



Proverbs chapter 14:1-15:33

Taught at our Sunday evening service, 17th October 2021 @ Deal Christian Fellowship

Reading: Matthew 7:26-27

Good evening. Let's pray.

Introduction

We are continuing our study through the book of Proverbs, and by the end of this evening we will have almost reached the halfway point. In the opening 9 chapters we saw Solomon contrast wisdom and foolishness, with the cry to seek wisdom.

And from chapter 10 on, he has been contrasting thoughts against each other in almost every verse. Tonight, we have 68 verses we're going to work our way through. And of course, if either of these chapters have an overall theme, it is wisdom - but as with the previous 2 weeks, we'll see lots of smaller themes emerge.

Themes in chapter fourteen

Some of the themes we'll see in chapter 14 are:

- Our words (v3-9, 25)
- Our hearts (v10, 12-14, 30, 33)
- Our tempers (v16-17, 29)

Themes in chapter fifteen

Then in chapter 15, we'll see a couple of those themes continued including:

- Our tempers (v1, 18)
- Our words (v2-4, 7, 26)
- Correction (v10, 12, 31-33)
- Treasure (v6, 16-17, 27)

Chapter fourteen

So, let's get into chapter 14. We read in verse 1...

Proverbs 14:1

The wise woman builds her house,
But the foolish pulls it down with her hands.

This is a stark contrast - we're talking about complete opposites here. And we see that on this very topic when comparing the bulk of chapter 7 to chapter 31 of Proverbs (we'll do that when we get to chapter 31).

Of course, the results look obvious and ridiculous from the outside, as do the actions here. Yet, when we look at our own lives, we seldom see our actions, or our habits, so clearly. In fact, we can fool ourselves into thinking what we're doing is right. We need prudence. We need to think through the likely consequences of our actions.

Ladies, I think it is helpful to ask yourselves; are you building? If so; what are you trying to build? If so; what are you building with? A comment I read summarised this well... "The wise woman realises the tremendous impact she can have by discipling, praying for, loving, and encouraging her family."

Proverbs 14:2

He who walks in his uprightness fears the LORD,
But he who is perverse in his ways despises Him.

Why is it that people hate God, or the idea of God? I think RA Torrey, like others have done, answers this well...

Men will give you a great many reasons why they object to the Bible, but in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, if you should trace men's objections to the Bible home, you would find the reason they hate the Bible is that it makes them uneasy in their sin.

RA Torrey

It is that unwillingness to give up the sin that they love, that develops this despising of God.

Proverbs 14:3

In the mouth of a fool is a rod of pride,
But the lips of the wise will preserve them.

For the most part, from verses 3-9, we see Solomon address the things we say.

Here, he says that fools use their words as a weapon to hit others with, without realising they are causing themselves problems by puffing themselves up in pride. Yet wise words will help not only the hearer, but the one who delivers them.

Is it better to not talk at all then? No! For words are important. Through them, the gospel is shared, the Bible taught, comfort brought and much joy to be had too. We read...

Proverbs 14:4

Where no oxen are, the trough is clean;
But much increase comes by the strength of an ox.

While at times we would do well to keep silent, we'll read later in chapter 15 that it is so good when something is said at the right time to us. But only if that something is a good and helpful thing...

Proverbs 14:5

A faithful witness does not lie,
But a false witness will utter lies.

Jon Courson notes in his commentary on this verse...

A false witness can be one who shares the right information, but with the wrong implication. False witnesses at the trial of Jesus said, "He said to destroy the temple and He would build it up," implying that Jesus was an anarchist (Matthew 26:61). The truth, however, is that Jesus was speaking of the temple of His body (John 2:19-21).

Jon Courson

We need to be careful that we don't misrepresent factual information by adding wrong intent.

Proverbs 14:6

A scoffer seeks wisdom and does not find it,
But knowledge is easy to him who understands.

That is, don't be so busy complaining that you're not listening. It's easy to do. Particularly in a crisis, where complaints, arguments and egos can surface, when what is actually needed is wisdom, understanding and instruction.

But if we remain teachable - we'll learn!

Proverbs 14:7

Go from the presence of a foolish man,
When you do not perceive in him the lips of knowledge.

In other words, don't let stupidity rub off on you. And don't sit there continually listening to those who offer nothing but foolishness. Others may think you agree.

Proverbs 14:8

The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way,
But the folly of fools is deceit.

