

PROVERBS 24 ON MISSION

What is a skill or some knowledge you have used to benefit others? Architects use their skills to design houses for families and buildings for businesses to function efficiently. Moms and dads use their instincts and knowledge to keep children safe. Firefighters use their knowledge to extinguish threatening fires. Educators pass their knowledge on to students. Doctors use their knowledge to help sick people get well.

Proverbs 24 reminds us that God has called us to live on mission, wisely leveraging the skills and knowledge He has given us to benefit others. To do that, we must not join with people whose hearts are aimed at trouble (v. 1). Instead, we must partner with wise warriors whose hearts are aimed at living out God's mission in the world (w. 5-6). As we do, we must boldly speak God's wisdom. To not contribute wisdom when given opportunity is foolish (v. 7). There are needs all around us, and God intends for us to live in a way that offers help to those who are hurting. We may be tempted to do nothing, but we can't live on mission if we don't speak and act on behalf of those in need of rescue (w. 10-12). Where laziness and carelessness abound, so does trouble (w. 30-34).

All believers in Jesus Christ have been sent into the world to carry out His mission. To do that, He gives us truth in His Word. He gives us skills and passions.

He gives us fellowship with other believers who are also living on mission. And He places us in jobs and communities where there are needs. Wisdom looks for the opportunities to use those unique gifts in those specific places to rescue those who are perishing.

Saying 20

¹ Do not envy the wicked, do not desire their company; ² for their hearts plot violence, and their lips talk about making trouble.

Do not be envious of evil men: This is a common and sometimes difficult temptation for the righteous man or woman. There are times when evil men seem to prosper and we may become envious of them, and then desire to be with them.: This evil spirit of envy, if it does not bring the scandal of open sin, curses our blessings, decreases our virtues, destroys our peace, clouds our confidence, and stains our Christian profession.

For their heart devises violence: The kind of evil is the kind associated with violence and troublemaking. The seemingly quick and easy money and status gained through violence and troublemaking is a temptation we must resist.

Saying 21

³ By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established; ⁴ through knowledge its rooms are filled with rare and beautiful treasures.

Through wisdom a house is built: We think of the actual material building of a house, and how wisdom, proper engineering and construction are necessary. The same is true of the moral and spiritual values of a home. Those moral and spiritual values must be built through wisdom and established through understanding.

The house of the wicked is not built on wisdom. The house of the wicked is a snow-palace built in the winter, and melts away under the power of the summer's sun. By knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches. The blessing of building a home with God's wisdom, God's understanding, and God's knowledge will bring precious and pleasant riches in the spiritual sense and often in the material sense. God's blessing is on the home that seeks and honors His

wisdom. The precious jewels that fill the house are a harmonious, loving family and a sense of security and stability.

Saying 22

⁵ The wise prevail through great power, and those who have knowledge muster their strength. ⁶ Surely you need guidance to wage war, and victory is won through many advisers.

A wise man is strong: Solomon understood the strength of wisdom, and how a man of knowledge increases strength. Folly makes a person weak and vulnerable. A wise man is strong, courageous and determined, and able by wisdom to do greater things than others can accomplish by their own strength.

By wise counsel you will wage your own war: The strength of wisdom isn't solitary; it understands and relies upon the wisdom of others. It knows how to use the wise counsel of others and the safety of a multitude of counselors.

Saying 23

⁷ Wisdom is too high for fools; in the assembly at the gate they must not open their mouths.

Wisdom is too lofty for a fool: The fool looks at wisdom and thinks it is above him or her in the sense of being too dignified. They think it is overly smart and superior and tend to glory in the simplicity of their foolishness. In his opinion; it is overly difficult and unnecessary; he speaks of how impossible it is, because he will not put himself to the charge or trouble of getting it. The simple and diligent prove that the treasure is not really out of reach; but it is too high for a fool. His mind can never rise to so lofty a matter. He has no understanding of it, no heart to desire it, no energy to hold it.

He does not open his mouth in the gate: Often, the fool will be denied influence and a platform of leadership. At the place where the elders gather and decisions are made (the gate), the fool will not open his mouth. He can say nothing for himself when he is accused before the magistrate, who he is before frequently. He does not know how to speak acceptably and helpfully in the public assembly among wise men. Noting the incompetence of fools to speak in the gate where public policy is formulated.

