



## Proverbs chapter 22:1-23:35

Taught at our Sunday evening service, 14th November 2021 @ Deal Christian Fellowship

**Reading:** 1 Timothy 6:6-10

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

### Introduction

As you know, we're studying our way through the book of Proverbs, and as we continue through this enormously practical book, we see topics and themes repeat themselves, for our benefit, for our learning, for application in our lives.

### Themes in chapter twenty two

Tonight in chapter 22 we'll see the following themes...

- Children & parenting (v6, 15)
- Money & riches (v1, 7, 9, 16, 22-23)
- Effort (v13, 29)

## Themes in chapter twenty three

Some of which continue into chapter 23...

- Children & parenting (v13-16, 22, 24-25)
- Money & riches (v4-5)
- Alcoholic drinks (v19-21, 29-35)

So let's get stuck in...

## Chapter twenty two

As we begin this chapter this evening, we start with an important reminder that the way we act, the things we do, and the things we don't do, are choices. And the choices we make will impact not only our lives, and our relationship with God, but others lives, and our relationship with them.

And we read in verse 1...

### **Proverbs 22:1**

A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches,  
Loving favour rather than silver and gold.

So, a good name is to be chosen. That is active, intentional choice. But just like you can't choose to have riches, you can't choose to have a great name. You have to work for either. The point Solomon makes, however, is that one is far better than the other.

And he was someone who knew what he was talking about - for he had both. But what do we value? I suspect we each often think of what we'd do with great riches. But do we ever think of all we could do with a great name? Do we ever consider what might happen if we had a reputation as godly, righteous, bold, courageous, loving Christians?

We read...

### **Proverbs 22:2**

The rich and the poor have this in common,  
The LORD is the maker of them all.

You see, it is not our finances that God is interested in.

It has been said that the greatest test of character is how a man handles either wealth or poverty. Both are difficult in their own ways. Again, it is character that is important - it's that which we'll need to give account of to God, not our bank accounts.

And we read in verse 3...

**Proverbs 22:3**

A prudent man foresees evil and hides himself,  
But the simple pass on and are punished.

That is, he foresees because of prudence. Because he has taken the time to think through the consequences of his actions, he has not only made choices to do certain things, but to keep himself from certain things too.

Financially, we know there is wisdom to prepare for the future - whether it is putting some money aside to pay the bills at the end of the month, or for a rainy day, to save for a house, or to invest in a pension - but are you investing anything for your future spiritually?

"Oh, I don't think it's unfair the simple are punished". Well, friends, we *read* back in chapter 1 that Proverbs was written...

**Proverbs 1:4**

To give prudence to the simple,  
To the young man knowledge and discretion—

It's very purpose was to help! The problem is us - we need to listen. And we need to apply. In the very next verse we *read*...

**Proverbs 1:5**

A wise man will hear and increase learning,  
And a man of understanding will attain wise counsel,

Will you hear? Will you listen to wise counsel? Will you be prudent and keep yourself from things that would do you harm spiritually, or invest in things that would draw you close to God?

You'd be a fool not to.

**Proverbs 22:4**

By humility and the fear of the LORD  
Are riches and honour and life.

Will you choose to humble yourself before your maker, to follow His way? Or will you say with pride "I did it my way!"?

When you choose to be humble, and know who God is, and what He requires of you, AND do it, you will attain riches that money can't buy. And you will set the course to hear the words "Well done, good and faithful servant".

Solomon warns...

**Proverbs 22:5**

Thorns and snares are in the way of the perverse;  
He who guards his soul will be far from them.

Remember the snares we saw laid by the immoral woman in chapter 7? That's the kind of trap that you'll walk right into if you don't choose to guard your soul.

Am I saying your heart is perverse? Well, yes. Or actually, that's what God tells us in His Word...

**Jeremiah 17:9-10**

"The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings.

So guard your soul! Nothing is more precious. Be careful what you watch, read and listen to.

And if guarding our souls is important in our lives, so it is in our children's lives too. We read...

**Proverbs 22:6**

Train up a child in the way he should go,  
And when he is old he will not depart from it.

This is a big verse - one that is often wrestled with by Christian parents. What we don't like about it is the implication that if our children don't go the way they should, then we couldn't have trained them right. And of course, this raises the question of why children of Christian parents don't always come to know the Lord as their own Saviour.

And rightly so, we note that that there is personal responsibility. However, personal responsibility of the child does not absolve the parent of their responsibility. We balk at the idea that our children turned out the way they did because of us, yet when they do well and do right, how proud we are!!