Again, prudence is taking the time to think about the likely outcome of your actions (or inaction), but fools would rather trip up others. However, though the foolish may seek the harm of others, they are continually setting themselves up for a fall - in the case of deception, no-one ever looks good when found out.

Proverbs 14:9

Fools mock at sin,
But among the upright there is favor.

You know, you can tell a lot about someone by what makes them laugh. Do you laugh when others stumble? Do you find sin funny? Do you make jokes about it? Some do, and the Bible calls them fools for it. God hates sin, He doesn't joke about it, as we saw this morning; He doesn't revel in talking about it, rather He sent His Son to pay for it.

Proverbs 14:10

The heart knows its own bitterness,
And a stranger does not share its joy.

How often we forget that we don't know everything. Something I remember my Mum teaching me was that there's always something you don't know about every situation. And we rarely ever know the extent of the heartache others carry. We might be a little nicer to each other if we did.

And as a church family, we are not to be strangers. We read in Romans 12:

Romans 12:15

Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

We are to be caring and compassionate to each other. We should sympathise, even if we can't empathise.

Proverbs 14:11

The house of the wicked will be overthrown,
But the tent of the upright will flourish.

You would think a house would last far longer than a tent - yet, the one who knows this world is not our home, and is looking forward to their heavenly home, will be the one who prospers in the end.

We read...

Proverbs 14:12

There is a way that seems right to a man,
But its end is the way of death.

In the end, we can either say my will done, or Thy will be done. As we read earlier, Jesus said;

Matthew 7:26-27

But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."

So do what Jesus says.

There is a great Christian song written by Bob Hartman, that is partly based on this verse. I want to read the words to you;

So many voices telling me which way to go
So many choices come from those who think they know
There's a way that seems right to a man
But it only brings him death
I wanna go the way that leads to life
Till I draw my dying breath

Don't wanna be a manpleaser - I wanna be a Godpleaser
I just want to have the wisdom to discern the two apart
Don't wanna be a manpleaser - I wanna be a Godpleaser
I just want to do the things that please the Father's heart

Some make a sacrifice and never let it show
Some make a point of letting everybody know
Some will live their lives as unto men
And they have their reward
I just wanna do everything I do
With all my heart unto the Lord

I just want my life to glorify His Son
To make my Father proud that I'm His child before I'm done
No need to pat me on the back or stop the shake my hand
I just want to hear my Father say "Well done, well done"
I just want to hear my Father say "Well done"

That's the way to live. Jesus' way, or no way!

Proverbs 14:13

Even in laughter the heart may sorrow,
And the end of mirth may be grief.

How true this is, that we laugh about and laugh off our problems, but that never solves them. Many a comedian will tell you that happy and funny are not the same thing. Only the Lord can bring true joy. The kind of joy that James writes about - that even in the midst of our trials, we can joy.

Proverbs 14:14

The backslider in heart will be filled with his own ways,
But a good man will be satisfied from above.

Those who backslide are filled, that is satisfied, with their choices - but only in the short term. Because in the end there is no satisfaction that can match what we have in Jesus. Why? Because that's what we were designed for. I could try running my car on chip oil, but it wasn't designed to do that. It'll work best when I put the right kind of fuel in it.

Proverbs 14:15

The simple believes every word,
But the prudent considers well his steps.

We need to weigh up what we hear. That is, we MUST hold fast to what the Bible teaches, not what people say. And if people say things contrary to the Bible, we are not to believe them. No matter if they are popular, or in a pulpit.

In Acts 17:11 Luke notes the example of those in the city of Berea, and he says:

Acts 17:11

These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.

Check out what you hear, and think about the likely outcome of any doctrine you hear. If it won't draw you closer to Jesus, you should be hearing alarm bells.

Proverbs 14:16-17

A wise man fears and departs from evil,
But a fool rages and is self-confident.
A quick-tempered man acts foolishly,
And a man of wicked intentions is hated.

When your temper boils over, you usually end up in hot water. Rather, we are to be slow to wrath - we'll talk more about this later.

Proverbs 14:18

The simple inherit folly,
But the prudent are crowned with knowledge.

Once again, we need to think through the consequences of our actions, for we read...

Proverbs 14:19

The evil will bow before the good,
And the wicked at the gates of the righteous.

Though the wicked may reign now, they will not reign in eternity.

Proverbs 14:20-21

The poor man is hated even by his own neighbour,
But the rich has many friends.
He who despises his neighbour sins;
But he who has mercy on the poor, happy is he.