Saying 24

⁸ Whoever plots evil will be known as a schemer. ⁹ The schemes of folly are sin, and people detest a mocker.

He who plots to do evil will be called a schemer: The evil man who plots his evil will be recognized for the schemer he is – even though planning foolishness is sin, and that evil person will be regarded as a disgrace to men. The sense is that he will hide his wicked devices by pretending that his actions are fair and right. Underneath is a cold, calculating, active person: the fool is capable of intense mental activity but it adds up to sin.... This type of person ignores all morality, and sooner or later the public will have had enough of him.

Saying 25

¹⁰ If you falter in a time of trouble, how small is your strength! ¹¹ Rescue those being led away to death; hold back those staggering toward slaughter. ¹² If you say, "But we knew nothing about this," does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who guards your life know it? Will he not repay everyone according to what they have done?

If you faint in the day of adversity: Adversity comes to everyone. The godliest and the most evil will experience their own adversity, and that is a test to see whether or not they will faint. In times of trial we should attempt to be doubly courageous; when a man loses his courage, his strength means nothing. The day of adversity did not *make* your strength small; it *revealed* your strength to be small. In a sense, we should welcome the day of adversity because it reveals our strength or weakness. If your strength is small: Commit yourself daily to God, for his supply of grace is sufficient for you. So go forward, weak or strong at the same time—weak in order to be strong, strong in your weakness.

Deliver those who are drawn toward death: The idea is those who are on their way towards destruction are stumbling to the slaughter. If we have the opportunity, we should deliver them. These could be literal prisoners who have been (presumably wrongfully) condemned to die. The reader is to take extraordinary measures to secure their release (a dramatic modern example would be the extermination of the Jews in Europe during the Second World War). Alternatively, these are people stumbling toward death because of their moral and spiritual blindness. The story of Esther is one wonderful example of someone who delivered those near death.

Surely we did not know this: We shouldn't be indifferent towards those headed toward death. Since they often reject God's wisdom and are hostile, it is easy to give up on them or ignore them. Yet God, He who weighs the hearts, does know and consider this. We cannot ignore the evil around us, and say we are not responsible for it. We cannot shut our eyes and turn our faces from wrongdoing, and tyranny, and oppression.

Will He not render to each man according to his deeds? God will make the fool to answer for his folly, but He will also cause the indifferent one to answer for their lack of care. God will render to each man according to his deeds. God will certainly deal with us as we have dealt with him, either rewarding our performance of duty, or punishing our neglect of it. The omniscient and omnipotent Sovereign will act justly. If the son turns a blind eye to helping victims, the Protector of Life will turn a blind eye to him in his crisis. Count on it!

Saying 26

¹³ Eat honey, my son, for it is good; honey from the comb is sweet to your taste.

¹⁴ Know also that wisdom is like honey for you: If you find it, there is a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off.

My son, eat honey because it is good: Eating honey is rewarded by the sweetness of the taste. It is easy to understand the reward of the honeycomb. The proverb draws on the image of honey; its health-giving properties make a good analogy to wisdom. Right behavior is not recommended solely on the grounds of strict morality but also because it is the best route to sheer pleasure and the fulfillment of dreams.

So shall the knowledge of wisdom be to your soul: The gaining wisdom rewards the life the way the sweetness is the reward of honey. We should learn to discern and appreciate the sweetness of wisdom. Once we appreciate the reward of wisdom, our hope will not be cut off. **If you have found it:** There is indeed some difficulty and trouble in the pursuit of wisdom, but it is well worth the effort because of the sweetness and the advantage obtain, when found.

Saying 27

¹⁵ Do not lurk like a thief near the house of the righteous, do not plunder their dwelling place; ¹⁶ for though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again, but the wicked stumble when calamity strikes.

Do not plunder his resting place: This proverb presents its wisdom in the form of a command to the wicked man, telling him to not rob or steal from the home of the righteous man.

For a righteous man may fall seven times, and rise again: The reason why the wicked man should not rob the righteous is that in the end, the righteous man will not be defeated. Even when he may fall – even seven times! – he shall rise again. Many commentators insist that the fall that a righteous man may experience here is trouble, not sin. There is no adequate reason why it cannot include both ideas. Though God permit the hand of violence sometimes to destroy his house, temptations to overwhelm his mind, and afflictions to come on his body, he constantly emerges; and every time he passes through the furnace, he comes out brighter and more refined.

