

October 3, 2021

“Living an Ordered Life”
Lesson 5 of Unit

Proverbs 29:16-27

Intro

The Book of Proverbs provides many principles that will help Christians to lead an ordered life, both publicly and privately. None of us is perfect in applying these principles, but that also doesn't excuse us from trying to do so more and more frequently. Most of these principles also show up in the New Testament, showing they connected with lives then, and by extension, to us now.

Today's passage is part of a larger section, going from 28:1 through 29:27. A primary focus of this section is the wicked or greedy person who disrupts harmony and security by ignoring God's law.

Read Proverbs 29:16-27

1. vs. 16: This verse indicates the general concept that the verses following will address

“When the wicked thrive, so does sin”

The more wicked people there are, the more acts of wickedness there are
“but the righteous will see their downfall”

Here and now, there are some instances of this

Gangs / drug cartels where rivals kill each other

There are, unfortunately, many examples where the wicked seem to thrive
In the world to come, the righteous are guaranteed to see the wicked fall

Rev. 20:15 says “Anyone whose name was not written in the book of life, he was
thrown down into the lake of fire.”

God will cast them down as He is righteous, and the wicked are unrighteous

Until that time, there will be ongoing tension between the righteous and the wicked

2. vs. 17: Disciplining a child brings peace and delight, says this verse

Discipline here could be either a verbal correction or a physical one

Both are needed to have children who behave correctly

David failed to correct Amnon for raping Tamar (2 Samuel 13)

Absalom later killed Amnon, and took over David's kingdom

David's failure to correct Amnon led to multiple negative actions

There was no peace and no delight for David in his sons.

Parental discipline is also not to be overly harsh (see Eph. 6:4)

It is to be done to help the child learn and grow, out of love and concern

3. vs. 18: The verse has two contrasting aspects of knowing what God says

The first half says that “Where there is no revelation”

This means that God's word is unknown by the people

Where this happens, the people do what they want—they are “unrestrained”

The second half shows a person “who keeps the law”
This person knows what God says and does what God wants
This person is also described as “blessed”
Blessed by God’s favor, likely blessed by people as well
The person who obeys God is leading a well-ordered life that produces blessing

4. vs. 19: This verse deals with an OT situation that has a contemporary connection
Servants/slaves are unable to be corrected by words—their behavior stays the same
The servant understands, but doesn’t respond
We would call that “giving the silent treatment” in today’s world
In an employer/employee situation, a boss may treat others verbally in an unkind way
Some employees may give that boss “the silent treatment”—no response
The principle being advocated here seems to be respect
If a master / boss treats those under them with respect, they usually receive respect
The worker is usually willing to do their job well if treated well
We receive respect by being respectful—that’s a principle of a well-ordered life

5. vs. 20: Haste is always a bad thing biblically (Prov. 19:2, 21:5, 25:8)
Speaking in haste is also bad
We are told to speak good words at the right time (15:23, 25:11)
Speaking the right words at the right time produces an ordered life

James 1:19 warns us to “be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to become angry”
Being slow to speak and quick to listen provides for a well-ordered life in speech

The fool in the book of Proverbs is constantly belittled for poor choices
Here, the fool has “more hope” of a good life than the one who speaks hastily
This is a sobering warning to us about how we speak

6. vs. 21: This verse has two distinct ways it’s translated, though all agree on the first half
“If a man pampers his servant from youth...”
All translations have some variation of this thought
The second part is translated in two different ways, though they have a connection
1) “He will bring grief in the end”
2) “He will become a son”

The Living Bible translates it as “he will expect you to treat him like a son”
The Amplified Version says, “...will have him expecting the rights of a son afterward.”

What this verse is talking about is how a servant born into a household is treated/raised
If a servant is “indulged/pampered”, he will not see himself as a servant, but as a son
Both alternate translations are saying essentially the same thing
If this servant is treated like a son early on, he will continue to expect it
This attitude from a servant will cause grief to the master for allowing it
The translations from the Living and Amplified versions say this very thing

The verse seems to be saying there is a right way to raise a servant, different from a son
The well-ordered life knows how to keep distinctions between how those two groups are
treated by the master of the house.

7. vs. 22: The person described here is “angry” and “hot-tempered”

Anger itself isn’t the issue; even Jesus got angry (Mark 3:5, Mark 11:15)

The person here has a life *characterized* by anger—that’s what they are like all the time

We have known people like this, that burst our angrily all the time

The result of their anger? Dissension, and committing many sins

So where’s the well-ordered life here?

Doing the opposite

The person described in the verse lacks both self-control and Spirit-control

Heb. 17:27 says, “He who restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit
is a man of understanding.”

The person who has self-control bears fruit (Prov. 14:29, 16:32, 29:11)

The well-ordered life is under the control of both the person involved and the Spirit of God

8. vs. 23: This verse describes one of the paradoxical truths of the Christian life

Lift yourself up by your pride, you’ll be brought low

Start out low (humble), and you will be lifted up

The person led by their pride thinks they don’t need to learn anything more

They know it all already

The lowly / humble person recognizes they don’t know it all; they are teachable

The well-ordered life comes from embracing humility, in being willing to learn

9. vs. 24: An ethical dilemma exists in this verse for a thief who has been caught

If he’s being tried and his partner is called to testify, what will happen?

If the partner lies to protect the accused, he violates the law against false testimony

Lev. 5:1 specifically directs to tell the truth when called to testify in court

If the partner tells the truth, then he accuses himself of being an accomplice to a crime!

The well-ordered life again comes in doing the opposite

First, do not be connected to ungodly people, who will entice you to sin

Second, “Honesty is the best policy”

Mark Twain once said, “If you tell the truth, you don’t have to remember anything.”

10. vs. 25: There is a choice here: fear man or fear God

Many people fear “what others may think”

They make decisions so as not to be ridiculed

However, humanity is fickle and cannot be trusted for security

The verse says fearing man “will prove to be a snare”

A person will be caught fearing the wrong one

Fearing God (reverencing/respecting) is the better way

“whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe”

Safe literally means “to be set securely on high” (Job 5:11, Ps. 69:29)

This is the theme of all wisdom literature—fear God and trust Him alone

Proverbs 1:7 says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom”

Placing our fear and trust on God rather than man will rightly order our lives

11. vs. 26: This verse is about getting justice when an injustice has been done

Getting justice requires going to the one who has the power to give it

A continual source people have always sought is the governing authorities

“Many seek an audience with a ruler”

Good may come from this meeting, but it could end without getting the desired outcome

The only true source of justice, and consistent justice, is from God

“but it is from the Lord that man gets justice”

The well-ordered life is one that seeks out God for all needs, not just those of justice

12. vs. 27: There is a connection between this verse and vs. 16

Both contrast the wicked and the righteous

However, there is some common ground here:

They both detest the other

In Christian terms, we are told to love our enemies

God detests the wicked for their actions and lack of desire to know Him

We are called to imitate Christ, who loved sinners and gave them opportunity to know Him and correct their paths.

The well-ordered life is one that follows the Godly path as closely as possible

Application: Today’s study passage breaks down into three groups:

Vs. 18, 25, 26 teach us to trust the Lord for our security, to look to Him always

Vs. 19-20, 22-24 deal with personal characteristics that enhance our lives

Humility, self-control, listening ear, respect, honesty

Vs. 17, 21 teach that discipline in family and work relationships provide peace and rest

If we practice these, we will live an ordered life as directed by Godly principles.

Prayer: Father God, help us to follow your wisdom in ordering our life upon your principles. Help our lives to show honesty, humility, and wisdom. Help our actions to be an example to others that will draw them to You. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

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