

## Proverbs 12 – More Input Needed

We often think in terms of opposites - right or wrong, light or dark, truth or lie. It is easy to see other people in these clear categories. At the same time, many of us have a hard time believing that our own words and decisions can be defined by such lines. As we examine our own lives, we tend to think in shades of gray.

Proverbs, though, functions on the principle of opposites, reminding us that God calls us to the highest standard, and His standard does not allow any wiggle room. In the first four verses of chapter 12 alone, we see the choice between love and hate, favor and condemnation, security and insecurity, noble character and shame. The contrasts continue in each verse, assures us we can't have it both ways. For instance, verse 22 teaches us that the Lord detests lying lips, and sees lying as an antonym of faithfulness. As much as we might attempt to reason otherwise, lying and faithfulness cannot coexist as compatible traits in a person's relationship with the Lord.

We want to walk in wisdom. However, left to ourselves, we don't always see our choices clearly defined as either foolish or wise. Because we tend to view our own lives in shades of gray, we need help. We cannot trust our own reasoning. Left unchecked, we think our way is right (v. 15). This is why God's Word exhorts us to seek wise counsel. Wisdom always seeks input when making decisions.

### Tall Trees, Deep Roots

*<sup>1</sup>Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but whoever hates correction is stupid.*

Wisdom tells us to keep learning and to love instruction and knowledge. A humble willingness to be taught shows a true love of knowledge. If we find that we are upset when our faults are pointed out to us, that shows we lack not only grace but understanding. We are being prideful.

If we want to be taught anything, we should not reject discipline. To gain knowledge involves some pain and difficulty. Anyone who rejects knowledge demonstrates that he would rather be comfortable and ignorant than wise.

*<sup>2</sup> Good people obtain favor from the Lord, but he condemns those who devise wicked schemes.* Obedience to God leads to deeper relationship with Him ([1 John 1:6-7](#)). This principle was especially true under the old covenant, with its promises of blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience ([Deuteronomy 27-28](#)). God sees the heart and sees wicked intentions before they result in action, and even if they never result in action.

*<sup>3</sup> No one can be established through wickedness, but the righteous cannot be uprooted.*

A man and his son were digging out the stump of an old tree in his front yard. The tree had been only 5 inches in diameter, so they didn't think the task would be difficult.

After digging around the stump and cutting through the surface roots, they fastened a nylon tow rope to the back of a truck and pulled. Nothing happened. They dug some more, cut out some more roots, and tried again. Still no success. On the third try the heavy nylon rope broke. Strong, deep roots had anchored that tree firmly in the ground. A tall, immovable Christian comes only through a life of Bible study, discipline, and tested faith—conditions that produce deep roots.

Many men try to advance and establish themselves through treating others badly. Lying, cheating, and deception are common when someone seeks to advance or establish himself. This is never God's way and can never enjoy His blessing. "Evil is always variable: it has no fixed principle, except the root that is in the human heart; and even that is ever assuming new forms. Nothing is permanent but goodness; and that is unchangeable, because it comes from GOD."

The root of the righteous cannot be moved: God establishes His righteous ones in a firm, permanent way. Their root goes down deep and holds strong. This idea is repeated many times in the Scriptures. *"God is my rock, I shall not be greatly moved."* [[Psalms 62:2](#)] *Nay, 'I shall not be moved at all.'* [[Proverbs 12:3](#)]. The root of the righteous is in God, and therefore he is firm.

#### Person of Character

*<sup>4</sup> A wife of noble character is her husband's crown, but a disgraceful wife is like decay in his bones.* An excellent wife is the crown of her husband: A man may achieve success in many areas of life, but unless there is happiness in the home, all other achievements are empty. To have an excellent wife and all the home happiness that she brings is a true crown of success.

