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## Consequences of Righteousness and Wickedness 15: 20-33

**A proverb is a short and memorable saying designed to be our blueprint for living in the world that ADONAI has created. It is important to note that proverbs are not promises; they are generally true principles, all other things being equal.**

**A wise son is a joy to his father, but a foolish man despises his mother (15:20 NIV); a wise son brings joy to his father (10:1a).** Not only is the first colon virtually identical to **10:1a**, the thought of **the two proverbs** is also very close. Thus, the commentary at that verse should be seen. The difference between the second colon has to do with the fact that it comments on **the son's** sorry attitude toward **his mother**, as demonstrated by **his foolishness**. In **10:1b** the emphasis is on the grief that such **a son** brings to **his mother**.<sup>306</sup>

Family can be a great blessing. In spite of all our technology and advancement, we still are fundamentally family creatures. We came from the womb of a nurturing mother. In the best of all possible worlds, we were raised by a mother and/or a father who desired to place in us some level of **wisdom** and success. We seek a man or a woman with whom to spend a lifetime of companionship. These desires and realities affect us at the core of our being. No career can take the place of our basic human needs.

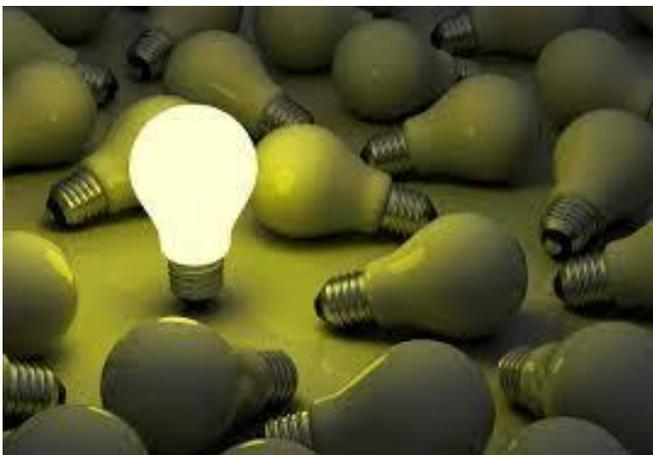
As with many **wisdom** principles, we are confronted here with a choice between an easy way and a hard way. The easy and peaceful path is that of love and family joy. This is easy in the sense that it makes our lives easier, not easy in the sense that family love and joy are easy to come by. The hard path is that of the loner. Ignoring spouse, parents, siblings, and grandparents, the loner tries to make their way as an island in the world. Perhaps the loner seeks to replace family with friends. Because family is a part of the fabric of the created order, the loner will experience emptiness, like a ship sailing into the wind. To this person, **Lady Wisdom (to see link click Am - Lady Wisdom's Rebuke of the Foolish)** says: **Like a bird that strays from a nest is a man who strays from his home (27:8)**. In between

these two, lies the average person, who has some family love and joy, but also experiences disharmony and keeps a distance between himself and his family. To that average person, **Lady Wisdom** is calling out, “You have the silver but you could have the gold and precious gems.”<sup>307</sup>

**Foolishness brings pleasure to those with no sense.** The perverse, self-willed **fool** finds **pleasure** in going down **the crooked path of evil**. **But a man of understanding keeps on a straight path (15:21 Hebrew)**. On the other hand, contrary to **stupid people**, those with **wisdom** and **understanding** have a **straight path** ahead. **A lazy person’s way is blocked with a hedge of thorns, but the path of the upright is a level highway (15:19)**.

**Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with a multitude of advisers they succeed (15:22 NIV)**. Yet no matter how **many advisers** there are, **they** must be truly **wise** in order to prove this to be true. All we have to do is read **First Kings 12**, where two groups are advising **King Rehoboam** of Judah immediately after **his** ascension to the throne (see the commentary on **the Life of Solomon Dc - A House Divided**). Again, this **proverb** is only true in a general sense.<sup>308</sup> It is important to note that **proverbs** are not promises; they are generally true principles, all other things being equal.

**Everyone enjoys a fitting reply; it is wonderful to say the right thing at the right time (15:23 NLT)**. Words of encouragement are always welcomed. By encouragement I mean sincere expressions of affirmation and gratitude given honestly to another person. – in public whenever appropriate, in private if that is **wiser**. Moreover, it is a joy to give a helpful answer to a problem, but it must be spoken in a timely manner.



