



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

# BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

## PROVERBS

Week 3

## Watch Your Mouth

Proverbs 15

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

The philosopher Plato observed: “Man’s speech is like his life.” Based on brief conversations with you, what conclusions could someone make about your life? (a) “He’s a judgmental man,” (b) “She’s extremely naïve,” (c) “He’s a positive thinker,” (d) “What great faith she has,” (e) other .....

**DIGGING**  
into the Word

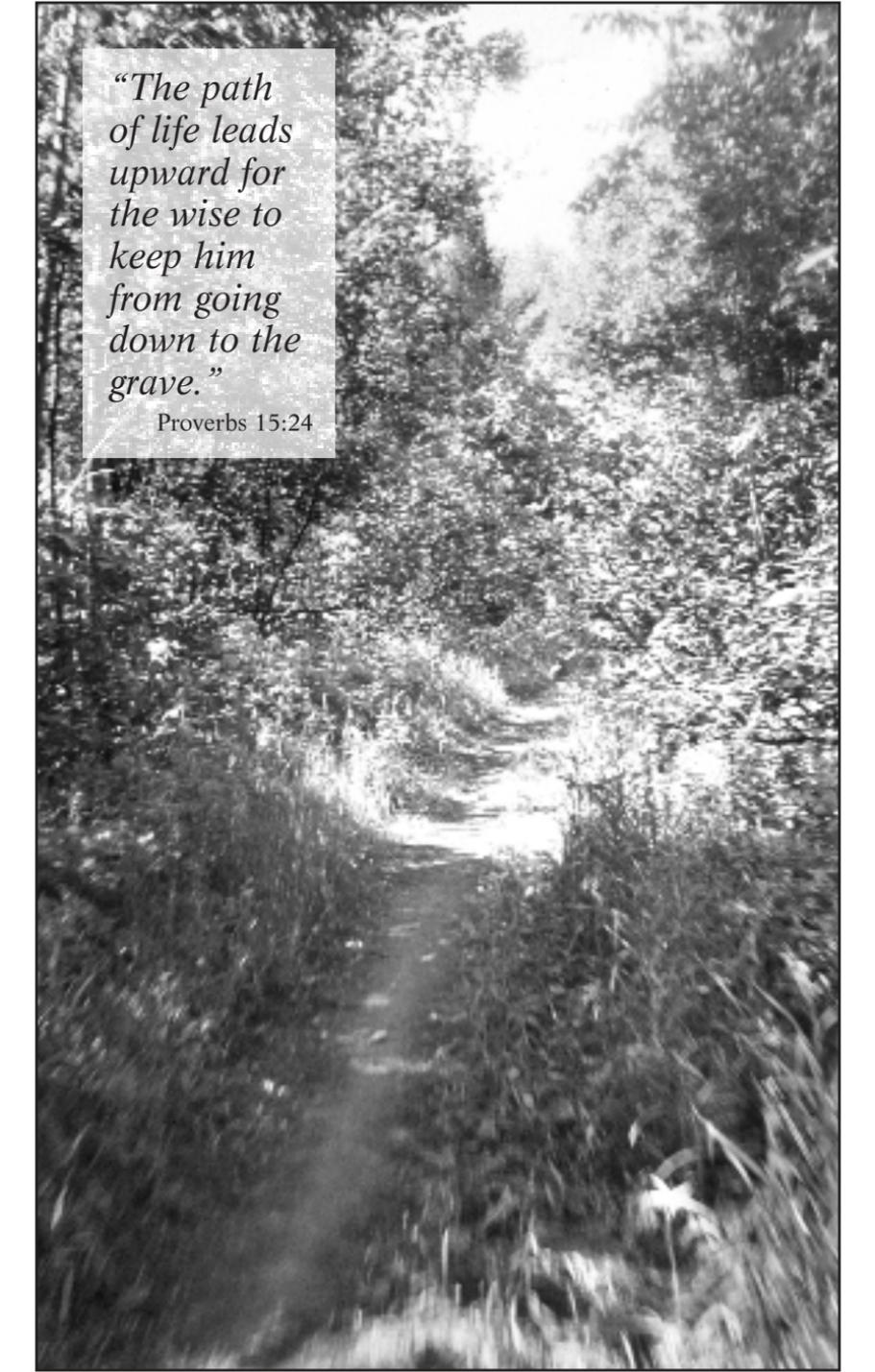
Divide a page into two columns. Based on this chapter, make a list of traits to be cultivated and a list of traits to be avoided.

