



## Proverbs chapter 16:1-17:28

Taught at our Sunday evening service, 24th October 2021 @ Deal Christian Fellowship

**Reading:** Daniel 4:28-33

**Good evening. Let's pray.**

### Introduction

We're now moving past the half-way point in the book of Proverbs, and by the time we finish this evening we'll also have reached the half-way point of this second section of the book, from chapters 10-24, which contains Proverbs written and set in order by Solomon himself.

### Themes in chapter sixteen

A couple of themes we'll see in chapter 16 are:

- Our hearts (v1, 5, 9, 21, 23)
- Our words (v1, 10, 13, 21-, 24, 27-28)

## Themes in chapter seventeen

Then, as we get into chapter 17 we'll see those two themes continue:

- Our hearts (v3 , 16, 20, 22)
- Our words (v4, 7, 9, 14, 27-28)

And as mentioned in previous weeks, there are even more themes than these - I hope you may see some more as we move through this marvellous book.

## Chapter sixteen

So, chapter 16, verse 1 says:

### **Proverbs 16:1**

The preparations of the heart belong to man,  
But the answer of the tongue is from the LORD.

That is, there is responsibility on us to prepare our hearts. To feed on the right spiritual food. To get instruction in righteousness. But for our words, though we can prepare the foundation, we need to rely on the Holy Spirit to guide us. We need to be that close to Him, that we are always in tune with what He would have us say.

Why? Because we always think we're right.

### **Proverbs 16:2**

All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes,  
But the LORD weighs the spirits.

Of course, if we thought we were wrong, we wouldn't think that way any more, right? But the problem is not just that we think we're right, but that we think we can't be wrong, when - in fact - sometimes we are.

God cares about not only our words and actions, but our thoughts and motives too. We too easily justify our words and actions using our own counsel, without considering or asking what the Lord thinks of the situation.

For the Christian, we may still try to justify our sin.

For the unbeliever, they often think "I'm a good person".

But for both, when we look at what God would have us do, there is conviction. There are His standards. His law. His Word. And so we need His help in our thought life. We read...

### **Proverbs 16:3**

Commit your works to the LORD,  
And your thoughts will be established.

I encourage you to commit each part of your thought life to the Lord, on a regular basis.

Pray before your working day that He would help you work well. Pray before any conversation that He would guide you. Pray in advance of and in the midst of any friendship, romantic relationship, engagement, and marriage that He would have His way.

It is so important that we don't try to go it alone.

### **Proverbs 16:4-5**

The LORD has made all for Himself,  
Yes, even the wicked for the day of doom.  
Everyone proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD;  
Though they join forces, none will go unpunished.

It is important to remember that we're not here for our own benefit. Though God has given us so much to enjoy, we are actually here for His pleasure.

So on one hand, it's a glorious thing to be used for what we were designed for - to please Him!

But on the other hand, the wicked will not be able to stand before Him - even if they were to group together, they would not be able to escape the punishment they deserve.

Harsh? Hardly.

There are at least 20 things in Proverbs that are described as an abomination to God. The perverse man, a proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a wicked scheming heart, feet that are quick to sin, a false witness that speaks lies, a sower of discord, wickedness, unfair trading, the sacrifice, the way and the thoughts of the wicked, the proud of heart, those that justify the wicked, condemn the just, that deal dishonestly, that refuse to hear the law and the prayer of the rebel.

It is not a bad thing that these things will be punished!

Yet we have a gracious God...

### **Proverbs 16:6**

In mercy and truth  
Atonement is provided for iniquity;  
And by the fear of the LORD one departs from evil.

### **John 3:16-17**

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

We should be humbled by that.

Solomon continues...

**Proverbs 16:7**

When a man's ways please the LORD,  
He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.

How does this work? Well, we're quick to focus on our enemies being at peace with us, but I think we'd do better if we focussed on pleasing the Lord. For when we please the Lord, by not being argumentative, or unkind, or selfish, or unjust, or unfaithful, or unholy - we'll both find we don't generate enemies, and that we appease those enemies we have.

Yes, there will always be persecution, but that's because people are enemies of the Lord, not of us.

**Proverbs 16:8**

Better is a little with righteousness,  
Than vast revenues without justice.

This doesn't mean things or money are bad. But that it's better to be poor & righteous than rich & wicked. Righteousness has far more value than money. It's about investing in the right currency.

**Proverbs 16:9**

A man's heart plans his way,  
But the LORD directs his steps.

