

GOOD ADVICE Sunday School- September 18, 2011

Unifying Topic: TEACHING VALUES

Lesson Text

I. The Case For Good Counsel (Proverbs 15:21-23)

III. The Path Of The Righteous And The Path Of The Wicked (Prov.15:24-30)

III. Accepting Constructive Criticism (Proverbs 15:31-33)

The Main Thought: He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul: but he that heareth reproof getteth understanding. (Proverbs 15:32, KJV).

Unifying Principle: People need good and effective advice in order to live well. Where can we find good advice? Proverbs is full of advice that can guide us toward a godly life.

Lesson Aim: To examine the connection between people's character and behavior.

Life aim: To help participants become acquainted with proverbial sayings that promote effective living and to help students learn to be accepting of constructive criticism.

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- 15:21 Folly is joy to him that is destitute of wisdom: but a man of understanding walketh uprightly.
15:22 Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established.
15:23 A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it!
15:24 The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath.
15:25 The LORD will destroy the house of the proud: but he will establish the border of the widow.
15:26 The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the LORD: but the words of the pure are pleasant words.
15:27 He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live.
15:28 The heart of the righteous studieth to answer: but the mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things.
15:29 The LORD is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous.
15:30 The light of the eyes rejoiceth the heart: and a good report maketh the bones fat.
15:31 The ear that heareth the reproof of life abideth among the wise.
15:32 He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul: but he that heareth reproof getteth understanding.
15:33 The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom; and before honour is humility.

HISTORY:

Proverbs 15 is a collection of thirty-three individual sayings. While there is no unifying theme to the chapter, certain verses focus on topics such as speech, accepting rebuke, prayer, and taking things into perspective.

SYNOPSIS:

Chapter 15:1-20

¹**Outline**

- 1-2. Speech—²*The power for good and evil that lies in the human tongue is awesome. A soft word will often disarm a man whose heart is bent upon great harm, whereas harsh words serve only to stir up great anger. The wise man masters the art of producing the right answer at the proper time and place. He often allows angry words to pass unchallenged, for he has his personal feelings in subjection. He knows when to speak; and when he does, he uses his knowledge in such a way that his words are statements that have great profit for his hearers. The fool is always ready with an answer, but men are seldom profited by his foolish contribution.*
3. Omniscience—*The wise man does not just believe in God; he believes in the God who is always there and all-knowing. In every moment Yahweh is beholding all He says and does. Not one word or deed escapes His knowing eye. He beholds the evil man and weighs each action until his iniquity is full (Gen.15:16). He compassionately watches the good man and is ever ready to come to his aid (Ps.25:15-17).*
4. Speech—*The wholesome tongue in verse 4 should be understood as the healing tongue, the tongue that issues forth healing speech, and brings forth grateful recipients of its ministry. However, the perverse*

¹ <http://thedailychapter.wordpress.com/2009/04/28/proverbs-15-%E2%80%9Cvarious-sayings-proper-speech-accepting-rebuke%E2%80%9D/>

² The KJV parallel Bible Commentary

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tongue belongs to the man who sows discord. Those around him suffer much, but he is the ultimate loser; for perverse speech will ultimately cause a breach in his spirit, literally a fragmentation of his own personality.

