



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

PROVERBS

Week 4

What's in a Name?

Proverbs 22

OPENING
up to the Word

Are you careful to maintain your good family name? Have you ever done something to tarnish it?

DIGGING
into the Word

What insights does this chapter provide about: (a) avoiding trouble, (b) parenting, (c) divine punishment, (d) treatment of the poor, (e) dangerous associations, (f) speech, (g) sources of strife, (h) generosity?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Focus on verse 17. Which “wise” people—teachers, friends, pastors, parents, etc.—most influenced you? How? Consider thanking someone for sharing wisdom with you.

2. Verse 13 contains a humorous condemnation of laziness. The “sluggard” makes excuses for not working: “There is a lion outside!” “I will be murdered in the streets!” Is there something you’ve always wanted to accomplish? Are you using any excuses to keep you from following through on that dream?

3. In what ways do today’s unscrupulous wealthy increase their wealth by oppressing the poor (v. 16)?

4. Are you involved in any unhealthy relationships (v. 24)? Can you re-shape those relationships into something healthier, or should you simply remove yourself from them?

5. Who does society “assign” to help the poor? Is helping those who are impoverished only the task of government agencies and non-profit ministries and organizations?

“Do not be a man who strikes hands in pledge or puts up security for debts; if you lack the means to pay, your very bed will be snatched from under you”

Proverbs 22:26-27



Whatever Happened to Gluttony?

Proverbs 23

OPENING
up to the Word

In past ages, churches often spoke out against the sin of gluttony. Does it seem to you that organized Christianity is somewhat silent about this problem today?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Make a list of the vices and virtues contained in this chapter.
2. According to this chapter, what social situations are to be avoided?
3. Which virtue offsets the vice of jealousy or envy?
4. What are the results of alcohol (or drug) abuse according to the writer of these proverbs?

LIVING
out the Word

1. How do some people in our society “wear themselves out” to get rich (v. 4)?
2. Are you hopeful for your future? What accounts for that hope?
3. Where are some of the best places for us to get “wisdom, discipline and understanding” (v. 23)?
4. Look at verse 25. Are your parents glad and rejoicing in you? Why or why not?
5. What kind of friendships do you cultivate? Are there people you avoid (note vs. 20-21)?

WINDOW
on the Word

A **glutton** can be someone who either inordinately longs for food and drink, or actually habitually overindulges. The Bible contains several warnings against gluttony—Deuteronomy 21:20, Proverbs 23:21; 28:7, Matthew 11:19, Luke 7:34, Titus 1:12.

PROVERBS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Proverbs Quoted in the New Testament

<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>NT SCRIPTURE</u>	<u>FOUND IN PROVERBS</u>
Discipline	Hebrews 12:5	3:11
Motivation to humility	James 4:6 1 Peter 5:5	3:34
Necessity of judgment	1 Peter 4:18	11:31
Against vengeance	Romans 12:20	25:21-22
Returning to folly	2 Peter 2:22	26:11

Proverbs Alluded to in the New Testament

<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>NT SCRIPTURE</u>	<u>FOUND IN PROVERBS</u>
Treasures of wisdom	Colossians 2:3	2:4
Growing in favor	Luke 2:52	3:1-4
Do not be conceited	Romans 12:16	3:7
“Level paths for your feet”	Hebrews 12:13	4:26
Love covers wrongs	James 5:20 1 Peter 4:8	10:12
Building your house on a rock	Matthew 7:24-27	10:25 12:7

Build A Life, Not Just A House

Proverbs 24

OPENING
up to the Word

Imagine a spiritual house—the house you are building by your life. What spiritual and ethical foundations support your house? What virtues form the framework? Are the building materials lasting and durable? How does your house look to passers-by from the outside? What decor and furniture fills the interior of your house?