**The path of life leads upward for the wise; they leave the grave** (see **Af - Sh'ol**) **behind (15:24 NLT)**. There are consequences for both **righteousness** and **wickedness**. The unstated opposite of **sh'ol** must be heaven, the very place of eternal life and beyond **the grave**. **ADONAI tears down the house of the proud, but He protects the property of widows (15:25 Hebrew)**. The **proud** are those who put **themselves** first, above **ADONAI** and other **people**. Therefore, **Ha'Shem** will see to **their** eventual downfall (**Psalm 73**). On the other hand, **the widow** is the epitome of social vulnerability in Ancient Near East culture. In a predominantly patriarchal society, **a widow** had no one to represent **her** in court, so **she** was often a victim of cruel **people**. If anyone could be certain of a dismal future, it was **the widow**. So, **ADONAI** declares that **He** will step in to **protect** and support **them**.

**Evil plans are an abomination to ADONAI, but gracious words are pure in His sight (15:26 Hebrew)**. For **abomination to ADONAI**, see the comments at **11:1**, where the phrase is explained as indicating something that offends **God's** sense of moral order. Thus, it is not surprising that here it is seen in contrasting parallelism with **pure**, a word indicating what is appropriate in **His** sight. The **proverb** thus provides a strong reproof of **evil** plans, which presumably refers to those who strategize concerning the downfall of others.

**Greed brings grief to the whole family**. In the first colon we learn that although one may be tempted to ignore morality in order to get ahead, or to support one's **family** (no matter how they might try to justify themselves), such shortcuts normally do not end well. The second colon gives us a contrasting positive example of how **the godly** will conduct themselves. **But those who hate bribes will live (15:27 NLT)**.

**The heart of the righteous thinks before speaking, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil words (15:28 NLT)**. The **proverb** points to the reflective nature of the wise, while fools are impulsive in all that they do, including taking advice. This **proverb** is a call to think before speaking and also serves as a warning against listening to **those** who are too quick to give **their** opinion. Other **proverbs** that advocate reflection before speaking include **19:2, 20:18** and **25, 21:5, and 29:20**.

**ADONAI is far from the wicked, but He hears the prayers of the righteous (15:29 CJB)**. This **proverb** is a rare, but not unique, statement about **prayer** (also see **15:8** and **28:9**). The question is this, "Who can approach **ADONAI** in prayer?"

The answer is, the righteous (**Psalms 1, 15 and 24**), but not **the wicked**. It's not that **YHVH** is unaware of **the prayers of the wicked**. **The proverb** does not mean that **God** only listens to **the prayers of the righteous** and does not even **hear the prayers of the wicked**. The verb hear in Hebrew often implies a response. In other words, **the LORD** does something in response to **the prayers of the righteous**. Conversely, **God** does not act on **the prayers of the wicked**.<sup>309</sup>

**A cheerful glance brings joy to the heart; good news gives health to the bones (15:30 Hebrew)**. Whatever is good – whatever is sound truth and **wisdom** – stirs **the heart** by relieving anxiety and producing a **cheerful** spirit.<sup>310</sup> Here **“heart,”** which in general refers to the core of one's personality. The second colon also begins with something external, good news, in this case a matter of hearing rather than seeing. The effects of this news are also felt internally. **Good news** makes **people** feel **good to their** very **bones**.

**If you listen to correction, you will be at home among the wise (15:31 NLT)**. Once again, acquiring **wisdom** requires a teachable spirit and listening to **correction** (see [Au - Do Not Despise ADONAI's Discipline](#)). Only **the wise** are willing to admit mistakes, change behavior, and improve **their** lives. In this way, **correction** enhances life. **Wise people** are much less likely to make the same mistake twice. **The proverb**, in effect, suggests that **wisdom** is defined by one's willingness to listen to **correction**.

**If you reject discipline, you only harm yourself**. This subject is similar to the previous proverb, but here the teaching is achieved by contrasting those who ignore discipline with those who pay attention to it. In other words, again the advice is to improve one's character. **Those** who **reject discipline** blacken **their** lives because **they** run the risk of getting into trouble over and over again since **they** don't allow **themselves** to be aware of **their** mistakes. On the other hand, **those** who do **listen to correction grow in understanding (15:32 NLT)**. In other words, **they** become **people** of substance; there is something to **their** internal makeup.

**The fear of ADONAI is the discipline leading to wisdom**. In the first colon, this **proverb** begins by combining two important concepts in the book: **The fear of ADONAI** (see [Ai - The Fear of ADONAI is the Beginning of Wisdom](#)) and **discipline leading to wisdom**. **Discipline** relates this **proverb** to the previous two and refers to recognizing the importance of identifying mistakes one has made and making the necessary **corrections**. **And humility comes before glory 15:33**



**Hebrew).** The second colon appropriately relates to the first by observing that **humility** is a crucial component of **correction**. If one does this, then one's ability to navigate life will improve and in this way, will lead to **glory**. **Humility** is often contrasted with pride specifically in the area of being open to **correction (3:5, 6:17, 11:2)**.<sup>311</sup>