This is very similar to verse one, but what we learn in addition is that it's not just our words that God will direct - but our steps. That is the decisions we make and things we do. And I guarantee God will guide you if you walk with Him, and take everything to Him in prayer.

**Proverbs 16:10**

Divination is on the lips of the king;  
His mouth must not transgress in judgment.

Here, Solomon begins 5 verses that speak of kings, which are appropriate for us to apply to earthly leadership. Here, Solomon is making the point of how the words kings say carry weight, as oracles or divine sayings put forth - that is; there is responsibility to say the right thing. That those in earthly leadership should speak justly. Our example being our Heavenly King...

**Proverbs 16:11**

Honest weights and scales are the LORD's;  
All the weights in the bag are His work.

That is, God is always fair, honest and just. So should earthly leadership be. We read...

**Proverbs 16:12**

It is an abomination for kings to commit wickedness,  
For a throne is established by righteousness.

The throne of David is such an example of a throne being established by righteousness.

And where leadership is righteous, they will celebrate truthfulness, and not tolerate wickedness in those that they lead...

**Proverbs 16:13**

Righteous lips are the delight of kings,  
And they love him who speaks what is right.

But upset a righteous king, and you'll see that...

**Proverbs 16:14**

As messengers of death is the king's wrath,  
But a wise man will appease it.

A wise man will have not committed wickedness in the first place, but the wise man who has fallen short will have the humility to admit their error.

**Proverbs 16:15**

In the light of the king's face is life,  
And his favour is like a cloud of the latter rain.

Standing before the face of a king would only happen if you were welcome. And that is true on an eternal scale - for only those who please our Heavenly King will stand before His face and have life. And that pleasing, that standing is only possible because of what Jesus has done for us.

Next, Solomon speaks from experience...

**Proverbs 16:16**

How much better to get wisdom than gold!  
And to get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver.

Solomon knew riches beyond anything we'll ever have - yet he still concluded that wisdom was the much better thing to have. But as Finnis Dake notes, "Few people believe this, judging by their relative search for wisdom and gold."

In verse 17 he says...

**Proverbs 16:17**

The highway of the upright is to depart from evil;  
He who keeps his way preserves his soul.

In other words, set out the right way and stay on track - turning neither to right nor left. For after all, we're on the narrow way.

**Proverbs 16:18**

Pride goes before destruction,  
And a haughty spirit before a fall.

The problem of pride is that I is at the centre. That's a point, not a grammatical error! When everything is about us, we've lost sight of what it is all about. And Solomon warns how this puffed up attitude can only lead to humiliation - just like we saw in our reading from Daniel chapter 4 earlier, where King Nebuchadnezzar was humiliated. Rather, we read...

**Proverbs 16:19**

Better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly,  
Than to divide the spoil with the proud.

Our options are voluntary humility, or actual humiliation when we realise it's not all about us.

So then...

**Proverbs 16:20**

He who heeds the word wisely will find good,  
And whoever trusts in the LORD, happy is he.

When we trust in God, and read & apply His Word, we're building a strong foundation for our lives.

**Proverbs 16:21**

The wise in heart will be called prudent,  
And sweetness of the lips increases learning

Once again, we see that it is the heart, not head that is important. This isn't about mere knowledge.

But also, sweetness, not loudness of lips increases learning. We should look for *what* is being said, rather than how loudly.

**Proverbs 16:22**

Understanding is a wellspring of life to him who has it.  
But the correction of fools is folly.

If you're wise you'll keep learning.

If you're a fool, you'll never learn.

**Proverbs 16:23**

The heart of the wise teaches his mouth,  
And adds learning to his lips.

Once again, the heart is so very important. We read in Proverbs 4:23 to "Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life." Here, we're instructed to teach out of a good heart our mouths and our lips, because...

**Proverbs 16:24**

Pleasant words are like a honeycomb,  
Sweetness to the soul and health to the bones.

So then - are your words pleasant? Are they? We *think* we know best, however we're reminded...

**Proverbs 16:25**

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

**Proverbs 16:26**

The person who labours, labours for himself,  
For his hungry mouth drives him on.

That is, it's our need that often motivates us - but also our selfish desires...

**Proverbs 16:27**

An ungodly man digs up evil,  
And it is on his lips like a burning fire.

Journalists take note! But as Christians, of course, slander should have no place in our lives. For it can do so much damage. Not only to others but to us too. You can't throw mud and keep your hands clean. Solomon continues...

**Proverbs 16:28**

A perverse man sows strife,  
And a whisperer separates the best of friends.