I don't know that this is saying if you train your child well, they'll become a Christian. But it *is* saying that if you teach them to live right, they will. In how they treat others. In how they conduct themselves. In how they live.

Such is the effect of good parents, that it is a qualification Paul lists to Timothy for elders in the church. He says...

**1 Timothy 3:4-5**

...one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?);...

And this is repeated in verse 12 as a qualification for deacons - effectively what we call trustees.

So, how can you train your child in the way he should go? By going that way yourself! Think of yourself as your child's personal trainer in the ways of God, for you wouldn't think much of a personal fitness trainer who showed up grossly overweight, kebab in hand, having only learnt the *theory* of how gym equipment worked!

In the same way, your faith cannot be theory only. If your children see you skip church for sports, for parties, because friends are visiting, or because you had a late night - they'll imitate that. If they never see you read your Bible, or never hear you pray, they'll follow your example. If your children never see you serve God, why would they? If your children perceive that being a Christian means church on a Sunday with zero impact on the rest of your life - you can expect that in them.

This verse is an amazing promise. And we're too quick to think of our excuses, rather than the application. Are there difficult situations where truly Godly parents have ungodly or unruly children? - yes, but in those cases I believe you can trace that back to the effect of a fallen world.

Just be sure that you're doing all you can by living how *you* should.

#### **Proverbs 22:7**

The rich rules over the poor,  
And the borrower is servant to the lender.

For most of us, it will never be possible to buy a house without taking on a mortgage. And unlikely to buy a car, at least a relatively new one, without any kind of loan. And I don't think you're acting unbiblically in doing that, *per se*.

However, we'd do well to pay attention to this verse - for we so easily take on *unnecessary* debt. Do we need the most expensive car? Do we need house with 8 bedrooms? Do we really need that shiny new thing? Being hemmed in by debt is not fun. And Solomon is pointing that out here.

#### **Proverbs 22:8**

He who sows iniquity will reap sorrow,  
And the rod of his anger will fail.

Many problems and frustrations in our lives could have been avoided, and could yet be avoided if we sowed correctly. That is not sowing the the flesh in sin, but to the spirit.

The apostle Paul wrote to the Galatians...

#### **Galatians 6:7-8**

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

...

#### **Proverbs 22:9**

He who has a generous eye will be blessed,  
For he gives of his bread to the poor.

Where does contentment come from? Well, not from being selfish - for then you never have enough. Later Solomon notes the opposite of this verse...

**Proverbs 28:22**

A man with an evil eye hastens after riches,  
And does not consider that poverty will come upon him.

You reap what you sow. So focus less on what you can get, and more on what you can give. That's a challenge for all of us!

**Proverbs 22:10**

Cast out the scoffer, and contention will leave;  
Yes, strife and reproach will cease.

This is exactly what Jesus did in Mark 5, when, just prior to healing Jairus' daughter, He put outside all those who mocked Him for saying she was not dead, but sleeping.

And sometimes the only way to end strife is to cut out of your life those that cause it, who masquerade as friends, yet are not friendly.

**Proverbs 22:11**

He who loves purity of heart  
And has grace on his lips,  
The king will be his friend.

Simply put, purity AND grace are a winning combination. We are to speak the truth in love - especially in regard to the gospel. However, it's helpful in all areas of life - being someone who is both right and kind will gain you friends.

**Proverbs 22:12**

The eyes of the LORD preserve knowledge,  
But He overthrows the words of the faithless.

That is, God protects the one who has built up sound knowledge - but will bring to ruin the words of those who sin.

**Proverbs 22:13**

The lazy man says, "There is a lion outside!  
I shall be slain in the streets!"

You will be known for what you do. But also what you don't do.

And here, the lazy man makes an excuse. Citing what seems a plausible reason to him to stay at home, he does so. And people make excuses just like this today. I remember one winter we'd had a just few inches of snow overnight, and that morning both myself and my manager drove around 45 miles to the office, from almost opposite directions. My boss then received a phone call from a colleague who lived 1-2 miles from the office saying he wouldn't be in because of driving in the snow, and he didn't have the right kind of shoes to be able to walk in. After a quick discussion with my boss, he did rethink the situation and sure enough did turn up for work!

I look back on that and laugh, because it was the most pitiful excuse. Yet, I wonder, do we do the same when it comes to serving the Lord, or even getting to church meetings? I've heard some pretty wacky excuses why people don't come along to anything other than Sunday mornings. But in the end, it's the heart. If they wanted to be here, they would.

