

# Avoid the Trap

May 28 — *Proverbs 5:1-7:27*

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections

Day 148 — 217 Days to Go

## Today In Your Reading...

We continued in *Proverbs*. The predominant topic was the immoral woman, which for us today is the rampant and repulsive plague of pornography that is sweeping our country. It is an insidious industry that makes more money annually than all movies and professional sports combined. It reaches 90% of our men by age 17 and is now targeting women and children.

**Pornography is a perversion of God's gift of sex.** A perversion is something that has been twisted or changed from its intent. God intended sex for marriage, but Satan has perverted it to be watched, enjoyed, or practiced outside of marriage. Thus, *Satan uses porn to destroy God's intent for individuals, sex, and marriage.*

**Why is pornography so successful? Simple, it is a seductive trap.** It is seductive in that it uses our own natural desires as bait; and, once we have been lured into the trap, it is very difficult to escape. In fact, this particular trap leads us to dead ends in many ways. The purpose of a trap is to cage or kill something; and, pornography kills one's thought life, spiritual growth, individual potential, relationships, and even leads many people to other sins and crimes (i.e. adultery, divorce, sexual immorality, rape).

So then, how do we avoid this trap? It is not easy but it can be done. First, **know how it works.** *All traps have lures*, something as bait. The best traps use our interests or desires against us; fish like worms, mice like cheese, and wolves like blood. *We like to lust.* "We are tempted when we are carried away by our own lust, and lust brings forth sin and sin produces death" (*James 1:13-15*). Thus, the lure for this trap is our eyes, our attraction to images on TV, in movies, on our phones and devices, magazines, etc.; *the bait is lying all around us.*

The other hidden bait is a host of lies that accompany the porn trap. Pornography tells us it's harmless, it's natural, no one is watching, we are alone, it's not hurting anyone, we will enjoy it, and a little bit won't hurt us. However, we must remember that **Satan always promises one thing but delivers another.** That's exactly what Solomon warned us about today. Her ways are sweet but "as bitter as poison and as sharp as a sword" (*5:4, 5*). She seduces and entices those who follow her. They are "like an ox to the slaughter, a trapped stag awaiting the arrow that will pierce his heart. They are like birds flying into a snare, little knowing it will cost them their lives. Her house is the road to the grave; her bed the den of death" (*7:21-27*).

## Daily Reflection

Sooner or later, if he hasn't already, Satan will attempt to lure you into this trap. What can you do to avoid it?

Solomon offered some suggestions to avoid the immoral woman in his day; it is good advice.

**Stay away from her door.** Don't go down her street. Do what Joseph did with Potiphar's wife, run! Run from her! Don't go near her house; if you do, you will lose your honor (*5:7, 8*). **The trap cannot catch those who avoid it. Protect your eyes and protect your mind.**

However, there is more to avoiding this trap than staying clear of its lures. It is all good and well to run from this trap but you need also to run to something or Someone. Take another tip from James and "Resist the Devil and he will flee from you; draw near to God, and He will draw near to you" (*4:7, 8*).

With God's help, you can avoid this terrible trap; and if you are free from this trap yourself, help others. **Our men are dying, our women are suffering, and our children are next.**

# The War of Two Women

## Today In Your Reading...

We covered three chapters in *Proverbs*, most of which was dominated by a war between two women — **Wisdom** and **Folly** — two women who constantly compete for the minds of men. First, Solomon described Wisdom (8:1-9:6), as she makes her appeal, "Choose my instruction rather than silver and gold," she says, "for wisdom is far more valuable than rubies. Nothing you desire can be compared with it... and whoever finds me finds life" (8:11, 35).

Next, Solomon described Folly (9:13-18) in terms similar to the immoral woman of earlier chapters (5-7). "The woman named Folly is loud and brash. She is ignorant and does not know it. She sits in her doorway (like a prostitute) and calls out to men, 'Come home with me. Stolen water is refreshing' she says, 'and food eaten in secret tastes the best.' But the men don't realize that her former guests are now in the grave."

Then, Solomon takes the advice of these two women and sets them side by side for us in individual proverbs (10:1-32). For example, "A wise youth works hard all summer, but a [foolish] youth, who sleeps away the hour of opportunity, brings shame" (v.5). "The [wise] give good advice, but fools are destroyed by their lack of common sense" (v.21). "Doing wrong is fun for a fool, while wise conduct is a pleasure to the wise" (v.23).