This is the damage your tongue can do. And we have a responsibility to not initiate it, listen to it, nor perpetuate it. Gossip has no place in the life of a Christian.

**Proverbs 16:29-30**

A violent man entices his neighbour,  
And leads him in a way that is not good.  
He winks his eye to devise perverse things;  
He purses his lips and brings about evil.

Here, we read that the violent man has planning and intent. Now, maybe you are not a violent man, but are you easily led? We are responsible for **our** actions.

**Proverbs 16:31**

The silver-haired head is a crown of glory,  
If it is found in the way of righteousness.

Great! - but hang on, there's a condition!

It's a great thing to be older, wiser, and Godly. But grey hair alone isn't the good thing - for age doesn't guarantee wisdom. It's about your life. It's such a joy to see old men and women who love the Lord who are people of prayer, who know their Bibles, who disciple others, who lead the younger, who are solid in the faith.

But in contrast it's very sad to see that to those who are immature in the faith, despite their years of knowing the Lord. Let that not be any of us!

**Proverbs 16:32**

He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty,  
And he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.

The world says, "Oh, it's the way I am - I just have a short fuse. I wear my heart on my sleeve, I say what I think". The Bible says NO - you need to grow up in Him.

**Proverbs 16:33**

The lot is cast into the lap,  
But its every decision is from the LORD.

There are many things we have no control over, but we do have control over our decisions. Oh how we should pray about our decisions, that God would lead us in all things.

## Chapter seventeen

As we move through chapter 17, Solomon will continue to talk about our hearts and our words, but first continues this vein of decisions. And there are few if any bigger earthly decisions than whether we marry, and whom we marry. And he warns...

**Proverbs 17:1**

Better is a dry morsel with quietness,  
Than a house full of feasting with strife.

We'll read later in chapter 21 that it is "Better to dwell in a corner of a housetop, Than in a house shared with a contentious woman." and that it is "Better to dwell in the wilderness, Than with a contentious and angry woman."

Here, he is making a similar point. That it's better, as Jon Courson puts it, to have a dry biscuit in a quiet house than to have steaks with strife.

If you're unmarried, choose wisely. Choose someone who knows the Lord and holds the Bible in the highest regard - that they have it as the foundation for their life. For that will be the key reference point for both of you.

If you are married, you need to do YOUR part in seeking a peaceful home environment built on His Word. Don't chase the big house, big car, big reputation over being godly.



**Proverbs 17:2**

A wise servant will rule over a son who causes shame,  
And will share an inheritance among the brothers.

Wisdom is not for the elite (which should be obvious when you see how many act!). Pursue wisdom, and God will bless you with it.

**Proverbs 17:3**

The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold,  
But the LORD tests the hearts.

Oh, how big this verse is!

Simply put, God uses trials to teach us. To refine us.

To purify these metals, it is necessary to heat them up, let them melt, and let all that will burn do so. Then, any remaining impurities can be lifted off until the smelter, the one doing this, can see their reflection in these precious metals.

That's just what God wants to do with us. To remove the impurities in our lives until He can see His reflection in us. But it seems that it's seldom possible to do this at a low temperature - we must go through that refiners fire.

CS Lewis comments:

God allows us to experience the low points of life in order to teach us lessons that we could learn in no other way.

**CS Lewis**

While most importantly we read in 1 Peter...

**1 Peter 1:6-9**

In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.

It's because of this end goal, and not the process, that James could write:

**James 1:2-4**

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

Whom the Lord loves He corrects. Why do we assume that will be a nice experience? We should remember that God came to save us from hell, not from poor health, not from poverty. Nor from trials. But he'll use all things for His purposes, including refining us to that which we can be in Him.

**Proverbs 17:4**

An evildoer gives heed to false lips;  
A liar listens eagerly to a spiteful tongue.

Once again, Solomon speaks of slander and gossip - but here the emphasis is very much on the listener. So what will you do when you hear either? You should walk away from it, and not repeat it - but you need to consider that you may also need to call someone out on it.

**Proverbs 17:5**

He who mocks the poor reproaches his Maker;  
He who is glad at calamity will not go unpunished.

It should please and worry us that everyone (including us) will give account of our thoughts and actions. Others misery is never a laughing matter. Therefore, these are not topics we joke about.

**Proverbs 17:6**

Children's children are the crown of old men,  
And the glory of children is their father.

It's been said grandchildren are the reward for not killing your own. But rather, good grandchildren are often raised by those who were raised well. You reap what you sow.