And maybe I'm going out on a limb, but the reason why some folks have never been to Sunday evening services, home groups, men's or ladies Bible studies, or Christian conferences, is simply because they are spiritually lazy. I don't say that to point a finger, but rather to encourage all of us to carefully assess what we don't do, and where we don't go, to be sure it's not because it's inconvenient to our laziness.

**Proverbs 22:14**

The mouth of an immoral woman is a deep pit;  
He who is abhorred by the LORD will fall there.

Once again, we should think back to chapter 7 that describes the immoral woman, for the reason that that anyone is abhorred by the Lord is because they hate wisdom, instruction, truth and righteousness. All things that lead them to fall.

**Proverbs 22:15**

Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child;  
The rod of correction will drive it far from him.

So again, Solomon returns to the importance of parenthood. Why is good parenting essential? Because sin and foolishness come naturally - you don't have to teach that! But you do need to teach righteousness - and with that correction, discipline and instruction. We previously read...

**Proverbs 13:24**

He who spares his rod hates his son,  
But he who loves him disciplines him promptly.

We'll come back to the topic of the rod later.

**Proverbs 22:16**

He who oppresses the poor to increase his riches,  
And he who gives to the rich, will surely come to poverty.

So we are neither to exploit those poorer than us, or to try and impress the rich by giving yet more to them, and in doing so fuelling the inequality enjoyed by them.

Now, as we move through the following 5 verses, we're given instruction on what to do with what we're learnt so far...

**Proverbs 22:17-21**

Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise,  
And apply your heart to my knowledge;  
For it is a pleasant thing if you keep them within you;  
Let them all be fixed upon your lips,  
So that your trust may be in the LORD;  
I have instructed you today, even you.  
Have I not written to you excellent things  
Of counsels and knowledge,  
That I may make you know the certainty of the words of truth,  
That you may answer words of truth  
To those who send to you?

So Solomon is saying that he has written all these things down that you might be wise, that you might trust God, that you'd know how to answer people, and that you'd in turn share this wisdom with others. And then he continues...

**Proverbs 22:22-23**

Do not rob the poor because he is poor,  
Nor oppress the afflicted at the gate;  
For the LORD will plead their cause,  
And plunder the soul of those who plunder them.

That is, God knows exactly how you treat others! So don't take advantage of anyone.

**Proverbs 22:24-25**

Make no friendship with an angry man,  
And with a furious man do not go,  
Lest you learn his ways  
And set a snare for your soul.

We are to choose our friends very carefully, for even little habits rub off quickly on us. I'm sure like me you've seen people affected for the better and the worse, based on who they hang out with - or who they date. But especially as an adult, you can't blame peer pressure for your failings, when it was you who chose your peers! So choose carefully.

**Proverbs 22:26-27**

Do not be one of those who shakes hands in a pledge,  
One of those who is surety for debts;  
If you have nothing with which to pay,  
Why should he take away your bed from under you?

That is, neither take on debt you cannot repay, nor be the guarantor for someone else who cannot pay. For even if you don't lose your bed, you may lose sleep over it. You may recall we looked at this at the start of Proverbs chapter 6.



### **Proverbs 22:28**

Do not remove the ancient landmark  
Which your fathers have set.

Practically, this was a warning to those who would try and change the boundaries of their property in order to gain that which wasn't theirs - for their own desires.

But today people are just as likely to try and change spiritual and moral boundaries for the same purpose - for their own desires - that their sin which they love, may become permissible and legally binding without respect to that which has been established long before they walked the earth.

That trend will continue, and sadly I believe the next battleground where some will seek to move boundaries will be to legalise polygamy.

### **Proverbs 22:29**

Do you see a man who excels in his work?  
He will stand before kings;  
He will not stand before unknown men.

This speaks not of the man who uses Microsoft Excel to do his job, but the one who does excellent work. The one who never accepts good enough as good enough. It's that man or woman that will stand before kings, or perhaps the CEO.

We use a phrase at work that is 'the standard you walk past is the standard you accept' - in other words, if you walk past something that is on fire and you don't put it out, or walk past the printer and see it's out of paper without refilling it, then that's what you're quite happy with. But rather, we want people who pursue excellence in all they do.

And Christian's should be the best at this type of attitude, for we read...

### **Colossians 3:17**

And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

May that attitude be found in all of us. That everything we do - whether at work, at home, or in ministry, is done well. AW Tozer once said "if it only be for 5 minutes, let it be done well". I far prefer that to the dangerous phrase, "that'll do".

## **Chapter twenty three**

So, into chapter 23 we go, and there Solomon starts with a warning...

