still feel tired. With the sluggard, inactivity becomes habitual. (PBC)

19:16 The only safe way through life is to listen to God's Word, and in faith "do what it says" (James 1:22). (PBC)

19:17 *lends to the LORD*. The Lord regards it as a gift to him (cf. Mt 25:40). (CSB)

Using the Lord's earthly gifts for the good of others has the promise of temporal reward (LC I 252). We may gain friends for ourselves (Lk 16:9) and reap many other benefits, both bodily and spiritual (1Co 3:8; 2Co 9:6; Ap V 245). Eternal life, however, comes only because of God's promise to be generous to poor, miserable sinners for Jesus' sake. Irenaeus of Lyons: "We make offering to Him, not as though He stood in need of it, but rendering thanks for His gift, and thus sanctifying what has been created" (ANF 1:486). (TLSB)

19:18 *Discipline your son*. Parents who do not discipline their children are, in effect, signing a death warrant for them. Parents are not to let up on discipline, thinking that their children can no longer be turned from wrong. When parents fail to carry out their duty under the Fourth Commandment, other authorities, whose judgment may be even more severe, step in (Rm 13:1–4), maybe even costing the child his life. Likewise, God lovingly disciplines us in this life (Heb 12:5–11) so that we do not suffer the greater judgment of eternal death. (TLSB)

The second line of this verse lends itself to two understandings: (1) don't overdo the physical discipline and beat your child to death; (2) don't underdo it and contribute to the child's self-destruction through an undisciplined life. (PBC)

19:19 *a man of great wrath*. Rather than constantly dealing with the symptom, it's better to help cure the disease. It's a matter of getting the heart right with God – confessing sins and asking forgiveness in Jesus' name. Once we work on the heart, then we can start to think about changing the behavior. (PBC)

do it again. People who have a bad temper are incurable. They will only get into trouble again. (TLSB)

19:20 *listen to advice – ay-tsaw'* ; *advice*; by implication *plan*; also *prudence*:—advice, advisement, counsel ([-lor]), purpose. (QV)

accept instruction – moo-sawr' – properly *chastisement*; figuratively *reproof*, *warning* or *instruction*; also *restraint*:—bond, chastening, chastisement, check, correction, discipline, doctrine, instruction, rebuke. (QV)

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. (PBC)

19:21 That’s why, when we plan, it’s always wise to consult God’s Word, seek the advice of trusted Christian friends, and offer the prayer that God’s will be done. (PBC)

19:22 *desired ... steadfast love.* But such loyalty is difficult to find (cf. 20:6; 14:22). (CSB)

We all have a yearning for love that won’t let us down. A deceitful friend or spouse might pretend to love us, only to leave us in the lurch. It’s better to be steadfast in love and poor than to be rich and unfaithful. Moreover, a wealthy person might wonder if others are loyal to him only because they’re interested in his money. (PBC)

better to be poor than a liar. Though poor people lack the resources to prove their desire to help, they are more faithful friends than people of means whose promises of aid prove to be lies. (TLSB)

19:23 Those who fear the Lord go to sleep well-fed and without fear of harm. From faith in the promise of the Gospel comes security (Php 4:7). (TLSB)

The fear of the Lord brings fullness of life in this world and everlasting life in the world to come. (PBC)

not be visited by harm. God does not promise to deliver us from anything that will harm us spiritually, and uses life’s sufferings for our eternal good. (PBC)

19:24 *sluggard.* We can imagine a person becoming so lazy that it’s too much effort for him to lift his hand from the plate to his mouth. The humor in this verse only serves to underscore the seriousness of the sin of sloth. (PBC)

bring it back. Touch of ironic humor: some people are too lazy even to put food into their mouth (26:15). (TLSB)

19:25 *strike a scoffer.* Someone who stubbornly scorns God’s wisdom. (TLSB)

simple. Not to be confused with the mocker. (CSB)

Punishment is a deterrent for the simple, who take warning from the fate of the wicked. Simple people must actually see what consequences come from disobedience. This is an indictment to us all—we may know well enough that lawlessness has its price, but we change our behavior only when the threat of punishment is near! (TLSB)

reprove a man of understanding – bene A primitive root; to *separate* mentally (or *distinguish*), that is, (generally) *understand*:—attend, consider, be cunning, diligently, direct, discern, eloquent, feel, inform, instruct, have intelligence, know, look well to, mark, perceive, be prudent. (QV)

A word of rebuke is enough for him. (PBC)

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

19:26 *does violence to his father and chases away his mother.* Children were expected to take care of their parents when they were sick or elderly (cf. Isa 51:18). Robbing them (cf. Jdg 17:1–2) and attacking them (Ex 21:15, 17) were serious crimes. (CSB)

Neglect, indifference, and taking advantage of them without giving in return are more subtle ways of doing this. (PBC)

19:27 *hear instruction – moo-sawr' – properly chastisement; figuratively reproof, warning or instruction; also restraint:—bond, chastening, chastisement, check, correction, discipline, doctrine, instruction, rebuke.* (CSB)

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.” (PBC)

2 Timothy 3:15-17, “¹⁵ and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

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. (PBC)

Learning is an ongoing process. We need to feed on God’s Word regularly, just as we daily need to eat food to stay alive. (PBC)

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

19:28 *devours iniquity.* Cf. the description of man as one “who drinks up evil like water” (Job 15:16; see Job 34:7). (CSB)

Those who take in a steady diet of wickedness through what they see and hear are drinking in wickedness. (PBC)

19:29 *beatings for the backs of fools.* It is also true, however, that God’s law and gospel can break through and change even the hearts of mockers and fools. (PBC)