5. **Accepting rebuke**— *The world is filled with young men who think that their insights are superior to those of their fathers. The young often register disdain for the reproof of their elders. The fool seldom cares for the advice of one who has been over the path before him. He is so full of self-confidence or full of themselves that he feels no need for the slightest assistance. The man who regards reproof and thankfully acknowledges correction is sure to finish life's journey in better fashion than the fool.*
6. **Reward of the righteous/wicked**— *God's blessing rests upon the **house of the righteous**. The treasure that is in such a house is undoubtedly the righteousness that becomes at once a sign and a pledge of abiding prosperity. Whatever **the wicked** may pile up, he shall never be truly rich; for he has no part in the true riches, the righteousness, and favor of God (cf. Luke 16:11), but he **has trouble**.*
7. **The wise/foolish**— *The lips of the wise are committed to evangelism and discipleship. They are constantly spreading abroad the knowledge God has given them for the profit, blessing, and edification of all humanity. The fool can only utter what is in his heart, and such nonsense is of no permanent value to anyone. In fact, his words, when believed, often produce great harm.*
8. **Prayer**— *The Lord delights in the prayers of the righteous, for such utterances form the nucleus of all worship. **The sacrifices of the wicked**, however, **are an abomination** to Him. Sacrifices, without righteousness is meaningless. It gains no favor with God. The term abomination is found only in Proverbs and Deuteronomy (Deut. 7:25, 26; 18:12).*
9. **Righteousness/wickedness**— ***The way of the wicked is an abomination**. Those who choose righteousness over wickedness can be assured of the presence and protection of God.*
10. **Accepting rebuke**— *A grievous (correction) punishment awaits those **who forsake the way** of wisdom. The Lord will first bring correction that is designed to bring them back into the way (Lev. 26:14 ff). If a man hates this reproof from the Lord and does not move to the place of repentance, the Lord will kill him.*
11. **Omniscience**— *No man will be able to fool Yahweh. His evaluation takes into account all the facts, for he is the perfect discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. All is open to him, even the unseen world of **hell and destruction**. Destruction is a synonym of sheol, or the grave.*
12. **Accepting rebuke**— *The **scorner** is incorrigible, and he will not tolerate the company of the wise man who could teach him the way of life. He **loves not one if words of reproof** must pass between them.*
13. **Emotions**— *Joy in the heart brightens the **countenance**. The inner condition of a man always shows in his outward appearance. Where **there is pain in the heart, the spirit of a man is broken**; and the power for effective living vanishes.*
14. **The wise/foolish**— *The heart possessed by **understanding** moves briskly toward **knowledge**, while the heart of the **fool** ushers him toward greater participation in **foolishness**.*
15. **Wealth and happiness**— *This verse is connected with the thirteenth verse. The man who is depressed sees in each day only those dismal events that serve to increase his already extensive fear. The man whose heart is possessed by **a merry heart** sees such evidences of God's faithfulness that his days are bright and his soul has a **continual feast**. Real happiness is always determined by the state of the heart.*
16. **Fear of the Lord**— *It is **better to have little on earth** with fear of God and joy in the heart than to have extensive luxuries accompanied by great trouble.*
17. **Love**— ***Better is a dish of herbs when love is there**. Better the simple diet with love than festive food shared with those who hate you.*

18. **A hot temper**— *The compensation of the even-tempered man is the subject of verse 18. He is the man who*
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*carefully controls his emotions and is not prone to quarreling. A wrathful man stirs up strife wherever he goes. The man who is **slow to anger** is able to spread the oil of peace on strife-laden situations.*

19. Laziness— *The slothful man sleeps on a bed of thorns. Every hour of the day he is **hedged** about by thorns. Most of the thorns, however, are imagined and serve to provide him with all manner of excuses for not dealing responsibly with the realities of life. The righteous, having been informed of his duty, presses toward the fulfillment of his goals. Such obedience illumines his way and makes plain the path for his feet.*

20. The two sons— *A father's heart will be **gladdened** when his son chooses to walk in the ways of wisdom. It is a foolish man who considers himself superior to his **mother** and ignores her loving advice. Such a man will soon lose the path and succumb to fascination with folly.*

LESSON:

Proverbs 15:21-23 The Case For Good Counsel

15:21 Folly is joy to him that is destitute of wisdom: but a man of understanding walketh uprightly—Causes of folly:

1. Willful determination not to follow in the way of wisdom. Although wisdom has sought him out, he has refused and rejected her. The fool is not neutral toward wisdom, he hates it, and he loves the evil of his way.
2. Trusting in himself. The fool, trusting in his own understanding, rejects the fear of the Lord, and chooses to walk in the way of evil