**Proverbs 23:1-3**

When you sit down to eat with a ruler,  
Consider carefully what is before you;  
And put a knife to your throat  
If you are a man given to appetite.  
Do not desire his delicacies,  
For they are deceptive food.

We can easily be swayed by things we like - and food is probably high up on the list for many of us. Indeed, a company I worked for was once rumoured to have spent £1m with a specific vendor on the strength of them providing the best buffet during contract negotiations!

That might seem crazy, but it happens all the time - even as individuals we're lured to buy products and services through free gifts, vouchers and such - but we need to be so in control of our desires that we are not deceived into signing up for what we don't need.

One man who got this right, was Daniel and his 3 friends, who declined the kings delicacies for the sake of honouring the Lord. And God blessed them for it.

**Proverbs 23:4-5**

Do not overwork to be rich;  
Because of your own understanding, cease!  
Will you set your eyes on that which is not?  
For riches certainly make themselves wings;  
They fly away like an eagle toward heaven.

Riches are so temporary - all CAN go in a moment, and ultimately, all WILL! So, work, yes. Overwork, not at all! That's not to say that we shouldn't be diligent. But it is to say that the pursuit of riches will always have a disappointing end, even if you get them. Consider our reading this evening from 1 Timothy 6 earlier this evening. Yet also, I'd point you to Haggai chapter 1 for a reminder about our priorities, for God loves you to the point he may intentionally frustrate your efforts for material wealth in favour of your spiritual health.

**Proverbs 23:6-8**

Do not eat the bread of a miser,  
Nor desire his delicacies;  
For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.  
"Eat and drink!" he says to you,  
But his heart is not with you.  
The morsel you have eaten, you will vomit up,  
And waste your pleasant words.

That is, don't spend your time with those who only want what they can get out of you, while giving as little to you as possible.

**Proverbs 23:9**

Do not speak in the hearing of a fool,  
For he will despise the wisdom of your words.

Once again, you can never win with a fool - for while they need instruction, they refuse to listen to it. As sad as it is, some conversations are a waste of your time.

**Proverbs 23:10-11**

Do not remove the ancient landmark,  
Nor enter the fields of the fatherless;  
For their Redeemer is mighty;  
He will plead their cause against you.

As with chapter 22:28, Solomon is warning to not take advantage of others - whether through land-grabbing, or exploiting those in need. God is watching your every move.

**Proverbs 23:12**

Apply your heart to instruction,  
And your ears to words of knowledge.

So as we started with this evening, we're back to your choice. You don't *have* to apply your heart, you don't *have* to listen to good counsel, but you are a fool if you don't.

**Proverbs 23:13-14**

Do not withhold correction from a child,  
For if you beat him with a rod, he will not die.  
You shall beat him with a rod,  
And deliver his soul from hell.

Well, this isn't very PC, is it! The crazy thing though, is that we over-react to the mention of a rod, and under-react to the mention of an eternity in hell - the very thing we're trying to keep them from!

So let's be clear, the Bible gives no justification to beat a child out of a foul temper, or to relieve your own stress - but it does stress correction is actually necessary for *their* sake, and you're not fulfilling your responsibility to them as a parent if you withhold it.

So what do we make of this verse, and specifically of physical discipline? Well, as parents we must operate within the boundaries of what the Bible says - we read in Ephesians...

**Ephesians 6:4**

And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

That is you should be training and explaining. Where appropriate, a gentle tap on the backside should not be used for punishment, but correction, for discipline. In other words, if you can't explain it, you have no place doing it.

**Proverbs 23:15-16**

My son, if your heart is wise,  
My heart will rejoice—indeed, I myself;  
Yes, my inmost being will rejoice  
When your lips speak right things.

This is what happens when the joyful parent sees the fruit of their labour - patiently, regularly, persistently teaching their child wisdom. Correcting, rebuking, and instructing them. Solomon has said "my son" 16 times already in Proverbs, and he continues his instruction...

**Proverbs 23:17-18**

Do not let your heart envy sinners,  
But be zealous for the fear of the LORD all the day;  
For surely there is a hereafter,  
And your hope will not be cut off.

Wow, if we'd only get this!

Your friends may seem like they're having a great time getting drunk, sleeping around, gambling, climbing the corporate ladder at any cost - but even IF that works out well on earth (and it unlikely will), they will have an insurmountable problem in Heaven.

But for the Christian, their hopes will come true. And their only regret will be how much, not how little they sinned.