We have funny relationship with money. As our pastor has said before, it's not a problem to have it, but it's a problem when it has you, for your whole outlook gets distorted, and subsequently your treatment of people is based on what you can get out of them, rather than what you can give.

For later reading, I suggest reading James chapter 2:1-13 which warns us of giving a better welcome to those who appear rich. If we do that, James says, we become judges with evil thoughts. Here we read...

Proverbs 14:22

Do they not go astray who devise evil?
But mercy and truth belong to those who devise good.

So consider how you can do good to others. Not for what you can get out of it, but for what you can give. And giving requires effort on our part. We read...

Proverbs 14:23

In all labor there is profit,
But idle chatter leads only to poverty.

We have much opportunity to serve, much need to work. And we are to be diligent in both. But sometimes we're lazy. I can't help but think of how Thomas Edison said "Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work."

Solomon says that idle chatter never helps anyone.

Proverbs 14:24

The crown of the wise is their riches,
But the foolishness of fools is folly.

I believe that is, the crown IS the riches. The reward of a life lived well is just that. But the reward to the foolish? A lack of good sense.

Proverbs 14:25

A true witness delivers souls,
But a deceitful witness speaks lies.

Lying is the opposite of speaking the truth. And what better truth is there to speak than that which saves souls? Here's the question though; do you represent Jesus well? Are you a good ambassador? Are you a faithful witness?

Proverbs 14:26-27

In the fear of the LORD there is strong confidence,
And His children will have a place of refuge.
The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life,
To turn one away from the snares of death.

When you know who God is, what He requires of you, and you obey Him in it, you can have great confidence. Knowing not only that He made you, but that He loves you enough to send His son to die for you that you might live. There is no greater place of refuge than that.

Proverbs 14:28

In a multitude of people is a king's honor,
But in the lack of people is the downfall of a prince.

Indeed, a popular leader has security, but a rebellious people can tear down human leadership.

Proverbs 14:29

He who is slow to wrath has great understanding,
But he who is impulsive exalts folly.

In verse 16 we read about how the fool rages and is self-confident. And here and through subsequent chapters Solomon says he who is slow to wrath, slow to anger; has great understanding, reduces contention, is better than the mighty and has discretion.

But as Christian's we are to bear the fruit of the Spirit:

Galatians 5:22-23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

Proverbs 14:30

A sound heart is life to the body,
But envy is rottenness to the bones.

Here I think Solomon nods back to Proverbs 4:23, where he says we should keep our hearts with all diligence. A healthy heart is indeed so important physically, but so it is spiritually too. And one of the ways spiritual heart disease manifests itself is in envy. Always wanting what it doesn't have, rather than thinking about how it can help others get what they need. We read...

Proverbs 14:31

He who oppresses the poor reproaches his Maker,
But he who honors Him has mercy on the needy.

If you get your attitude and relationship to God right first, health in other relationships will follow

Proverbs 14:32

The wicked is banished in his wickedness,
But the righteous has a refuge in his death.

We may not look forward to the process of death, but we can sure look forward to what awaits us the other side. That is not true for the wicked.

Proverbs 14:33

Wisdom rests in the heart of him who has understanding,
But what is in the heart of fools is made known.

Finnis Dake makes the simple observation here, that a wise man does not display his wisdom, but a fool parades all he knows.

Proverbs 14:34

Righteousness exalts a nation,
But sin is a reproach to any people.

Oh, how much greater might our country be if it didn't enjoy sin like it does. If we were closing betting shops, not getting drunk, had no drug issues, if no affairs took place.

As CS Lewis noted:

Our declaring the notion of sin to be obsolete has not diminished human suffering.

CS Lewis

In verse 35 we read...

Proverbs 14:35

The king's favour is toward a wise servant,
But his wrath is against him who causes shame.

This country needs wisdom. In our government, and in its citizens. But let us also be wise servants of our Lord and King, Jesus.

Chapter fifteen

Once again, as we start chapter 15, Solomon deals with the tongue. And so again it's helpful to remember that the Bible says more about the danger of the tongue, than the problem of drunkenness. And building on what he has already said about being slow to wrath, he now tells us how to deal with it when it comes toward us. He says:

Proverbs 15:1

A soft answer turns away wrath,
But a harsh word stirs up anger.

It really does take two (or more) people to argue. You should never be the one to raise your voice first. And you should never be the one to raise it second. Simply put, be careful and kind with your words - yes, there may be reason to disagree in the strongest possible terms, there may be reason to be angry. But we are not to sin.