The modern sense of *virtuous* does no justice to the Hebrew term's root idea of strength and worth.... The modern phrase, 'she has a lot in her', expresses the meaning. A wife that brings shame to the husband and the family seems to take away life and happiness instead of bringing it. A 'crown' is a symbol of honor and reputation; but the negative side, using the figure of 'decay in his bones,' is that the disgrace will eat away her husband's strength and destroy his happiness."

*<sup>5</sup> The plans of the righteous are just, but the advice of the wicked is deceitful.* The righteous man or woman is not only right in their actions, but even in their thoughts. They know what it means to be transformed by the renewing of the mind. ([Romans 12:1-2](#))

As for the wicked, it is more than their actions that are deceitful; their counsels (thinking, thoughts) are also full of deception. They deliberately look for ways to get around peoples' defenses and to hide their own wickedness."

***<sup>6</sup> The words of the wicked lie in wait for blood, but the speech of the upright rescues them.*** The wicked plot violence and are ready to ambush others for their own unrighteous gain. "The vivid picture of 'lying in wait for blood' shows that the wicked make a trap by their false accusations." The good man has thoughts that are focused on the truth and justice for his fellow man, while the wicked plans deceit for his own profit. When thoughts are translated into speech, deceit bears fruit. On the other hand, the righteous man's words are words of deliverance to the unsuspecting persons who are ready to fall into the trap laid for them. Selfishness, which is the root of wickedness, cruelty and injustice are used when necessary. The righteous man will rescue person with good and wise words that they speak.

The man who is wise has God as his center. He will be merciful and helpful. He understands that words can slay as truly as swords. Now that the press has multiplied the power of speech, and the world is buzzing with the clatter of tongues (empty cymbals – making a lot of noise), we all need to take seriously the responsibility and power of spoken and printed words, and 'to set a watch on the door of our lips.' Psalm 141:3.

***<sup>7</sup> The wicked are overthrown and are no more, but the house of the righteous stands firm.*** The wicked are defeated and have no root in righteousness. They will one day be overthrown and simply perish. Compare the house of the righteous which will stand: God will preserve His own righteous men and women. They and their house will endure that which would overthrow the house of the wicked.

***<sup>8</sup> A person is praised according to their prudence, and one with a warped mind is despised.*** Wise men and women will be recognized and honored for their wisdom. The more wisdom, the greater the commendation. This is often true in this world, but always true in the world to come. Some men are commended for their sense of humor, their genius and for their learning. That praise is built on a false foundation. All wisdom comes from God.

John the Baptist did not always receive praise from men but we find that he was held in great respect even by the king. The Pharisees and the priests sought the approval of the people, and yet we find that Pilate saw through their false pretenses, when they delivered Christ to him to be crucified. But the apostles showed their wisdom, by glorying in shame for the name of Christ. They knew that this shame would end in royal honors.

<sup>9</sup> *Better to be a nobody and yet have a servant than pretend to be somebody and have no food.* There are two kinds of contempt. To receive an insult or be slighted is never pleasant. But wisdom sees that if one has enough in this world to have a servant or is a servant himself who gets bread by his own labor, they should not despair over an insult. A man should not worry that his household is looked upon with disrespect if his house is filled with righteousness. It is better to be content with little, and humble than to be proud and hungry. Honoring self isn't the way to either prosperity or happiness. Nothing is so shameful as to be proud when there is nothing to be proud about. The Revised Standard Version means: *Better is a man of humble standing who works for himself than one who plays the great man but lacks bread.*

### Caring for All Beings

<sup>10</sup> *The righteous care for the needs of their animals, but the kindest acts of the wicked are cruel.* This is a cluster of proverbs focused on personal living. It shows how the contrasted qualities come out in the two men in relation to how they care for animals. ([Matthew 10:29](#) *Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care.* [Psalm 104:27](#) *-All creatures look to you to give them their food at the proper time.*) The righteous man will also show care and compassion to his animals. God gives him authority over the animal.