**Proverbs 23:19-21**

Hear, my son, and be wise;  
And guide your heart in the way.  
Do not mix with winebibbers,  
Or with gluttonous eaters of meat;  
For the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty,  
And drowsiness will clothe a man with rags.

Now Solomon begins his warmup for the end of the chapter, and warns us to guide our hearts. That's in complete opposition to the world's mantra of "follow your heart". The truth is our hearts, as we've already read this evening, are desperately wicked - so don't be a fool and follow it!

And don't mix with those that show no self-control, even though they think you're odd for not joining in, as we read in the first 5 verses of 1 Peter chapter 4.

**Proverbs 23:22**

Listen to your father who begot you,  
And do not despise your mother when she is old.

Good parents are a tremendous help - we're wise to listen to them. As a teenager we think we know better, as a young adult we think our opinions are well formed. As we mature, we realise our parents knew a lot more than we gave them credit for!

**Proverbs 23:23**

Buy the truth, and do not sell it,  
Also wisdom and instruction and understanding.

Finnis Dake comments, saying: "This means to acquire the truth by all rightful means, and then hold on to it, guard it, and defend it even to the risk of your life." Do we love the truth that much?!

**Proverbs 23:24-25**

The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice,  
And he who begets a wise child will delight in him.  
Let your father and your mother be glad,  
And let her who bore you rejoice.

As we've already this evening, we should be a joy to our parents! But how much more should we aim to delight our Heavenly Father?

**Proverbs 23:26-28**

My son, give me your heart,  
And let your eyes observe my ways.  
For a harlot is a deep pit,  
And a seductress is a narrow well.  
She also lies in wait as for a victim,  
And increases the unfaithful among men.

So, a child should turn their heart and eyes in the right direction. But for that to bear fruit, the parents must demonstrate, not merely explain, what purity looks like. Often, we talk of purity as something that is required *before* marriage - and while that is true, it is required *in* marriage too. So show them how it is done! Show them how you pursue purity even in your marriage. Show them how you are faithful with your eyes and heart, as well as your actions. And if you have failed at some point, be honest enough to show the scars of your sin and plead with them to pursue what you're pursuing now - purity.

### Proverbs 23:29-35

Who has woe?  
Who has sorrow?  
Who has contentions?  
Who has complaints?  
Who has wounds without cause?  
Who has redness of eyes?  
Those who linger long at the wine,  
Those who go in search of mixed wine.  
Do not look on the wine when it is red,  
When it sparkles in the cup,  
When it swirls around smoothly;  
At the last it bites like a serpent,  
And stings like a viper.  
Your eyes will see strange things,  
And your heart will utter perverse things.  
Yes, you will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea,  
Or like one who lies at the top of the mast, saying:  
"They have struck me, but I was not hurt;  
They have beaten me, but I did not feel it.  
When shall I awake, that I may seek another drink?"

If there is a better description of the effect of drinking alcohol, I've not read it. But sadly, getting drunk almost seems like a badge of honour for many today, and society turns a blind eye to it as if it doesn't really do anyone any harm.

Yet in my sheltered life (and I'm thankful that it's been sheltered!) I've seen a colleague fired for being drunk at work, a car overturned outside our house from drink driving, and Sian's car written off as a result of likely drink driving. I have an ex-colleague who killed two people by driving the wrong way down a motorway while drunk, and I've seen others drive home from work functions so drunk that I was worried I wouldn't see them the following day. I've had to stop a friend from head-butting glass windows because they were drunk and thought it was funny, I've cleaned up after another threw up then passed out after drinking, and I've pulled a married friend away from kissing a woman that wasn't his wife. And that's a sheltered life! I know you've seen horrors too.

Friends, our culture is in a mess. And we do not help anyone when we join in with the wine o'clock or beer o'clock jokes. It's not a laughing matter to joke about needing a glass of red to get through the day. And we are utterly wrong if we join in with the world's behaviour and get drunk ourselves.

The Bible doesn't prohibit drinking alcohol, but it warns of the dangers, implores you to consider your example before others, and expects you to not treat Jesus sacrifice for you with contempt.

## Summary

In closing, let us consider our example before others, including our children, and how we live before God. Charles Spurgeon said...

I cannot trifle with the evil that killed my best Friend. I must be holy for his sake. How can I live in sin when He has died to save me from it?

**Charles Spurgeon**

### Application questions

The application questions I think it would be good to ponder this week are:

- Are you diligent and excellent in your work?
- Are you training your child in the way they should go?
- If your children imitated your example, what would their walk with the Lord be like?
- Does your use of alcohol fit within Biblical guidelines?

**Let's pray.**