**LIVING**  
out the Word

1. Is there anyone in your circle of friends who is worthy of a “peace-prize”?
2. Verse 3 tells us, “The eyes of the Lord are everywhere.” How does that make you feel? (a) guilty, (b) happy, (c) frightened, (d) safe.
3. Describe a family, either your own or one that you know well, of whom it can be said: “The house of the righteous contains great treasure” (v. 6).
4. This chapter mentions many traits that are self-defeating. Are you guilty of sabotaging yourself? Do you believe God can help you stop? How?
5. Read verse 4 again. Now go back over the last week of your life recalling conversations people had with you. Did you mainly experience words that brought healing or words that crushed your spirit? How about your own words to others—were they mainly healing or crushing?

**WINDOW**  
on the Word

*The idea expressed in verse 30, that good news gives **health to the bones**, comes from a Hebrew expression that literally means “makes the bones fat,” a metaphor for prosperity and health. The concept of good news reviving a spirit is also found in Proverbs 17:22; 25:25; Genesis 45:27 and Isaiah 52:7-8.*



*“The path  
of life leads  
upward for  
the wise to  
keep him  
from going  
down to the  
grave.”*

Proverbs 15:24

*“How much  
better to get  
wisdom than  
gold, to choose  
understanding  
rather than  
silver.”*

Proverbs 16:16



# Life's Invisible Partner

DAY 16

## Proverbs 16

We do not journey through life's ups and downs alone (v. 3). Has there been a time in your life, either a good time or a hard time, when you powerfully felt the presence of our "invisible partner"?

Go through this chapter and answer the following three questions: (a) Which proverbs are similar to ones already recorded? (b) What new thoughts are introduced in this chapter? (c) Which proverbs in this chapter speak most to you? Why?

1. If you have one available, see how another modern version of the Bible translates or paraphrases these verses: 1, 7, 9, 10, 26, 30.
2. Why does God have a problem with proud people (v. 5)?
3. Paraphrase in your own words and out of your experience the following verses:
  - *Better a little with righteousness than much gain with injustice* (v. 8).
  - *Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed* (v. 3).
  - *The Lord works out everything for his own ends* (v. 4).
  - *Better to be lowly in spirit. . . than to share plunder with the proud* (v. 19).
  - *Whoever gives heed to instruction prospers*. (v. 20).
  - *Gray hair is a crown of splendor* (v. 31).
4. Could verse 10 be helpful to our elected leaders?
5. Have you ever experienced the painful truth of verse 28: "a gossip separates close friends"?

*In many cultures, people of advanced years are respected and esteemed. To the ancient Hebrews **gray hair and old age** were signs of God's blessing on the individual. The Hebrews knew that older people had much to offer a community because of their long experience and practical wisdom. Gray hair was not a sign of disgrace and diminished ability and certainly not something to be covered over. They were to wear their gray hair as a "crown of splendor."*

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

**DIGGING**  
into the Word

**LIVING**  
out the Word

**WINDOW**  
on the Word

## Taking a Spiritual Inventory

Proverbs 17

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

Think back to a time of suffering through which you feel you became a better person. What changes took place?