June Williams was only 4 when her father bought 7 acres of land to build a zoo without bars or cages. Growing up she remembers how creative her father was in trying to help wild animals feel free in confinement. Today Chester Zoo is one of England's most popular wildlife attractions. Home to over 30,000 animals on 130 acres of land, the zoo reflects her father's concern for animal welfare, education, and conservation. With God-given wisdom, we give thoughtful consideration to the creatures in our care.

<sup>11</sup> *Those who work their land will have abundant food, but those who chase fantasies have no sense.* Verse 11 has no connection with the preceding, unless the link is common reference to home life and business. The one who does the hard work of farming will be satisfied with bread. Under God's blessing, they will enjoy the result of their labor. The only way to get honest wealth is to work for it.

The one who lives for the vain and superficial things of life lacks something worse than bread; he lacks understanding.

<sup>12</sup> *The wicked desire the stronghold of evildoers, but the root of the righteous endures.* Verse 12 continues the same thought, and puts it in a somewhat difficult phrase. It goes a little deeper than the former, showing that the covetousness which follows after vain (empty) things, is really wicked lusting for unrighteous gain. It is in the nature of

the wicked to covet what others have, even if it is the catch of evil men. They long for what has been gained by evil men. God's righteous men and women don't need to covet the catch of evil men, because they are like fruit-bearing trees. Fruit comes from their very root, from who they are.

How many professing church members have known that feeling in desiring things of the wicked thinking they bring happiness?

***<sup>13</sup> Evildoers are trapped by their sinful talk, and so the innocent escape trouble.*** What a wicked man says (**the transgression of his lips**) will eventually get him into trouble. It will become a snare he is trapped in. A man who deals in lies and false oaths will sooner or later be found out to his own ruin. There is another proverb as true as this: A liar had need of a good memory; for as the truth is not in him, he says and unsays, and often contradicts himself.

While the wicked goes into a snare, the righteous will come out of trouble. He will not always escape it. All of our lives which were molded on the example of Jesus pass through similar experiences. "But the just shall come out of trouble." We belong to Him who has come out of the great tribulation. He who led us in will lead us out. Listen to the voices that stand on the radiant shore: ***Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world (John 16:33) and, Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. (Revelation 2:10)***

***<sup>14</sup> From the fruit of their lips people are filled with good things, and the work of their hands brings them reward.*** A righteous man finds blessing comes to his life by what he says (the fruit of his mouth). His good, kind, and encouraging words will bring life to himself and others. A man will receive what he has worked for, whether it be for good or evil. God's judgments are true and fitting.

Good words will bring forth fruit, which will satisfy the speaker, because, whatever effects his words may have on others, they will leave strengthened goodness and love. ***'If the house be worthy, your peace shall rest upon it; if not, it shall return to you again.'*** Matthew 10:13 That reaction of words on oneself is the universal law of consequences coming back on us. We are the architects of our own destinies. Every deed has an immortal life, and returns, either like a raven or a dove, to the man who sent it out on its flight. It comes back either croaking with blood on its beak, or cooing with an olive branch in its mouth. All life is at once sowing and reaping. A harvest comes in which retribution will be even more entire and accurate.

***<sup>15</sup> The way of fools seems right to them, but the wise listen to advice.*** The fool almost always thinks they are on the right path. It is difficult for them to think carefully and

accurately about the path of their life. The wise man or woman understands the value of counsel and does not look only to what is right in his own eyes. The wise person understands that it is helpful to get another set of “eyes” on one’s way.

An executive at Oracle described his company’s CEO, Larry Ellison, in these words: “The difference between God and Larry is that God doesn’t believe he is Larry.” Meaning that Larry believes he is God. This can be an area of temptation and subsequent failure in so many leaders: they think they’re indispensable and infallible. Sadly, this isolates them from the wisdom of others.

***<sup>16</sup> Fools show their annoyance at once, but the prudent overlook an insult.*** The fool does not have the self-control to wait and let the immediate anger pass before making a response. The fool does most things out of impulse without thought.