As for the second half of this verse, we should again note the importance of fathers taking their responsibility seriously. They should be present, involved, good and godly. The stats that follow situations where that is missing are horrifying.

**Proverbs 17:7**

Excellent speech is not becoming to a fool,  
Much less lying lips to a prince.

Your words will be understood in the context of your character, so as mentioned before, don't let poor actions speak so loudly that no-one can hear the good words you're saying.

**Proverbs 17:8**

A present is a precious stone in the eyes of its possessor;  
Wherever he turns, he prospers.

The unexpected gesture can lift the spirits. We should be examples of doing that.

**Proverbs 17:9**

He who covers a transgression seeks love,  
But he who repeats a matter separates friends.

Now, this isn't about burying sin under the carpet, but not making matters worse. Others may make mistakes, and certainly need correcting. But don't be someone who always brings up past mistakes to use as fresh ammunition.

**Proverbs 17:10**

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

This creates quite the picture, with the point being that the fool just won't listen. So will you? Will you listen to rebuke, to correction, to instruction? If not, then you're ignoring much of what Solomon has been saying in Proverbs so far.

Rather, we should take note of David's example in responding to Nathan's correction. Rather than ignore what was said, or lash out at Nathan for being brave and godly enough to deliver it, David admitted that he had sinned against the Lord.

**Proverbs 17:11**

An evil man seeks only rebellion;  
Therefore a cruel messenger will be sent against him.

There are some people who only complain - I've seen it at work (often) but in churches too, where the only comments some folks make are ones of complaint - never of encouragement. And sometimes that can happen to such a degree it has to be dealt with. In the case of the church, that would absolutely take place where someone is causing division in a church family - to the extent that for the health of a church, an individual could and should be asked to leave.

**Proverbs 17:12**

Let a man meet a bear robbed of her cubs,  
Rather than a fool in his folly.

Another great picture that shows how much of a problem a fool is.

**Proverbs 17:13**

Whoever rewards evil for good,  
Evil will not depart from his house.

There are Biblical and historical examples of this. But again it comes down to reaping what you sow.

**Proverbs 17:14**

The beginning of strife is like releasing water;  
Therefore stop contention before a quarrel starts.

Here I believe Solomon is using an everyday situation to help us. That is, once you've committed to your bathroom visit, it's hard to hold back... In the same way, when you start an argument it is indeed very difficult to stop. So don't start one!

Again, the best and easiest time to stop an argument is before it begins.

**Proverbs 17:15**

He who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the just,  
Both of them alike are an abomination to the LORD.

Therefore, we should be careful about what we approve/disapprove.

**Proverbs 17:16**

Why is there in the hand of a fool the purchase price of wisdom,  
Since he has no heart for it?

In other words, what a waste! Yet we have our Bibles. And despite our best attempts to justify otherwise, we do have time to read them. But do you have the heart for it?

Don't waste opportunities you have to read God's Word.

**Proverbs 17:17**

A friend loves at all times,  
And a brother is born for adversity.

How good a friend are you? How good a Christian brother/sister are you? We should be there for each other, in the bad times at least as much as the good times.

**Proverbs 17:18**

A man devoid of understanding shakes hands in a pledge,  
And becomes surety for his friend.

In this case, the man with no understand lacks prudence. He is not thinking through the end result of his actions.

**Proverbs 17:19**

He who loves transgression loves strife,  
And he who exalts his gate seeks destruction.

That is, if you love sin, difficulties will come with it. God is VERY gracious to forgive, but consequences remain... often evident in a trail of health, wealth, and relationship problems.

**Proverbs 17:20**

He who has a deceitful heart finds no good,  
And he who has a perverse tongue falls into evil.

Your heart, and your thoughts, will determine your words and actions. So do all you can to guard, lead and put God's Word in your heart.

**Proverbs 17:21**

He who begets a scoffer does so to his sorrow,  
And the father of a fool has no joy.

There are three things to note: Train your children. Honour your parents. And please your Heavenly Father.

**Proverbs 17:22**

A merry heart does good, like medicine,  
But a broken spirit dries the bones.

Happiness has a massive impact on our lives - but we tend to think happiness is a result of what happens to us - but so often it's a result of choices we make.

**Proverbs 17:23**

A wicked man accepts a bribe behind the back  
To pervert the ways of justice.

If only the world followed this advice - truly if you learn AND apply what you read here in God's Word, it will set you up for life. Each year for my job, I have to complete an ethics certification - and though it's a good thing, it is basically saying we should act how the Bible says we should act. Yet, it's trying to wrestle with our actions, without dealing with the heart.