**DIGGING**  
into the Word

**1.** What conclusions could you make about the person who wrote or collected the proverbs in this chapter?

**2.** What does this chapter teach about:  
(a) friendship, (b) arguing, (c) gossip, (d) revenge, (e) God?

**LIVING**  
out the Word

Now that we are more than half-way through the book of Proverbs, use this chapter to take a spiritual inventory. Take your time in responding to these questions based on chapter 17:

- When I am “tested” by difficulties do I look for God’s hand or do I resent the hardship (v. 3)?
- Do I like being in on the grapevine, hearing gossip? Do I pass it on (v. 4)?
- Does my heart beat with compassion for the poor, or am I calloused to their needs (v. 5)?
- Am I consistently truthful in my words and my deeds, or do I compromise my principles (v. 7)?
- When I am criticized, even unjustly, do I take time to process it or do I react with anger (v. 10)?
- Am I quick to get into an argument (vs. 14, 19)?
- Do I listen more than I speak and do I use words carefully, being certain that my words inspire rather than injure (v. 27)?

**WINDOW**  
on the Word

*Verse 3 says: “the Lord tests the heart.” Those words are preceded by a reference to the **refining of silver and gold**. Both of these precious metals are produced using high heat. Impurities float to the top and are skimmed away, leaving behind pure gold and silver. God uses suffering in our lives the same way. Suffering allows moral and spiritual “impurities” to surface and be eliminated from our lives. That frees us to live closer to God and to be guided more by spiritual values rather than temporal, material ones.*

## VIRTUES AND VICES

*The Book of Proverbs encourages these virtues,  
often comparing them against corresponding vices.*

VIRTUE	EXAMPLE
Respect for parents.....	10:1; 13:1
Faithfulness in witness.....	12:7; 14:25
Honesty in business.....	11:1; 16:11
Love.....	10:12
Diligence in work.....	10:5, 26; 19:15
Righteousness over wealth.....	11:4
Generosity.....	11:24
Discipline of children.....	13:24; 22:6
Control of temper.....	14:17
Kindness to poor.....	14:31; 17:5; 19:17
Restraint in speech.....	15:1, 4, 18
Cheerfulness.....	15:13
Seeking God's guidance.....	16:1, 3
Humility.....	16:18
Not given to pleasure.....	21:17
Chastity and faithfulness.....	22:14

## Listen Before You Speak

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Proverbs 18

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

Minister and author Bruce Larsen writes: “One of the best ways to demonstrate God’s love is to listen to people.” Verse 13 condemns those who speak without properly listening. Are you a good listener? Do people find it easy and helpful to speak with you because you’re a good listener? Is there someone you feel comfortable speaking with about a problem because that person is a good listener?

**DIGGING**  
into the Word

What do the proverbs in this chapter say about: (a) the wealthy, (b) the fool, (c) the wise, (d) the tongue, (e) pride?

**LIVING**  
out the Word

1. This chapter contains 24 proverbs. Which three speak to you the most and why?
2. How is God like a “strong tower” (v. 10)? When you need refuge, what spiritual resources do you turn to?
3. Wealth usually brings power. Is it wise to assume that the wealthy are demanding and rude (v. 23)?
4. Friends can be divided into two groups: (1) fair-weather friends, those who are friends when we are doing well; (2) loyal friends, those who stand with us when we are in trouble (v. 24). What kind of friend are you?

**WINDOW**  
on the Word

***Injustice** is soundly denounced in verse 5—being partial to the wicked and depriving the innocent of justice. This is an important theme, not only in Proverbs but other books of the Bible as well. Note Deuteronomy 10:17; Malachi 2:9; Proverbs 17:26; 28:21.*

*“The name  
of the Lord  
is a strong  
tower; the  
righteous  
run to it  
and are  
safe.”*