Consider for a minute the sources of Wisdom and Folly. Solomon has already told us that "The Lord grants wisdom! From His mouth (His Word) come knowledge and understanding" (2:6). James confirms Solomon's claim, "If anyone lacks wisdom, let him ask of God..." (1:5). So then, if wisdom's source is God, then what is the source of folly or foolishness? It must be Satan. Is he not the father of lies, deception, and confusion? Yes, it is he who convinces men to reject

God's ways and wisdom; and, *in his rebellion to God, folly is born.*

Also, if wisdom is found in the Word of God, then *folly is found in the world system that Satan has established.* That is precisely why the Lord warns us to be wary of the world. "Do not love the world," He says, "nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you. For the world offers only a craving for everything we see and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from the world" (1 John 2:15, 16).

## Daily Reflection

To which Woman are you listening — Wisdom or Folly? It is one or the other; and, *since their paths go in different directions, you cannot walk them both.* You will choose one or the other.

**To get you to choose the path of Folly, the world will lure you with lies.** What are some lies that she may tell you?

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**While the path of Folly or the ways of the world may seem to you right and good, they are a dead end.** Unfortunately, God's people often get caught up in the world's thinking, the world's philosophies, the world mindset and mission, and they get trapped in the den of Folly. Don't let that happen to you. Walk with Wisdom and let her (or Him) guide your way.

# Snapshot of Godliness

## Today In Your Reading...

For several days we will plow through a section that contains 375 of Solomon's individual proverbs (10:1-22:16). The section is disorganized as there is no apparent order, with an occasional grouping by topic; and, the proverbs are often without context which makes them difficult to interpret and apply. It is important, then, for us to use the rest of Scripture to help us understand their meaning and usage. For the most part, each proverb stands alone and expresses a nugget of wisdom; still, we must keep in mind that a proverb is not a promise of God but a keen observation by a wise man.

It is nearly impossible to point out a common theme in the *Proverbs*; one could go in numerous directions. However, one cannot read these tidbits of truth without noticing that Solomon regularly compares the righteous or godly person with the wicked or ungodly person. By doing this, he paints for us a picture of what a godly person should look like, how he should think, how he should act or react, and how he should talk. I would like to focus on these attributes today, as I believe they will be helpful to us.

For example, Solomon pointed out that **godly people are honest**, which means that they are just and fair in their dealing with others; they are free from deception and fraud (11:1, 2, 5, 20; 12:22). Second, **godly people are humble**, which means that they are free from arrogance; they have a modest estimation of their own worth and a deep sense of their unworthiness in the sight of God (11:2; 12:23; 13:7, 10). **Godly people practice discernment**, which means that they can distinguish one thing from another, truth from error, virtue from vice; they demonstrate good judgment and perceive errant thinking (11:9; 12:26; 13:16).

Solomon described **the godly as careful with their words**; they either bless others with what they have to say or they remain silent (11:11, 12, 30; 12:6, 13, 16, 18). The godly do not gossip but keep confidential that which is entrusted to them (11:13). **Godly people are diligent and productive**; they are also generous and willing to share (12:11, 12; 27; 13:4).

## Daily Reflection

How would you rate yourself from 1-10 in each of these categories? In what ways are you doing well? In what ways can you do better?

Honesty/Integrity \_\_\_\_\_

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Humility \_\_\_\_\_

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Discernment/Wisdom \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Speech \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Diligence/Productivity \_\_\_\_\_

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# Kind, True, and Necessary

## Today In Your Reading...

We read 101 individual proverbs. None of them had any connection at all on the surface, which presents a challenge when trying to draw out common themes or devotional messages. However, I did notice that this set of proverbs, as in the rest of them, had much to say about words.

I believe that, in His Word, the Lord gives us some wonderful guidelines for choosing and using our words, *both to glorify Him and to bless others*. These guidelines can be divided into three categories, those that are **kind**, those that are **true**, and those that are **necessary**. Here is a good filter for the things we say. Before they come out of our mouth, we should put them through this test.

