

September 19, 2021

“Teaching Values”
Lesson 3 of Unit

Proverbs 15:21-33

Intro

A quote from our text summarizes very well what this week’s study passage is about. “Proverbs’ guiding belief is that the human intellect—wisdom—founded on fear of God and tutored in traditional teachings, is the prime virtue of character, and as such is the necessary (and almost sufficient) means for creating a life of success—materially, physically, socially, and morally.”

Last week’s lesson dealt with the idea of there being two (and only two!) paths in life: the path of righteousness and the path of wickedness. Today we will look at various proverbs from chapter 15 that help us in our efforts to walk in the path of righteousness.

Read Proverbs 15:21-33

1. vs. 21: This verse serves as an overview to what the next 10 proverbs address

Folly vs. understanding

A person who lacks judgment (good sense, in a way) “delights” in folly

This person enjoys and seeks that which is foolish and unhelpful!

The “man of understanding” keeps “a straight course”

This person uses their understanding to stay on “the straight and narrow”

They choose to walk on the path of righteousness (not always easy, as we know)

How does a person walk on the righteous path and avoid the path of folly?

By receiving and paying attention to good counsel (see the next verse)

2. vs. 22: Trusting one’s own brain isn’t always the best plan

It limits one to a single view, usually not allowing for different thoughts

This verse says “with many advisors” a person’s plan succeeds

Multiple views of multiple people = seeing the whole range of possibilities

It’s likely that if someone’s view disagrees with or challenges yours, it would be wise to think through your own decision-making process again

This obviously depends on the trustworthiness of your “advisors”

Having friends who will challenge your thinking is beneficial

The opposite side of this is “plans fail for lack of counsel”

Not having anyone to discuss plans with makes it more likely things won’t go well

3. vs. 23: “A man finds joy in giving an apt reply”

The joy here is for the person *giving* the advice, not *getting* it.

If you’ve ever had someone you love accept your advice (which went against what that person originally was planning), you know the truth of this proverb.

It’s a joy to have our advice accepted

It’s a greater joy if it helps the one who has accepted our advice.

The “apt reply” means the advice fits a particular circumstance at a particular time
Sometimes “Charge!” in battle is the “apt” command
It doesn’t mean that “Charge!” should be commanded in every circumstance
“How good is a timely word”
The right thing said at the right time makes all the difference
It also is crucial if that “timely word” is heeded!

4. vs. 24: Here, as with last week’s lesson, is the idea of there being two paths in life to choose from
“The path of life” vs. “going down to the grave”

The big quality here is that the person is “wise” who is on the path of life
A wise person does wise things—seeking the upward with (towards God)
The unwise person doesn’t frequently do wise things—
Takes the path “going down to the grave”
The path of life refers to physical life as well as spiritual life
There are no guarantees for how long a person will live, even if a Christian
But the wise person will make choices that lead to a longer physical life
Obviously, the wise person will also make more choices that benefit spiritually

5. vs. 25: The verse is a “negative example”, a verse warning what *not* to do

First, “The Lord tears down the proud man’s house”
Multiple verses show God’s displeasure with man’s pride
God “resists the proud” (James 4:6)
He has “scattered the proud” (Luke 1:51)
“The one who has a haughty look and a proud heart, Him I will not endure”
(Ps. 101:5)

The word “arrogant” frequently is coupled with the idea of pride
This man thinks he can do whatever he wants without consequences
God will not allow this man’s house (physical or figuratively) to stand

Second, “He keeps the widow’s boundaries intact”
Widows are among the most vulnerable; they have no protector or power
They are frequently coupled in Scripture with orphans
Job 22:9, Ps. 94:6, Is. 10:2, Mal. 3:5
Boundary stones were used in ancient times to mark a person’s boundary
Apparently, more powerful neighbors sometimes shifted the rock boundaries

This verse shows a contrast

The humble who trust in God will be protected and cared for
The arrogant who reject God’s path will be taken down

6. vs. 26: This verse contrasts the purity of the pure and the wicked in their words

The wicked have wicked thoughts that God detests
We know that “Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks” (Matt.12:34)
So the wicked not only think wicked thoughts, but they speak them as well

The pure are pleasing to God in their thoughts

It’s not that the pure never think wrongly; we know we all do at times
The pure are always thinking about and turning to God, which pleases Him

7. vs. 27: This verse is talking about honesty, in actions revolving money

“The greedy man brings trouble to his family”

People are usually greedy for money / possessions / things

Their greed can cause them to use unethical / violent ways to get more

They may not even spend it—having more is the goal

Think of Scrooge from “A Christmas Carol”

He was wealthy, but didn’t use it, and resents not having more

Some families can be greedy for more money against each other

Large inheritances, family possessions after a parent dies, etc

Connection to vs. 25 about the Lord tearing down the proud man’s house?

The opposite (positive) side is the one who hates bribes

Honesty in actions rejects attempts to use money to “buy” an outcome

Knowing / doing what’s right is the Godly path to success, not more money

8. vs. 28-29: These two verses contrast the use of speech by the righteous and the wicked

First: the righteous use their heart (mind, will emotions, spirit) when they talk

They consider what they say before they say it.

The wicked just answer—they “gush evil”

Second: God’s view of the speech of the righteous and the wicked

He “hears the prayer of the righteous”

He approves of what they say; he is close to them

He “is far from the wicked”

He not only disapproves, He is “far” from them, not close

9. vs. 30: This verse only shows the positive aspect, which implies its opposite is to be avoided

It speaks of a “cheerful look” and “good news”

This person has a happy, encouraging disposition

They “smile with their eyes”!

They also bring “good news”—things which are positive and uplifting

We all know people who are like this, and we enjoy being around them

These two qualities should be front-and-center in every Christian’s life

10. vs. 31: This verse is really about being teachable

Listening is a sign of being teachable—willing to hear what a wiser person says

Listening to a rebuke is a mark of a wise person

No one likes being rebuked, but a wise person listens to grow and change

They want to become a better person, so they accept the rebuke

Again, the opposite isn’t listed here, but to be unteachable is the wrong way to go

11. vs. 32: This verse is a deeper thought to vs. 31

The one who “heeds correction” learns from it—“gains understanding

The one who “ignores discipline” is only hurting himself—they gain nothing good

This one “despises himself”

In other words, he doesn’t respect himself enough to listen to good advice

He’d rather keep doing wrong and suffering for it (knowingly!)

12. vs. 33: This is a good summary verse to the passage

“The fear of the Lord” is found multiple times in Proverbs

This concept is the foundation to all the proverbs

A healthy fear of God helps us to a proper sense of humility in His presence

Humility and Fear of the Lord are parallel ideas here

A proper fear of the Lord has two benefits in this verse

It leads one to wisdom

It leads one to honor

Both of these benefits are wonderful, but getting them should have one purpose only:

To walk the path of righteousness before God and man

Application: This passage has developed 10 qualities of the person who is walking God’s path:

1. Seeker
2. Encourager
3. Wise
4. Humble
5. Pure
6. Honest
7. Righteous
8. Cheerful
9. Teachable
10. Disciplined

That’s a full day’s work! It takes a long time and a lot of effort to have each of these qualities in the measure we’d like to have. Be encouraged that God has provided us with His view of what he wants our character to look like, and that He is longsuffering with us as we strive to become more like Him.

A suggestion: choose one of these 10 to focus on, and seek to develop it more in your life over the next several months.

Prayer: Father God, Thank You for your wisdom, and how You desire us to grow in that wisdom. Help us as we strive to do Your will and follow You more closely. Bless our efforts to do this. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

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