Folly (foolishness) is pleasure to him who is without heart and sense; void of understanding. This is the character of a wicked man when he takes pleasure in sin; he has an appetite to the bait, and swallows it greedily, and has no dread of the hook, nor feels from it when he has swallowed it. Folly is joy to him because it is sin and he loves sin. One way to tell is, if you warn them about sin and they laugh at you. One reason fools don't learn wisdom is because they can't keep their eyes focused on what's important. "*A discerning man keeps wisdom in view, but a fool's eyes wander to the ends of the earth*" (17:24, NIV). Instead of dealing with reality, the fool lives in a faraway fantasy world. But the man that is of understanding enlightened by the Spirit of God and walks according to the rule of the divine Word, going straight forward by committing his life to God. His walk is assured not in himself but in God's power.

15:22 Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established— If men will not take time and pains to deliberate, they are not likely to bring anything to pass. Many people do not like to receive advice. Perhaps they are proud and so they do not like to hear other people's ideas. If you do not obtain advice, then your plans will often fail. Those with "*tunnel vision*" are likely to miss the right road because they have closed their minds to any new options. It is a good rule, both in public and domestic affairs, to do nothing rashly and of one's own head. We need the help of those who can enlarge our vision and broaden our perspective. Seek out the advice of those who know you and have a wealth of experience. Build a network of counselors. Then be open to new ideas and be willing to weigh their suggestions carefully. How much it will be for our advantage to ask the advice of our godly friends. Solomon's son made no good use of this proverb when he agreed passively not in the counsel of the old men, but gave in to the young men.

15:23 A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it! — The wisest of men are apt to say things that they later regret. Much mischief is done by the tongue. Little wonder that a good and therapeutic answer would be a cause of great joy. Speech of this nature will only be found on the lips of those whose way of life is anchored in God's wisdom. When we're walking in the Spirit daily and being taught by the Lord, we'll "*know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary*" *Is.50:4*. Providing an apt answer or a timely word requires a listening posture. Good advice blesses the giver and receiver.

Prov.15:24-30 The Path Of The Righteous And The Path Of The Wicked

15:24 The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath—The way a wise man takes to

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obtain life, is to place his heart, and treasure, and conversation on things above. A good man sets his affections on things above; his way leads directly in that direction. Following the teaching of Proverbs and fearing God (1:7) was wise and it led upward so that the person did not die in hell. Men who speak therapeutically have stepped on the upward path that leads to heaven. The man of understanding has embraced a way of life that leads ever upward to higher levels of moral purity and responsibility that he may turn from the under-world beneath.

15:25 The LORD will destroy the house of the proud: but he will establish the border of the widow— Some people will praise a proud man. Some people think that proud people are very great. God does not think this. In the end, God will punish proud people. The house of the proud will not endure, for the Lord will destroy it. God's face is forever set against those who exalt themselves. "*Yahweh*" will establish the borders of the widows. The offense of removing a neighbor's landmark was a common form of oppression, and the threatened punishment is often mentioned in Scripture. When evil men try to take the property of widows, God will intervene. The most desolate (widows) who have God's help possess a more permanent dwelling place than the prosperous and self-reliant sinners.

15:26 The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the LORD: but the words of the pure are pleasant words— God knows our thoughts, and He hears our words. The evil person thinks about evil plans. He might plot against other people; he might try to steal from them. God knows these thoughts, and He hates these plans. This evil practice was a fruit of the thought of depraved men. Such men and their wicked plotting are an abomination to the Lord; they are utterly repulsive to Him. By declaring what God is pleased and displeased with, the writer revealed the nature and will of God. Not only the deeds, but the very thoughts of people, determine their relationship with God. In contrast, the words of the pure (clean, honest, and sincere) are pleasant words (pleasant thoughts), well-pleasing to the holy God, who delights in purity.

15:27 He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live— Material greed has destructive implications not only for one's self but also for all other relationships. Greed will destroy the family. The covetous man lets none of his family have rest or enjoyment.