First, are our words kind? **Are they intended to do good to others?** Do they come from motives of tenderness and goodness? Solomon wrote, "Never let kindness get away from you. Wear it like a necklace... for kind words are like honey, sweet to the soul, healthy for the body" (3:3; 15:4; 16:24). Paul wrote, "Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them" (*Ephesians 4:29*).

Second, are our words true? **Are they accurate, verifiable, and trustworthy, or are they embellished, revised, or self-glorifying?** Solomon said, "The godly are directed by their honesty... A truthful witness does not lie. While the talk of fools is like a rod to their backs, the words of the wise keeps them out of trouble" (11:5; 14:3, 5). Paul echoed this wisdom, "Stop telling lies, but rather let us tell our neighbors the truth" (*Ephesians 4:25*).

Finally, are our words necessary? **Are they suitable, fit, and proper, appropriate for the need of the moment?** Again, Solomon had

much to say on this subject. "The godly think before speaking... From a wise mind comes wise speech... A gentle answer turns away wrath..." (15:1, 28; 16:23). *Everything that we think does not need to be said out loud.*

Our words are powerful. **With them we can cause people to stand up tall and straight. With them we can cause people to stoop.** If we would practice using this filter – speaking only those things that are kind, true, and necessary – our words would give grace to those who hear them. "Discretion is a life-giving fountain to those who possess it..." (16:22).

## Daily Reflection

How would you rate yourself in these three categories? In what areas do you need to improve?

Words that are kind \_\_\_\_\_

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Words that are true \_\_\_\_\_

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Words that are necessary \_\_\_\_\_

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"The tongue is restless and evil, full of deadly poison," so be careful how and when you use it (*James 3:8*). Perhaps the best filter for your words is this — **only say to others what you would want others to say to you.**

# Lending to the Lord

June 1 — Proverbs 17:1-19:29

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Day 152 — 213 Days to Go

## Today In Your Reading...

We continued to read a vast section of Solomon's proverbs, which included various topics. One topic that we have not addressed but which Solomon mentioned many times is that of caring for the poor. Here is a sample of what Solomon had to say about helping the down and out.

"It is a sin to belittle one's neighbor, but blessed are those who help the poor" (14:21).

"Those who oppress the poor insult their Maker, but helping the poor honors Him" (14:31).

"Those who shut their ears to the cries of the poor will be ignored in their own times of need" (21:13).

"The rich and poor have this in common — the Lord made them both" (22:2).

"Blessed are those who are generous, because they feed the poor" (22:9).

"Whoever gives to the poor will lack nothing, but those who close their eyes to poverty will be cursed" (28:27).

"The godly care about the rights of the poor, but the wicked don't care at all" (29:7).

Here is what we read today, "If you help the poor, you are lending to the Lord, and He will repay you" (19:17). Throughout the Old and New Testaments, we see God's desire for His people to help the poor. Jesus said that the poor would always be with us (Mark 14:7). He also said that those who minister to the poor, the sick, or the needy are, in essence, ministering to Him personally (Matthew 25:35-40). He also said that caring for the needy was a way to "store up treasures in heaven." **He rewards those who care and act.**

**Our Lord has a heart for the less fortunate, so also should His followers.** We do not look down on them, but, instead, we view them as equals, made in God's image. We do not despise or neglect them, but we freely and generously share with them what God has given us. We do not overlook them, as if they do not exist; rather we esteem them as individuals, weighing them not by their social status but by their character, with dignity and worth.

## Daily Reflection

How do you view the poor, the sick, the needy? Are you guilty of overlooking them, neglecting them, or despising them?

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You may be like me. I want to help people, I want to give to people, and I don't want anyone to go without. However, *what I don't see regularly with my own eyes I do not think about regularly.* The down and out are not a part of my daily life. What can you do to reach out to the poor when the poor are not in your immediate view?

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You may have never considered helping the poor until today. You may not care to reach out to those in need. Solomon would describe you as "wicked," for not caring at all (29:7). **If this is the case, then the poor person is you.**

# A Good Name

June 2 — Proverbs 20:1-22:16

Day 153 — 212 Days to Go

## Today In Your Reading...

Having read another 77 stand-alone proverbs, it is unfair to single one out, but that is exactly what I'm going to do today. One proverb in particular has meant more to me and my family than any other over the years — *Proverbs 22:1*. "Choose a good reputation over great riches, for being held in high esteem is better than having silver or gold." In the *New American Standard* translation, this verse says, "A good name is to be more desired than great wealth..."