The wise and **prudent** man knows that there are many times when the right thing to do is to *cover* shame. They thoughtfully respond to situations instead of making an immediate, impulsive response. It is not so much that the wise man represses anger or feelings but that he is more shrewd in dealing with it.

### False Witnesses

***<sup>17</sup> An honest witness tells the truth, but a false witness tells lies. <sup>18</sup> The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.*** The words of the wise are filled with truth and therefore reflect God’s righteousness. But a false witness doesn’t speak the truth, and promotes deceit instead of righteousness.

A true and faithful witness will deliver his testimony fully, clearly, and impartially. He will not only tell the truth, but all the truth that he knows about the point in question. He will be careful with his language to ensure that he is not misunderstood by the judges. Nor will he separate matters in order to favor one side over the other even if he believes one to be right. He will give no unfair representation of matters, to gratify or serve man, or his best friend; nor will pity cause him to disguise facts as to serve the cause of the poor man, or him who is in danger of being condemned. If one should offer him a bribe, he will reject it, and will not listen to an attempt to bias his mind.

***“But a false witness sheweth forth deceit.”*** He utters falsehood, or turns truth into a lie, by his manner of telling it. Doeg misrepresented the facts and caused the death of eighty-five priests of the Lord; and they who bore testimony against our Lord, are called false



witnesses, though they repeated our Lord's words with a little variation, but the little difference in words made a complete change in the meaning. (1 Samuel 21 – 22)

### Trustworthy Reputation

*<sup>19</sup> Truthful lips endure forever, but a lying tongue lasts only a moment. <sup>20</sup> Deceit is in the hearts of those who plot evil, but those who promote peace have joy. <sup>21</sup> No harm overtakes the righteous, but the wicked have their fill of trouble.* God looks after those who love the truth and speak the truth. Under His blessing, they will be established forever. The lying tongue is but for a moment: It often seems that the lying tongue wins the day and is stronger than the truth. “The lying tongue may continue to utter its falsehood for a long time by the calendars of men, but when you place those years by the side of the ages of God, they are as a moment, as the winking of the eye, as nothing.” The judgments of the God of truth will show how temporary the success of the lying tongue is. “Truth stands for ever; because its foundation is indestructible: but falsehood may soon be detected; and, though it gain credit for a while, it had that credit because it was supposed to be truth.”

Those who devise evil and practice it have deceit in their heart before it is ever evident in their actions. There is something corrupt in their core that finds expression outwardly. There is a happiness and contentment (joy) that comes to those who speak words of peace. This *shalom* is within the counselors of peace, and so they are able to give it to others.

God's righteous men and women will certainly experience trouble. Yet God promised to manage the degree of trouble, the duration of trouble, and the depth of the trouble. Especially seen in the light of eternity, no grave trouble will overtake the righteous. In contrast, the wicked will receive the result of their wickedness. They will not be rescued from their trouble; because they pursued evil, they will be filled with evil.

### Lying Lips Are an Abomination

*<sup>22</sup> The Lord detests lying lips, but he delights in people who are trustworthy. <sup>23</sup> The prudent keep their knowledge to themselves, but a fool's heart blurts out folly.* The God of truth loves the truth and regards the lips that spread lies as offensive, an abomination. Those who deal truthfully are His delight: The same God who regards lies as an abomination takes delight in those who value and tell the truth. Wisdom's lesson is plain: stop lying and start telling the truth. An understanding of honesty begins with recognizing that God—our ultimate example—is truth ([Deut. 32:4](#)) and that *He cannot lie* ([Num. 23:19](#); [Heb. 6:18](#)). Also, *He hates falsehood* ([Prov. 6:16-19](#)). Beyond that, *all lies have as their originator Satan himself* ([John 8:44](#)). We can use these Scriptures as our guide: *“A righteous man hates lying”* ([Prov. 13:5](#)); *love rejoices in truth* ([1 Cor. 13:6](#));

*lying is part of the old nature* ([Col. 3:9](#)); *growth means setting aside deceit* ([1 Peter 2:1](#) - *Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.*); *and speaking truth declares righteousness* ([Prov. 12:17](#)).