Proverbs 15:2

The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly,
But the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness.

I don't know if you've thought about this, but it's possible to use knowledge wrongly - that's why we need wisdom and love to make the difference. This can even extend to how we use the Bible - it's the best type of knowledge we can have, but we should never use it as a weapon. And there's someone watching...

Proverbs 15:3

The eyes of the LORD are in every place,
Keeping watch on the evil and the good.

God knows EVERYTHING we say and do - sobering! More than just our words, He also knows our thoughts. I read an thought-provoking comment this week from Dustin Bengé:

The devil doesn't mind if we appear holy before others as long as we aren't holy before God.

Dustin Bengé

The eyes of the Lord are in EVERY place. Every action. Every word.

Proverbs 15:4

A wholesome tongue is a tree of life,
But perverseness in it breaks the spirit.

So how wholesome are our tongues? God knows exactly how wholesome they are.

Proverbs 15:5

A fool despises his father's instruction,
But he who receives correction is prudent.

Solomon keeps repeating this point - we looked at that last week - and I guess it's because some people need to be told things twice. Some people need to be told things twice.

But really, do we receive correction like we should?

Proverbs 15:6

In the house of the righteous there is much treasure,
But in the revenue of the wicked is trouble.

There is more than one kind of treasure. We need to be careful which it is we're seeking after.

Proverbs 15:7

The lips of the wise disperse knowledge,
But the heart of the fool does not do so.

Indeed, our words are one of the biggest signs of maturity. Do you shoot off your mouth when you're irritated, annoyed, or not getting your way? Do you argue, do you shout, do you speak harshly? If so, you have some growing up in wisdom to do.

Proverbs 15:8

The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD,
But the prayer of the upright is His delight.

Just this morning in the gospel of John our pastor was warning how some want to argue religion, but not live it. That is, they are happy to contest the truth, but they are not happy to deal with sin in their lives. That must not be the case with us, for we read in Psalm 66:

Psalm 66:18

If I regard iniquity in my heart,
The Lord will not hear.

And we read the in account of Saul's mistake in 1 Samuel 15 that "to obey is better than sacrifice".

God doesn't want your attendance, so much as your attention. He doesn't want your presence at church meetings, in lieu of you being interested in His presence in your life during the week.

Because, He is more interested in your soul, than He is in your songs. And what we read in Scripture is that if you want God to hear your prayers, then you need make sure your heart is right with Him.

We read...

Proverbs 15:9

The way of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD,
But He loves him who follows righteousness.

Are you really following Him? Are you really following after righteousness? So much better to live right, than to need correction.

Proverbs 15:10

Harsh discipline is for him who forsakes the way,
And he who hates correction will die.

That is, harsh discipline is the last resort, but sadly it is not 100% effective - for the fool still won't listen, because he or she hates being corrected.

Proverbs 15:11

Hell and Destruction are before the LORD;
So how much more the hearts of the sons of men.

God wants no-one to enter Hell - that's why He sent his son to die for us all, that whoever believes in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life. That's how much He loves us.

So how sad that some will refuse to accept Jesus as their Lord and Saviour.

Proverbs 15:12

A scoffer does not love one who corrects him,
Nor will he go to the wise.

May we love those who are willing to correct us, even if we don't enjoy the correction. And may we seek out the wise counsel we all so very much need.

Proverbs 15:13

A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance,
But by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.

How can we be truly happy? The world has so many suggestions, but few meaningful or helpful answers. In the end, if we're wise, we realise that true happiness is not possible apart from God.

Proverbs 15:14

The heart of him who has understanding seeks knowledge,
But the mouth of fools feeds on foolishness.

So what are you seeking or feeding on?

Proverbs 15:15

All the days of the afflicted are evil,
But he who is of a merry heart has a continual feast.

If all your heart is getting is junk food, spiritually speaking, it's unlikely to be a happy, healthy heart, even when the circumstances are good.

Proverbs 15:16

Better is a little with the fear of the LORD,
Than great treasure with trouble.

This doesn't mean that we have to have little. But that we should get our priorities right. More focused on our relationship with God, than returns on our investments.

Proverbs 15:17

Better is a dinner of herbs where love is,
Than a fatted calf with hatred.