"A Good Name" has been our family motto for as long as I can remember. We have memorized this verse, we have discussed what it means, and we have done our best to live it out. What is a good name? Why is it important to have one, and how does one go about building one? Let's take a minute to answer these questions.

A name is synonymous with a reputation. **Just as everyone has a name, so also does everyone have a reputation.** It is the opinion that our peers and the public at large have about us based on our character, our words, and our actions. It is the favor or disfavor that is attached to our name, what people immediately think of when our name is mentioned in conversation. While it is more important to have favor in the eyes of God, it is certainly a benefit to have favor in the eyes of people.

Here are some things to consider when building a good name. "Never let loyalty and kindness get away from you! Wear them like a necklace; write them deep within your heart. Then you will find favor with both God and people, and you will gain a good reputation" (3:3, 4). **Both kindness and loyalty go a long way to building a good name.**

"The wise inherit honor..." (3:35). All of us "are known by the way we act, whether our conduct

is pure and right" (20:11). "People with integrity walk safely, but those who follow crooked paths will be exposed" (10:9).

Building a good name is not a selfish enterprise, nor is it done for our own glory. Rather we build a good name by God's grace and for His glory, not that we might receive attention but that He might receive attention. **We build a good name because we are God's ambassadors; what we do and say reflects positively or poorly on Him.**

The builders of the Tower of Babel desired "to make a name for themselves" but it ended in disaster, because they rebelled against God (*Genesis 11:4*). Abraham, on the other hand, had a good name, because the Lord rewarded him for his faithfulness (12:2). Ultimately, **it is God who makes our name great.** He is the one who grants us favor in the eyes of men; but, we must use that name to shine a light on Him (*Matthew 5:14-16*).

## Daily Reflection

Are you building a good name? What have you tried to do to build a good name?

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Can you think of others who have a good name? What have they done to make it so?

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# Whistle While You Work

June 3 — Proverbs 22:17-24:22

Day 154 — 211 Days to Go

## Today In Your Reading...

Solomon shared some of his "sayings of the wise," which were more insights on topics that he had already covered, such as defending the poor, seeking after wisdom, speaking the truth, honoring parents, and avoiding drunkenness and sexual immorality. The topic that caught my attention today was the last one that Solomon addressed — *laziness*. "A little extra sleep, a little more slumber... and poverty will pounce on you like a bandit; scarcity will attack you like an armed robber" (24:33, 34). What is a biblical perspective of work?

God instituted work in the beginning, at creation. "The Lord took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it" (Genesis 2:15). Keep in mind that this was before Adam and Eve rebelled, which means that **work was included in the "very good" part of the creation account**. It was only after sin entered the scene that work became toil.

What, work is a good thing? Yes. **Work is a gift of God**. *It has a way of giving us a sense of purpose, productivity, and dignity*. That's why Solomon wrote, "Work brings profit but talk leads to poverty" (14:23). "Take a lesson from the ants, you lazybones. Learn from their ways... Even though they have no prince, governor, or ruler to make them work, they labor hard all summer, gathering food for the winter..." (6:6-11). Ants don't need someone to make them work, because they know the value of work. **God ordained that there be benefit to work. Through it He meets our needs.**

Paul made this connection between work and survival, when he wrote to the Thessalonians, "If a man will not work, then he shall not eat" (2 Thess. 3:10). **Work is integral to life.** *Therefore, we should do our best and not complain about it.*

As a child, I remember watching the Seven Dwarfs whistle while they worked, recognizing that they loved their labor. Since work is a blessing from the Lord, then **we should work with a thankful heart**. We can take pleasure in it. Though work is difficult, at times, and has its challenges, we can enjoy it. We should also work to the best of our ability in a way that pleases the Lord. "Whatever you do, do it with all your heart, as unto the Lord rather than men..." (Colossians 3:22-25).

## Daily Reflection

What has been your attitude towards work?

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Having in mind a biblical perspective of work, explain why laziness, apathy, or inactivity are displeasing, even offensive, to God.

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**Christians should be the best workers.** We should work harder we should be reliable and trustworthy to do a good job, even when no one is watching. We should exhibit the best attitude with our co-workers and our boss. *Work is another way for us to reflect well on our God.* Does this describe you? Why or why not?

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