Proverbs 18:10

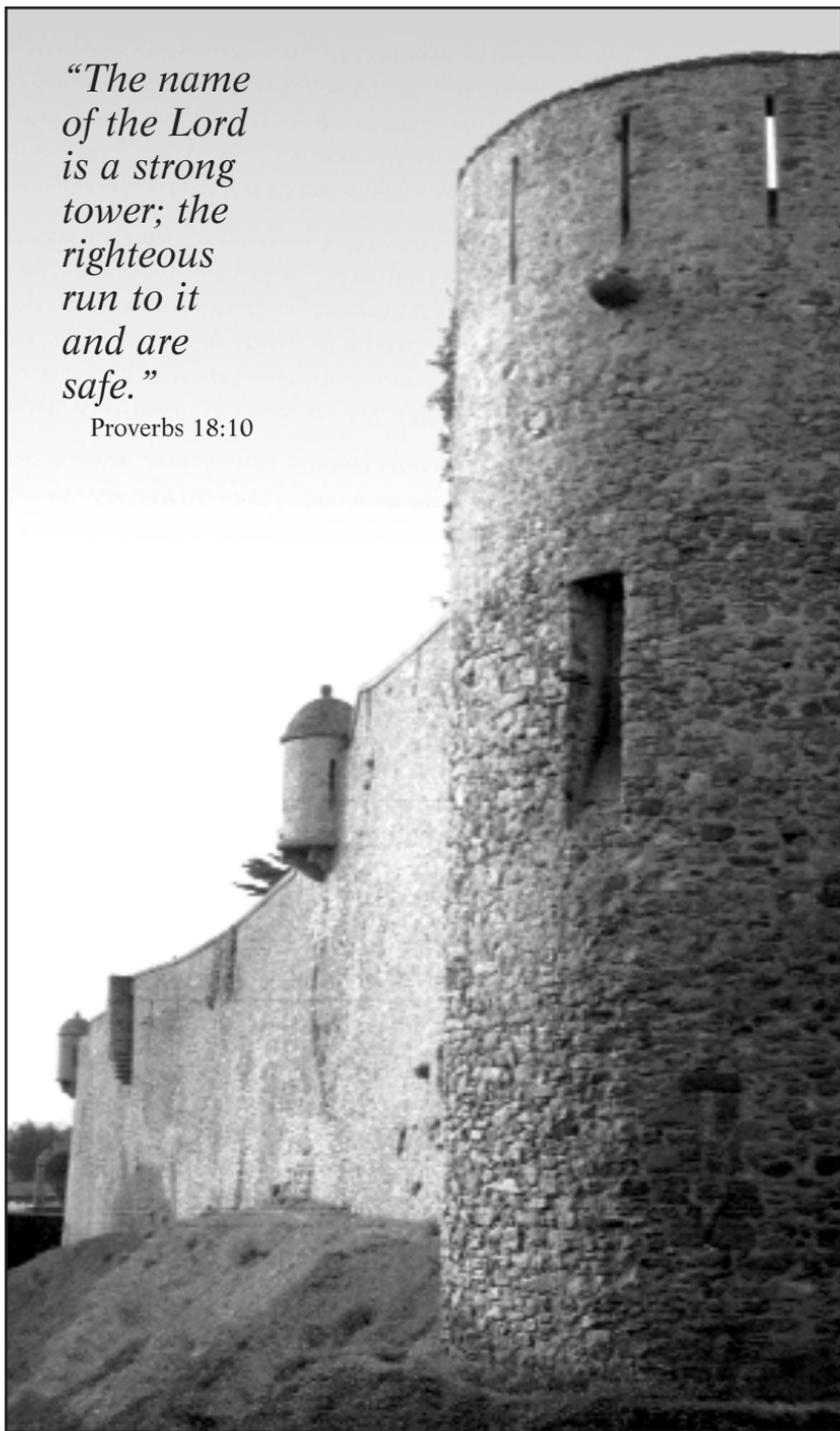


Photo by Monte Wolverton

## Blaming God

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Proverbs 19

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

Have you ever been tempted to lay the responsibility for a problem at God's feet?

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**DIGGING**  
into the Word

**1.** What verses in this chapter deal with the following issues: (a) fathers and sons, (b) the rich and the poor, (c) the wise and the foolish, (d) the kind and the unkind?

**2.** *A man's own folly ruins his life, yet his heart rages against the Lord* (v. 3). Blaming God has been a common spiritual problem from the beginning of the world (see Ge 3:12). Why do people blame God for problems they themselves have created?

