

Commentary on Proverbs 29:16-27

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The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Sunday School Series*) for **Sunday, October 2, 2011**, is from **Proverbs 29:16-27**. Five **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the [Bible Lesson Commentary](#) below. **Study Hints for Thinking Further**, which are also available on the [Bible Lesson Forum](#), will aid teachers in conducting class discussion.

Proverbs 29:16-26

(Proverbs 29:16) When the wicked are in authority, transgression increases, but the righteous will look upon their downfall.

When the wicked lead or rule, whether in business, government, or religious organizations, sometimes those abused and oppressed can only suffer at the hands of the wicked and pray to God for deliverance and help; for with human help alone, the righteous are powerless to defeat the wicked. The Proverbs give the word of hope that the righteous will see the downfall of the wicked (if not in this life, then they will see the justice of God in the life to come). The righteous who suffer and die at the hands of the wicked will see the downfall of the wicked before God's judgment seat.

(Proverbs 29:17) Discipline your children, and they will give you rest; they will give delight to your heart.

Discipline includes teaching and giving sound reasons why someone should do what is right, especially when you discipline your own children. Discipline is not just physical and/or mental punishment, and discipline may not include punishment more than what a person's own conscience may give them when they learn they have done wrong. The Proverbs give many good reasons for doing right and are a part of how God disciplines His children. When appropriate and necessary, discipline may include punishment for disobedience and rebellion that is meant to correct misbehavior and prevent disobeying God's law in the future. The fear of physical or mental punishment can be a good reason to do right for some of those who do not love to do right to God and those they love. With some few exceptions that prove this as a general rule, children disciplined correctly according to the Bible will allow parents to rest from punishing or suffering from sorrow caused by wicked children.

(Proverbs 29:18) Where there is no prophecy, the people cast off restraint, but happy are those who keep the law.

Prophecy can include preaching and exhorting (encouraging people to obey God always, His law always, and the laws of human governments when appropriate). Prophecy can also include predictions (sometimes based on experience or the precept and penalty of the law): "If you do this, then that will be the

consequences”. Prophecy can predict good consequences and bad consequences from obedience and disobedience—these consequences can be learned from a study of the Proverbs and other parts of the Bible.

(Proverbs 29:19) By mere words servants are not disciplined, for though they understand, they will not give heed.

Servants are employees who work for a wage and not because they will inherit from their employers as a son or daughter would inherit from their parents; therefore, some servants may misbehave because they do not have the same interests in the wellbeing of those they work for as children should. The Proverbs teach that consequences for obedience and disobedience must be given to servants for them to do what is right (unless they naturally do what is right for the love of God and others). These consequences may include giving a bonus to those who do what is right or provide exceptional service; or, firing an employee who will not do right. Words and consequences for disregarding those words are both necessary for some employees to always do as they are told.

(Proverbs 29:20) Do you see someone who is hasty in speech? There is more hope for a fool than for anyone like that.

Sometimes we think so much about what we plan to say that we do not listen to the words of others; therefore, our comments are hasty, inappropriate, and wrong. To be hasty in speech is not to listen carefully to what is being said; therefore, it becomes impossible to learn or improve oneself based on the comments or criticisms of others. A fool may listen and learn; one who will not listen will not learn; therefore, there is more hope for a fool.

(Proverbs 29:21) A slave pampered from childhood will come to a bad end.

Slavery persists today in some parts of the world. Though permitted, slavery is wrong, and the New Testament sows the seeds for the abolition of slavery around the world. For this reason, some slave holders do not want the New Testament studied or Christianity to spread. Where slavery persists, slaves should never be mistreated, but should be treated as the master would like for others to treat him. To pamper anyone, to give them far more than they deserve and not discipline them when they misbehave, will never result in what is best for all concerned. Pampered children may not grow into responsible adults.

(Proverbs 29:22) One given to anger stirs up strife, and the hothead causes much transgression.

Anger can be dealt with through prayer when one becomes angry over an injustice, personal attack, or wrong doing; then, the anger can be expressed in the best way for all concerned. A hothead is one who quickly reacts in anger without

taking the time to pray for God's guidance and peace when his ideas or plans are crossed by others.

(Proverbs 29:23) A person's pride will bring humiliation, but one who is lowly in spirit will obtain honor.

A person's pride can motivate them to boast of what they have done or can do. It can lead them to brag and compare themselves with others more favorably to themselves than they ought to—they may not be as good as they think they are—such arrogant behavior or words can bring humiliation and disgrace. The humble person who goes about doing what is good and just will be honored or appreciated by those who live humbly and quietly before God.

(Proverbs 29:24) To be a partner of a thief is to hate one's own life; one hears the victim's curse, but discloses nothing.

To steal is to violate the law of God and the rights of others. To knowingly receive stolen goods is to act no better than a thief, and if caught you will be treated as a thief. To know about a theft and do either nothing or something without prayer and reliance on the guidance of God may lead you to taking an inappropriate or harmful action. If you learn from a victim that something harmful has been done and you know evidence about the crime or the solution without trying to prayerfully help the victim, it is an indication that you hate your own life, for you would not want others to treat you in this way if you were the victim.

(Proverbs 29:25) The fear of others lays a snare, but one who trusts in the LORD is secure.

We have a choice: we can live in fear of others and what they might do to us and allow those who use fear tactics to manipulate us or we can trust in the LORD and find our security in the LORD and His guidance and protection. Even if we lose our property or our lives for faithfully following and depending on the LORD, in this life we will be happier trusting God rather than living in fear.

(Proverbs 29:26) Many seek the favor of a ruler, but it is from the LORD that one gets justice.

Some depend on human beings and how they can obtain what they want by becoming a friend to those in high places in business or government or a religious organization. The Proverbs teach us to trust in the LORD and not in the favors of others, to pray and do right even when we are in the minority, and God will give us justice—what we deserve in this life or in our new life with God after death.

(Proverbs 29:27) The unjust are an abomination to the righteous, but the upright are an abomination to the wicked.

Those who behave unjustly and do evil make the righteous angry and they despise the wicked for the type of people they have become. The Proverbs teach that the wicked have similar feelings toward the righteous—whose right behavior condemns their actions and shows them to be wrong. The righteous make the lives of the wicked difficult, even as the wicked make the lives of the righteous difficult.

Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. In what ways can a morally good leader serve better than a morally bad leader?
2. Which would you rather have leading you, a morally good person who is not competent or a morally bad person who is competent? Give reasons for your answer.
3. What are some of the ways that obeying the law of God can lead to happiness?
4. In what ways can fear of events, fear of the future, fear of others, fear of uncertainty, instead of trust in the LORD, lead to poor decisions?
5. For what reasons might a righteous person be detested and hated by a wicked person?

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