**Proverbs 17:24**

Wisdom is in the sight of him who has understanding,  
But the eyes of a fool are on the ends of the earth.

This is the difference between the wise man knowing what to do vs the fool staring into space.

**Proverbs 17:25**

A foolish son is a grief to his father,  
And bitterness to her who bore him.

How many times does Solomon repeat this? As I said last week; we need good parents and good children - neither of which happen by mistake.

**Proverbs 17:26**

Also, to punish the righteous is not good,  
Nor to strike princes for their uprightness.

Sometimes we do need to speak to those who cause offence.

But have you noticed that sometimes the whole team or class gets punished, or spoken to harshly when the person who needs to listen is physically present, but (often) absent minded?

I think that if we ever need to correct someone, we shouldn't try to do it subtly by correcting everyone! That's not a good look, or good feeling for those on the receiving end.

**Proverbs 17:27**

He who has knowledge spares his words,  
And a man of understanding is of a calm spirit.

Note that the Bible is stating this, not suggesting it. This is how it is.

And Solomon continues this thought into our final verse this evening...

### **Proverbs 17:28**

Even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace;  
When he shuts his lips, he is considered perceptive.

A phrase I learnt growing up was that it's "Better to be silent and appear stupid, than to open your mouth and remove all doubt."

Words are not toys. They are to be used wisely. Carefully. Lovingly. All for our health and His glory.

## **Summary**

There is no shortage of benefits that come with wisdom. And so I encourage you to read over these chapters again.

But in closing, I'd like to share something additional regarding trials that I have found helpful and challenging over the years - some of you will recognise this:

The hammer, the file and the furnace

It was the enraptured Rutherford who could shout in the midst of serious and painful trials, "Praise God for the hammer, the file and the furnace."

The hammer is a useful tool, but the nail, if it had feeling and intelligence, could present another side of the story. For the nail knows the hammer only as an opponent, a brutal, merciless enemy who lives to pound it into submission, to beat it down out of sight and clinch it into place. That is the nail's view of the hammer, and it is accurate except for one thing: The nail forgets that both it and the hammer are servants of the same workman. Let the nail but remember that the hammer is held by the workman and all resentment toward it will disappear. The carpenter decides whose head will be beaten next and what hammer shall be used in the beating. That is his sovereign right. When the nail has surrendered to the will of the workman and has gotten a little glimpse of his benign plans for its future it will yield to the hammer without complaint.

The file is more painful still, for its business is to bite into the soft metal, scraping and eating away the edges till it has shaped the metal to its will. Yet the file has, in truth, no real will in the matter, but serves another master as the metal also does. It is the master and not the file that decides how much shall be eaten away, what shape the metal shall take, and how long the painful filing shall continue. Let the metal accept the will of the master and it will not try to dictate when or how it shall be filed.

As for the furnace, it is the worst of all. Ruthless and savage, it leaps at every combustible thing that enters it and never relaxes its fury till it has reduced it all to shapeless ashes. All that refuses to burn is melted to a mass of helpless matter, without will or purpose of its own. When everything is melted that will melt and all is burned that will burn, then and not till then the furnace calms down and rests from its destructive fury.

With all this known to him, how could Rutherford find it in his heart to praise God for the hammer, the file and the furnace? The answer is simply that he loved the Master of the hammer, he adored the Workman who wielded the file, he worshiped the Lord who heated the furnace for the everlasting blessing of His children. He had felt the hammer till its rough beatings no longer hurt; he had endured the file till he had come actually to enjoy its bitings; he had walked with God in the furnace so long that it had become as his natural habitat.

Such doctrine as this does not find much sympathy among Christians in these soft and carnal days. We tend to think of Christianity as a painless system by which we can escape the penalty of past sins and attain to heaven at last. The flaming desire to be rid of every unholy thing and to put on the likeness of Christ at any cost is not often found among us. We expect to enter the everlasting kingdom of our Father and to sit down around the table with sages, saints and martyrs; and through the grace of God, maybe we shall; yes, maybe we shall. But for the most of us it could prove at first an embarrassing experience. Ours might be the silence of the untried soldier in the presence of the battle-hardened heroes who have fought the fight and won the victory and who have scars to prove that they were present when the battle was joined.

(Tozer, *The Root of the Righteous*, Chapter 39, Christian Publications, 1986).

## Application questions

This week, there are three application questions I would like to leave with you:

- What is God teaching you through your trials?
- Do the quality and quantity of your words honour God?
- Is your heart right with God?

**Let's pray.**