Now, the meat-eating burger-loving part of me reads this as "So important is love, that it's better to have love and be vegan, than have burgers but hatred." That to me is a compelling statement for how important love is. But Finnis Dake probably puts it better, saying:

Better is a poor man's dinner where love is than a rich man's feast with hatred and strife.
Finnis Dake

Proverbs 15:18

A wrathful man stirs up strife,
But he who is slow to anger allays contention.

Building on his previous points in 14:7, 14:29, and 15:1, Solomon says we can reduce the amount of quarrels in our life by being slow to anger ourselves. Yes, someone can try and start an argument with us, but if we don't return fire, all that happens is one man shouting on his own. That looks as silly as it should.

Proverbs 15:19

The way of the lazy man is like a hedge of thorns,
But the way of the upright is a highway.

Last week we read how the lazy man is like vinegar to the teeth, and smoke to the eyes. Dealing with a lazy man is hard work! It's the difference between getting caught in a thorny hedge, and being on the open road.

Proverbs 15:20

A wise son makes a father glad,
But a foolish man despises his mother.

We need both good parents and good children. Neither happen by accident.

Proverbs 15:21

Folly is joy to him who is destitute of discernment,
But a man of understanding walks uprightly.

You can be lacking in wisdom, or you can apply it. You can be a fool, or you can be wise.

Proverbs 15:22

Without counsel, plans go awry,
But in the multitude of counsellors they are established.

Hopefully you're seeing the repetition of themes from week to week, and again this is one that Solomon has addressed before. That is, of the importance of others. We need church. We need accountability, we need encouragement. We need godly friends. You can't do church on your own.

Proverbs 15:23

A man has joy by the answer of his mouth,
And a word spoken in due season, how good it is!

Opposite to shooting your mouth off at someone in anger, offering the right words of encouragement, or correction, at the right time, are a wonderful thing. And we need God's Word in us to know what to say, and His Spirit in us to know when to say it.

Proverbs 15:24

The way of life winds upward for the wise,
That he may turn away from hell below.

When we pause to consider how serious the reality of what we believe is, we should only want to live one way. God's way.

Proverbs 15:25

The LORD will destroy the house of the proud,
But He will establish the boundary of the widow.

God cares what happens to those in need. How? Well the answer might just be; through you. James writes:

James 1:27

Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

We read...

Proverbs 15:26

The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the LORD,
But the words of the pure are pleasant.

Again, God knows your thoughts! Perhaps those who consider that are the ones whose words are pleasant.

Proverbs 15:27

He who is greedy for gain troubles his own house,
But he who hates bribes will live.

The best commentary on the Bible, as always, is the Bible. Paul writes to Timothy:

1 Timothy 6:6-10

Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

Proverbs 15:28

The heart of the righteous studies how to answer,
But the mouth of the wicked pours forth evil.

Study this book - Proverbs. The Bible. They will make you wiser than your teachers!

Proverbs 15:29

The LORD is far from the wicked,
But He hears the prayer of the righteous.

Jon Courson notes:

While God distances Himself from those who distance themselves from Him, He draws near to those who draw near to Him.

Jon Courson

Proverbs 15:30

The light of the eyes rejoices the heart,
And a good report makes the bones healthy.

Oh, how Paul rejoiced at hearing others walk with the Lord. I wonder, are we excited in the same way at such good reports?

Proverbs 15:31

The ear that hears the rebukes of life
Will abide among the wise.

That is, if you don't listen, you won't be wise...

Proverbs 15:32

He who disdains instruction despises his own soul,
But he who heeds rebuke gets understanding.

It's foolish not to seek after wisdom. It's especially foolish if you reject it when it's offered to you through instruction, correction and rebuke. But listen to it, and you'll get understanding. You'll grow. You'll grow up.

Proverbs 15:33

The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom,
And before honor is humility.

And we're back to where we started in chapter 1. Friends, know who God is, what is required of you, knowing that you don't know it all. Be willing to listen, humble enough to learn, and wise enough to apply what you hear from God's Word.

Summary

Next week we'll read in Proverbs 17:10, that:

Proverbs 17:10

Rebuke is more effective for a wise man
Than a hundred blows on a fool.

As we go through proverb after proverb you might feel a gradual beating, or a constant rebuking. What will determine if it makes any difference, is you.

Application questions

This week I have 4 application questions for us all to think on:

- Do our words honour the Lord?
- Are our tempers in control?
- Are we willing to be corrected?
- Are we doing what is right in our own eyes, or God's eyes?

Let's pray.