And rise again: This should not only give warning to the wicked but also assurance to the righteous. The righteous can be confident that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ ([Philippians 1:6](#)). They can use that confidence to strengthen their resolve to never give up, even though they may fall seven times.

The real power to stand up against life and to benefit from its challenges is that of the righteousness of conduct which results from walking in the ways of wisdom, by yielding to the inspiration and authority of the fear of Jehovah. **But the wicked shall fall by calamity:** The wicked have a different destiny than the righteous. God will protect and preserve His righteous ones, but the wicked shall fall and stay fallen. The wicked will not survive—without God they have no power to rise from misfortune. The point then is that ultimately the righteous will triumph and those who oppose them will stumble over their evil.

Saying 28

¹⁷Do not gloat when your enemy falls; when they stumble, do not let your heart rejoice, ¹⁸or the Lord will see and disapprove and turn his wrath away from them.

Do not rejoice when your enemy falls: Knowing this, we should not rejoice when one falls. It should not make our heart be glad. David did not rejoice when Saul died in battle (2 Samuel 1:11-12).

Lest the LORD see it, and it displease Him: If God sees our rejoicing over the fall of the wicked, He may turn away His wrath from the wicked man just to rebuke our proud, unloving heart against the wicked man. So if we want God to continue his anger on the wicked, we better not gloat.

Saying 29

¹⁹Do not fret because of evildoers or be envious of the wicked, ²⁰for the evildoer has no future hope, and the lamp of the wicked will be snuffed out.

Do not fret because of evildoers: Proverbs 24:1 told us to not be envious of evil men; here we are told to also not worry (fret) because of them, as well as to not to be envious of the wicked. The translation 'Do not fret' is too mild. Do not get yourself infuriated over evildoers is more accurate. Those who love the truth are naturally enraged by the shamelessness of those who promote or practice godless behavior.

The lamp of the wicked will be put out: This speaks of death waiting for the evil man both in this life and the next. Any good or pleasure they experience in this life is the best they will ever have or experience. The wicked man has no prospect for the future. Sometimes people are bold enough to snuff out their own candle.

Saying 30

²¹Fear the Lord and the king, my son, and do not join with rebellious officials, ²²for those two will send sudden destruction on them, and who knows what calamities they can bring?

Fear the LORD and the king: Wisdom tells us to fear the LORD, but it is also wisdom to fear...the king. Earthly rulers deserve our respect and honor ([Romans 13:1-7](#)). He puts God before the king, because God is to be served in the first place, and our obedience is to be given, to kings only in subordination to God, and not in those things which are contrary to the will and command of God (Acts 5:29).

Do not associate with those given to change: Those who want to overthrow or change the present system must take great care. The revolutionary often finds that their calamity will rise suddenly, and they can bring great ruin in their revolution. People should fear both God and the government, for both punish rebels. Such as those in Samuel's time that cried, *Nay, but we will have a king.*

Further Sayings of the Wise

²³ These also are sayings of the wise: To show partiality in judging is not good: ²⁴ Whoever says to the guilty, "You are innocent," will be cursed by peoples and denounced by nations. ²⁵ But it will go well with those who convict the guilty, and rich blessing will come on them. ²⁶ An honest answer is like a kiss on the lips. ²⁷ Put your outdoor work in order and get your fields ready; after that, build your house. ²⁸ Do not testify against your neighbor without cause—would you use your lips to mislead? ²⁹ Do not say, "I'll do to them as they have done to me; I'll pay them back for what they did." ³⁰ I went past the field of a sluggard, past the vineyard of someone who has no sense; ³¹ thorns had come up everywhere, the ground was covered with weeds, and the stone wall was in ruins. ³² I applied my heart to what I observed and learned a lesson from what I saw: ³³ A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest—³⁴ and poverty will come on you like a thief and scarcity like an armed man.

The series of 30 words of the wise ended at Proverbs 24:22. Here, until the end of Proverbs 24, is a set of additional sayings of the wise.