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**LIVING**  
out the Word

**1.** Sadly, the wealthy appear to have many friends while the poor are neglected (vs. 4, 6-7). What does that say about people and how they relate to others?

**2.** Look at verse 11. Would you offer this type of prayer: "Dear God, please grant me patience. And I want it *right now*"?

**3.** Verse 12 uses the term "king" but applies to any person in power. Such individuals have the power to terrify or refresh. How have those in authority over you used their power? How have you used your power over others?

**4.** Have you experienced the truth of verse 20?

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**WINDOW**  
on the Word

*From time to time we meet people who have **zeal without knowledge** (v. 2). These are often well-meaning persons whose projects and involvements end in failure because they lacked the experience and maturity to see them through. The passage reminds us of the value of being emotionally, spiritually and intellectually prepared before undertaking any major action.*

### Proverbs 20

Have you ever been a victim of gossip—or have you ever gossiped? Did it effect the course of your life, or of the victim’s life?

1. Note all the vices condemned in this chapter.
2. Re-write, in your own words, verses 3, 6, 7, 13.
3. Look at verse 19. Think of at least five reasons why gossip should be avoided—even if the gossip may be true.

1. Someone once observed, “It will not be missiles but drugs and alcohol that will destroy our nation” (v. 1). Would you agree with that statement? Why?

2. Have you experienced the truth of verse 15? Can you identify someone who does not say much, but when that person does speak, he or she is really worth listening to?

3. Dishonesty (v. 23) is a common theme in Proverbs. Why do you think dishonesty is so hard to avoid? Have you ever been the victim of a dishonest person?

4. Have you ever had a clear sense that your steps were “directed by the Lord” (v. 24)?

5. Have you ever made a promise you were unable to keep (v. 25)? How do you feel about people who made promises to you but did not follow through on them?

*George Meredith (1828-1909) defined **gossip** as “social sewage.” The vice of gossip is condemned consistently in the book of Proverbs, including verse 19 of this chapter. Verse 24 can be of great **comfort to any person undergoing a difficult time** because the writer simply reminds us that there are some events in our lives that we cannot understand until years later. Looking back, we can more clearly discern the hand of God at work in our lives. This text encourages us not to worry about what is happening to us and to continue trusting God.*