- Man's greed for unjust gain is a perpetual source of woe for the people of this world.
- Greed leads men to habitually want more than their share.
- Greed and covetousness have proven the undoing of multitudes.

Expensive gifts to the children become substitutes for the gift of themselves; before long the values become twisted and the family falls apart. He that, in his greediness of gain, takes bribes, and uses unlawful ways of getting money, leaves a curse with what he gets to those that come after him, which sooner or later will bring trouble into the house. *Habakkuk 2:9,10* says, "*Woe to him...*" The gifts (bribes) they often accept bring ruin upon themselves and shame upon all who bear their name. On the other hand, those that are generous as well as righteous entail a blessing upon their families: he shall have the comfort of life; shall live in prosperity and have a good reputation; and his name and family shall live and continue.

15:28 The heart of the righteous studieth to answer: but the mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things— The righteous man understands the potential for good and evil that resides in words. In keeping with this understanding, the man who fears God will weigh his words carefully, lest through a hasty utterance he bring dishonor upon his Lord and cause pain in the life of his neighbor. The wicked show no such consideration. The evil man doesn't wait to speak because he doesn't care about the effects of his words. It is important to have something to say, but it is equally important to say it well. Do you carefully plan your words, or do you pour out your thoughts without concern for their impact?

15:29 The LORD is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous—³Sin separates us from God. Some have taken this Scripture to mean that God will not hear the prayer of the sinful man. I believe God does hear his prayers but will not answer until the sinful man repents. God is far from the wicked because the wicked

³ <http://www.lovetheLord.com/books/proverbs/23.html>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

has walked away from God, not the other way around. God does answer the righteous quicker. The Lord will hear the righteous, for He has pledged Himself to hear the prayers of the righteous. "Hears" implies God will answer; He is faithful to His faithful people. The wicked are those who choose to rebel against God and alienate themselves. *"The Lord is nigh unto them all that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth" Ps.145:18. "God...a very present help in trouble" Ps.46:1.*

15:30 The light of the eyes rejoiceth the heart: and a good report maketh the bones fat— The righteous will have eyes that are sparkling with joy, for they are dynamically linked to the God who cares for them and answers their prayers. This is referring to our spiritual eyes. Even our smiling faces shine through our eyes. It all depends on the condition of our heart. People like it when good news and prosperity come to them. Good news is always a tonic for both body and soul. A good report which a man hears of himself makes his spirit cheerful; and this affects his body and the juices of it, which fill his bones with marrow, and cover them with fatness.

Proverbs 15:31-33 Accepting Constructive Criticism

15:31 The ear that heareth the reproof of life abideth among the wise—This verse exalts a teachable spirit—a willingness to learn from others. Do you keep giving advice to those that don't want it? I've learned that you're only casting pearls among swine. The Lord reminds me of how valuable feedback can be, even if it seems painful at times. He doesn't ask me to agree with everyone, but He does expect me to listen and consider what has been said. My lesson is: my ear has to be opened not locked to what is being said, to hear, therefore, declaring me to be among and taking advantage of wise and sensible teachers. The wise listen to what life teaches.

15:32 He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul: but he that heareth reproof getteth understanding— When you despise something, you're setting your course toward another way. Therefore, refusing valuable instruction, you are despising your own soul; as if one hates himself. He will suffer as a result succumbing (unable to resist) as an unlearned person makes many mistakes. Undervaluing the benefits of correction determines he is in love with defeat. The person who wants to understand will listen carefully to someone who knows more, and will even take correction from that person to learn. The man who hears reproof recognizes a responsibility to protect the eternal dimension of his soul; his soul is secured from bad ways and directed in good ways. We can heed correction and prosper or reject correction and be destroyed.

15:33 The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom; and before honour is humility— This is a good fear. This fear actually means we will love Him and respect Him. *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" 9:10*, so it is with the "instruction" and correction "of wisdom". It teaches to abstain from sin, and to serve the Lord; and to seek the salvation of one's soul in the way God has appointed, which is by His Son Jesus Christ, which is the highest wisdom to do; He who fears God much, is well taught. Abiding in that fear, the man of wisdom affirms that it is in accord with wisdom to humbly acknowledge one's mistakes and faults. A man must receive admonition as coming from the Lord Himself, for humility is before honor, meaning God exalts no one but them that are truly humbled.