It is not good to show partiality in judgment: Whether it is in the formal court of law or in daily interactions, we should never make judgment simply on the basis of partiality. Those like us can be wrong, and those different from us can be right. Listen to the matter and the man; hear persons speak and not just causes; judge according to truth and equity, not according to opinion and appearance – to fear or favor.

You are righteous: This is what should not be said to the wicked. In a wise, moral society the people will curse someone with confused moral judgment, and the nations will abhor him. It is a mark of the folly of our present age that many monstrous examples of evil or wickedness today are told, "You are righteous." This proverb describes the working of a culture wiser than our present culture. Those who rebuke the wicked will have delight: Evil should be addressed and rebuked. We should not romanticize or excuse the wicked.

He who gives a right answer: The proper response to a question or a difficult problem is always welcome to the wise. We think of the many occasions when Jesus Christ was presented with difficult questions yet always gave a right answer. He was straightforward, costly though it may seemed, won gratitude. The right answer comes from the lips, just like a friendly and welcoming kiss.

Prepare your outside work: The idea is that before a house is built, proper preparations must be made. The field and the ground must be readied. Wisdom tells us that work should be done with proper planning and in the proper order. This would include plowing the land, planting gardens and orchards, so that it produces its fruit.

Do nothing without a plan. In winter prepare seed, implements, tackle, gears, etc., for seedtime and harvest." **Afterward build your house:** Some want to skip right away to the building without preparing the field. This foolishness will not be blessed. Do the preparation work first, and then afterward build your house. It emphasizes the practical rule of producing before consuming, a rule the slothful do not accept.

Preparations for Solomon's magnificent temple were made before his house was built. The spiritual house is similarly made of materials that have been prepared and fitted and so grow into a holy temple in the Lord (Ephesians 2:21-22). As, in a rural economy, well-worked fields justify and nourish the farmhouse, so a well-ordered life (material and immaterial) should be established before marriage.

Do not be a witness against your neighbor without cause: We should only speak against someone if there is good and righteous cause to do so. We often speak ill of others to entertain others, and ourselves – this is sin. Profit is the bait to the thief, lust to the adulterer, revenge to the murderer. But

it is difficult to say what advantage the witness gains from testifying against his neighbor. The allurements of this sin is the same as Satan himself feels—that is, the love of sin for its own sake.

Would you deceive with your lips? When we speak against others without cause, we usually exaggerate or color the truth, making it a deception. **I will do to him just as he has done to me:** This is what wisdom and grace tell us not to say. We should not return evil for evil (1 Thessalonians 5:15). Just because someone has spoken evil or lies against us does not mean that we should speak evil and lies against them. An injured party must love his neighbor (Leviticus 19:18) and commit no injustice to God. Nothing is more natural than revenge of wrongs, and the world approves of it as right because to put up with wrongs is cowardice and unmanliness. But that is not true for those of us in Christ.

There it was, all overgrown with thorns: This is what the wise man saw when he looked at the field or the vineyard of the lazy man. The lazy man did not plant the thorns or nettles, and he did not deliberately break down the stone wall. Yet his laziness made these things happen as if he had deliberately done them. Isaiah 28:24-29

When I saw it, I considered it well: The wise man learned from the tragedy of the lazy man. He didn't have to suffer the same things the lazy man did to learn the lesson. This is one of the marks of wisdom. The reader is invited to recall similar observations of homes in disrepair and to draw the same conclusions.

A little sleep, a little slumber: This is how the lazy man rationalizes his neglect of duty. A little sleep causes no harm; surely we all need a little sleep. The problem isn't the sleep of the lazy man; it is his neglect of duty. Rest assured that the best will become the worse if we neglect it. Neglect is all that is needed to produce evil. If you want to know the way of salvation, I must tell you; but if you want to know the way to be lost, it is easy; it is only a matter of negligence.

So shall your poverty come like a prowler: This is the destiny of the lazy man or woman. Because of their sinful neglect, poverty will come upon them as suddenly, as strongly, and as unwelcome as an armed man. In this case, the lazy man thinks himself innocent because he did not deliberately, actively sow the thorns or break the wall, but his neglect of duty did them – and he is without excuse. But let us look at the spiritual sluggard. If a neglected field is a melancholy sight, what is a neglected soul! Such a soul, when it is left to its own barrenness, instead of being sown with the seeds of grace becomes overgrown with thorns and nettles.