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

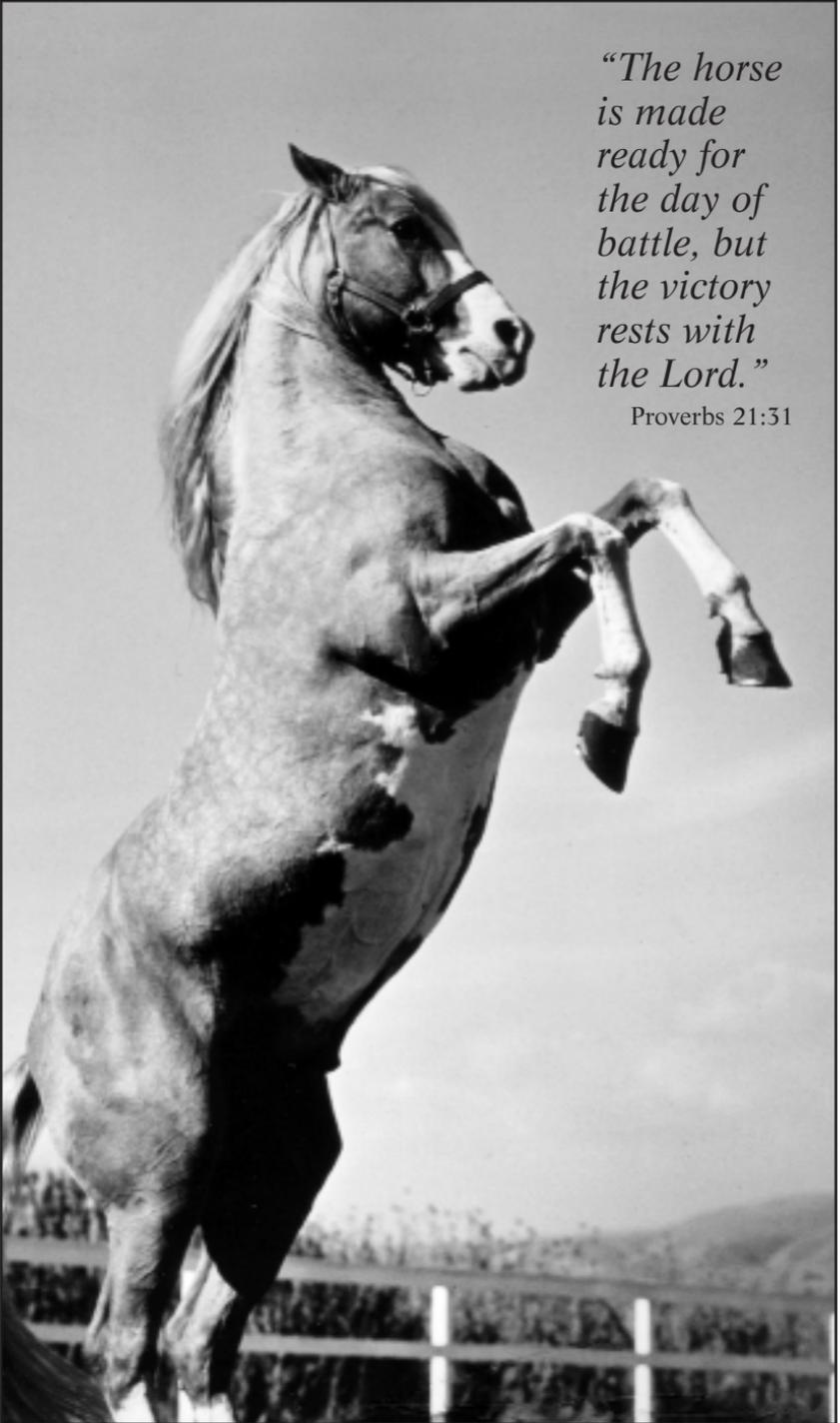
**DIGGING**  
into the Word

**LIVING**  
out the Word

**WINDOW**  
on the Word

*“The horse  
is made  
ready for  
the day of  
battle, but  
the victory  
rests with  
the Lord.”*

Proverbs 21:31



# The King of Kings

DAY 21

## Proverbs 21

Think back to some recent newspaper headlines. Have you seen the hand of God working through the powerful political leaders of our time?

What does Proverbs 21 say about: (a) prosperity by fraud, (b) the cost of pleasure, (c) generosity, (d) unacceptable worship, (e) true and false speech, (f) wisdom, (g) the rewards of righteousness, (h) peaceful family relations, (i) the effect of justice?

1. Does verse 2—which teaches that God evaluates our motives and not merely our actions—comfort or frighten you?
2. How is verse 5 similar to the proverb of Benjamin Franklin who wrote: “He who can have patience can have what he wills.” How is it different?
3. Do you see the law of sowing and reaping at work in your life (v. 13)?
4. What can we learn from verses 9 and 19? In today’s culture, can this lesson be applied to both sexes?

*Verse 1 declares the **absolute power of God**. Even kings, who often had total authority in ancient times, are subject to the direction of God. Just like a farmer who channels water where it is needed, so God may channel a king as he pleases. No human leader is supreme. God is the King of kings. The priority of **righteousness** is repeatedly stressed in the Bible. Verse 3 simply commands: “. . . do what is right and just.” Such righteousness is more pleasing to God than specific religious activities. Other biblical texts make a similar point: Proverbs 15:8; 21:29; 1 Samuel 15:22; Psalm 40:6-8 and Isaiah 1:11-17. However, these texts do not teach that ritual actions should be eliminated; rather the Bible stresses that religious acts of any kind are valueless without a heart of love.*

### OPENING

up to the Word

### DIGGING

into the Word

### LIVING

out the Word

### WINDOW

on the Word