SUMMARY:

⁴Wise leadership always seeks advice but many of us hate to admit that we need to be taught. Have you ever thought about the "why of many counselors?" God seems to do His best work through a group of men rather than by a "lone wolf" (v. 22). Seldom does the "one-man-show" prove to have lasting success. A multitude of counselors is needed to provide long-term goals, encouragement along the way, and proper evaluation of what is being accomplished. Giving the right answer at the right time makes everyone happy (v.23). All who are wise follow a road that leads upward to life and away from the depths of hell (v. 24).

The Lord has a way of humbling the proud by removing their possessions. At the same time He protects the widows (v.25). Land was a precious commodity to the Israelites and was carefully marked by boundaries (Deuteronomy 19:14). Land was kept in the family from one generation to the next and its boundaries were

⁴ <http://www.family-times.net/commentary/wise-leades-always-see-advice/>
<http://www.pitwm.net//pitwm-sundayschool.html>

important. Some would try to take advantage of widows by seeking to steal their land. For this reason the Lord promised to keep widows boundaries from being moved.

The Lord hates evil thoughts, but kind words please Him (v. 26). A father providing for his family, but dishonest in the process, will eventually cause his wife and children to suffer (v. 27). Mans greed for unjust gain is a constant source of woe for the people of this world. An example of this would be gambling or participating in lotteries. The people who refuse to be involved in these ungodly practices shall be the ones who gain.

⁵The righteous man weighs his words carefully rather than blurting out the first thing that comes to his mind, while the wicked has no such consideration (v. 28). The wicked speaks whatever comes to his lips and doesn't worry about what harm it may bring. In fact some people pride themselves on being frank and outspoken when it would be much better if they would be more careful in what they say and thus save offenses and sorrow. Because the Lord hates the wicked, He distances Himself from them and refuses to hear them (v. 29). However, He will hear the righteous for He has pledged Himself to hear their prayers (John 15:7). What a privilege and promise this is for those of us who know and love Him.

A cheerful look or a few words of encouragement not only brings joy to the heart but also contributes to physical well being (v. 30). It is only those who hear reproof, who get understanding (v.31). To ignore reproof, only shows that the person actually hates himself (v. 32). The fear of the Lord is not only the beginning of knowledge but it also brings wisdom. It is a part of wisdom for us to acknowledge our mistakes and faults and thus "*before honor is humility*" (v.33).

Those who have chosen to walk in the way of wisdom are obligates to point the way to those who have not.

APPLICATION:

There are at least two very practical applications of what we have just observed in Proverbs concerning what God loves and what He hates. The main dynamic is that we do what he delights in and avoid what He despises, and then we can gain insight into the subject of divine guidance or the will of God. Second is that we learn much about a person's character by knowing what he loves and what he hates. In these verses try to pinpoint one behavior that God wants you to implement or curb.

⁶Proverbs Character Study Questions

Communication	Begin your study by communicating with the Lord. Ask Him to help you see and understand the chapter.
Home	Which verse speaks most clearly to what I am experiencing at home?
Attitudes	What attitude described in this chapter do I need to cultivate or discard?
Relationships	Which verse could be applied to my relationships outside of the home?
Actions	What behaviors described in this chapter should I either adopt or curb?
Consequences	What positive or negative consequences of a particular behavior or attitude does God want to impress upon me?
Tongue	Which verse dealing with the tongue did the Lord impress on me?
Expression	What verse or truth does God want me to communicate to someone else?
Remembrance	Which verse from this chapter would be most helpful to memorize?

⁵ <http://www.family-times.net/commentary/proverbs-1528/>

⁶ <http://bible.org/article/growing-character-through-proverbs>
<http://www.pitwm.net//pitwm-sundayschool.html>