It is a mark of wisdom and prudence to not reveal all that we know, especially if it may harm or disgrace others. Someone who is careful in what he says will be equally careful about whom he confides in. The wise man or woman knows restraint, but the fool does not. It is in the nature of fools to proclaim their foolishness. What is in the heart will eventually be revealed. Fools proclaim their folly everywhere. They are dogmatic in arguments when wiser men are cautious. They teach when they should be learning.

*<sup>24</sup> Diligent hands will rule, but laziness ends in forced labor.* This is both according to the blessing of God (who rewards the diligent) and the nature of the world and society. Hard working people achieve and come to places of leadership.

We don't have to try to place ourselves into places of power, for an aspiring spirit is more likely to be humbled than exalted. But wherever we are called, let us abide and walk with God; so that we can obtain all that God has for us, and if it so pleases God, we will prosper. The advancement of Joseph and of Mordecai, of Moses and of David, and of the apostles, are eminent illustrations of this truth. Solomon advanced Jeroboam because he was an active man, and Pharaoh would only have active men over his cattle 1 Kings 11:28-43

*<sup>25</sup> Anxiety weighs down the heart, but a kind word cheers it up.* Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression. Solomon considered an inward cause of depression. It may come from fear and anxiety within a man or woman's heart. This is why God so often tells us to *be anxious for nothing* ([Philippians 4:6](#)) and *pray about everything*.

An anxious heart can be helped by a simple good word. Encouragement costs little from the one who gives it, but can do enormous good for the one who receives it. The 'kind word' probably includes encouragement, kindness, and insight—saying that which the person needs to gain the proper perspective and renew hope and confidence."

Think of the many times Jesus spoke a simple good word and made others glad:

- *Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you* ([Matthew 9:2](#)).
- *Your sins are forgiven* ([Luke 7:48](#)).
- *Daughter, be of good cheer; your faith has made you well* ([Luke 8:48](#)).
- *Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more* ([John 8:11](#)).



Expressions of sympathy and friendship have a powerful ability to soothe and allay the sorrows of the mind, and to prevent their dangerous effect. Job's complaints would have been fewer, had his friends shewed him that sympathy which he expected from them. But no words have such value as the words of God. David had perished in the day of his affliction, unless the law of God had been his delight. His afflictions were many, his griefs often great; but they never overwhelmed him, for the statutes of God were his song in the house of his pilgrimage.

***26 The righteous choose their friends carefully, but the way of the wicked leads them astray.*** This is good advice for both the righteous and those who have the wisdom to seek after righteousness. It has been rightly said, *show me your friends and I will show you your future.*

Bad friends can have a significant impact for evil and many people have been led astray towards the way of the wicked because of unwise and undiscerning friendships. The power of friendship can also work for good, and good friends can help one on *the way of wisdom*.

A neighbor may have worldly status, wealth, or wisdom, but these pale in comparison to the true value of righteousness. Material possessions and social standing do not grant spiritual worth or the eternal benefits promised to the righteous. Rather than pursuing superficial gains, we should seek wisdom and recognize the lasting excellence of righteousness, which guides our lives and gives genuine value.

***27 The lazy do not roast any game, but the diligent feed on the riches of the hunt.*** Solomon showed that the lazy man does not finish the job. He went to all the trouble of hunting and capturing the prey, but will never enjoy the fruit of his work because he is too lazy to do it. Just as one who might hunt but never cook what he finds, so the lazy person never completes a project.

There are many precious things a man or woman can have, but diligence is near the top of the list. Many great things are accomplished with little talent but great diligence.