DIGGING
into the Word

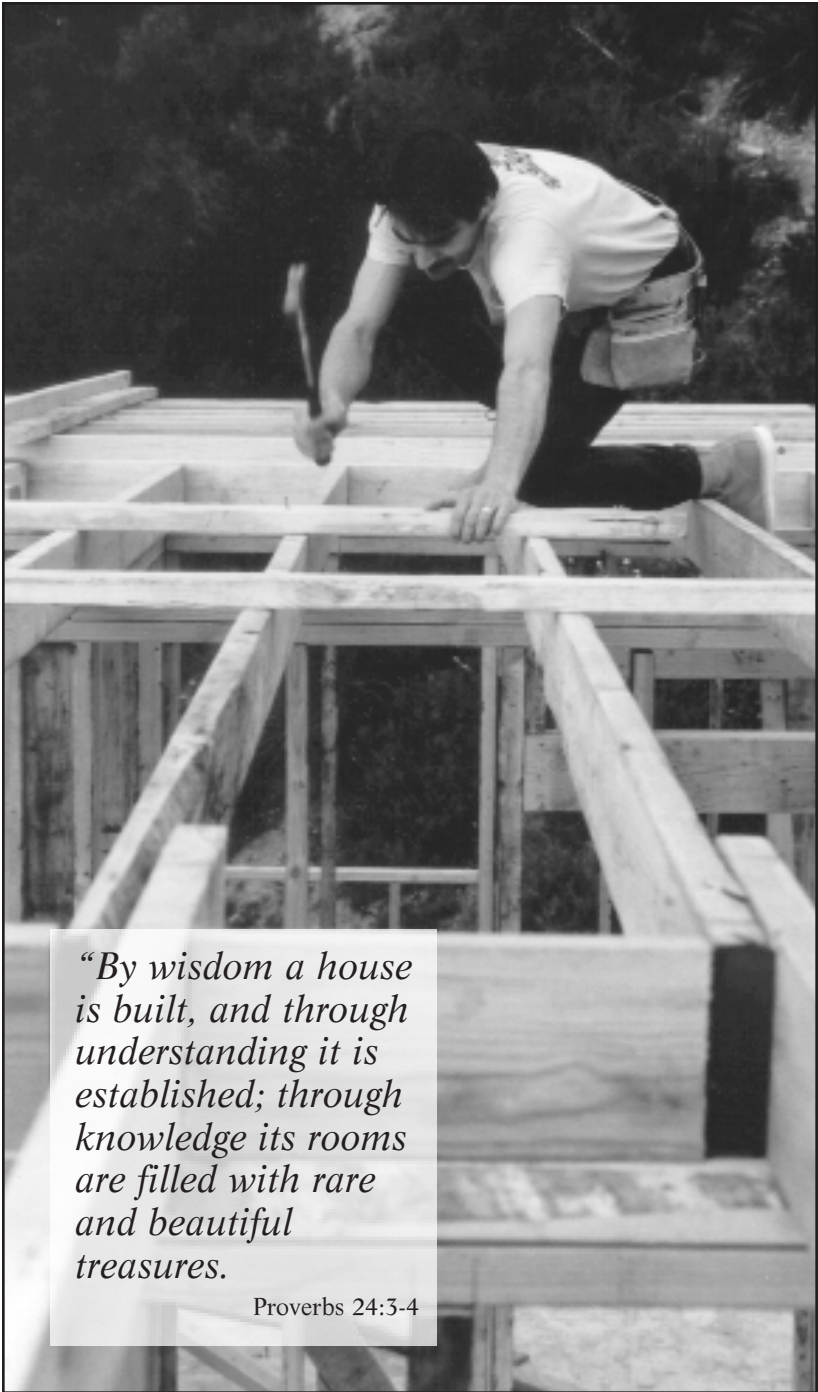
What does this chapter instruct us to do about: (a) our neighbor, (b) an enemy, (c) envy, (d) wicked people, (e) building, (f) sleeping, (g) God?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Why do people envy the wicked and even desire their company?
2. Who do you think of when you read verses 11-12?
3. What is spiritual honey to you? What really “sweetens” your spirit?
4. How have you responded when one of your enemies has fallen? With glee? With compassion? With disinterest?
5. In what areas of your life are you awake? In what areas of your life are you still slumbering?

WINDOW
on the Word

Honey (v. 13) was greatly appreciated by people in ancient times. Biblical writers often used honey to provide spiritual lessons. In addition to verse 13, note these references to honey: Song of Songs 4:11; Psalm 19:10; Psalm 119:103. Honey abounded in areas inhabited by the Israelites—2 Kings 18:32; Exodus 3:8; Leviticus 20:24; Deuteronomy 8:8; Numbers 16:13. It was regarded precious enough to be offered as a gift to God—2 Chronicles 31:5.



“By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established; through knowledge its rooms are filled with rare and beautiful treasures.

Proverbs 24:3-4

Being Kind to an Enemy

Proverbs 25

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you ever acted kindly toward an enemy?
What was the result?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. How are helpful, healing words described in this chapter?
2. What virtue is effective in persuading people to a better point of view?
3. What advice is given concerning good relations with neighbors? How is an enemy to be treated?
4. How is an undisciplined person described?

LIVING
out the Word

1. When you are unable to understand events in your life, what process do you use to gain spiritual understanding?
2. Once again, *patience* is cited as a powerful tool, this time to persuade others toward a better point of view. Calmness and patience can break down insurmountable opposition. For more on patience see also Proverbs 14:29; 15:1, 18. Have you witnessed a patient, calm spirit overcoming a major obstacle?
3. Reflect on verse 25. Try to recall a difficult time in your life when “good news” came your way. What was the content of the good news that cheered your heart? Why not consider delivering a word of hope and comfort to someone in another city or state whom you know is hurting?

WINDOW
on the Word

*Although it is difficult to do, the Bible encourages us to **be kind to our enemies** (vs. 21-22). Other similar exhortations are found in chapters 42-45 of Genesis; 1 Samuel 24:18-20 and Romans 12:20.*

People to Avoid

DAY 26

Proverbs 26

What kinds of people are you better off not associating with? Have you ever had to end a relationship with someone because the two of you were not good for each other? How did you go about doing that?

In these proverbs what do we learn about:

(a) deceptive speech, (b) retribution, (c) arguing, (d) conceit, (e) gossip?

1. When you read the words “undeserved curse,” (v. 2), whom do you think of? Has there been a time when you felt your life was cursed?
 2. Which of these proverbs appeals to you the most? Which one(s) give you a guilty conscience?
 3. It has been stated: “A fool wanders; the wise man travels.” What does that mean to you?
 4. Just as fuel feeds a fire, gossip feeds trouble (vs. 20-21). What are some effective ways of extinguishing gossip?
 5. Has anyone ever accused you of being lazy? Were they right? What did you do about it or what can you do about it now?
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Some people are just not good for us. Such relationships have been described as toxic. In this chapter the writer identifies some types of people we may be wise to avoid: the fool (vs. 1-12); the sluggard (vs. 13-16); the troublemaker (vs. 17-28). Of course, it is wise for us to consider that others might even see us as “someone to avoid.”

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

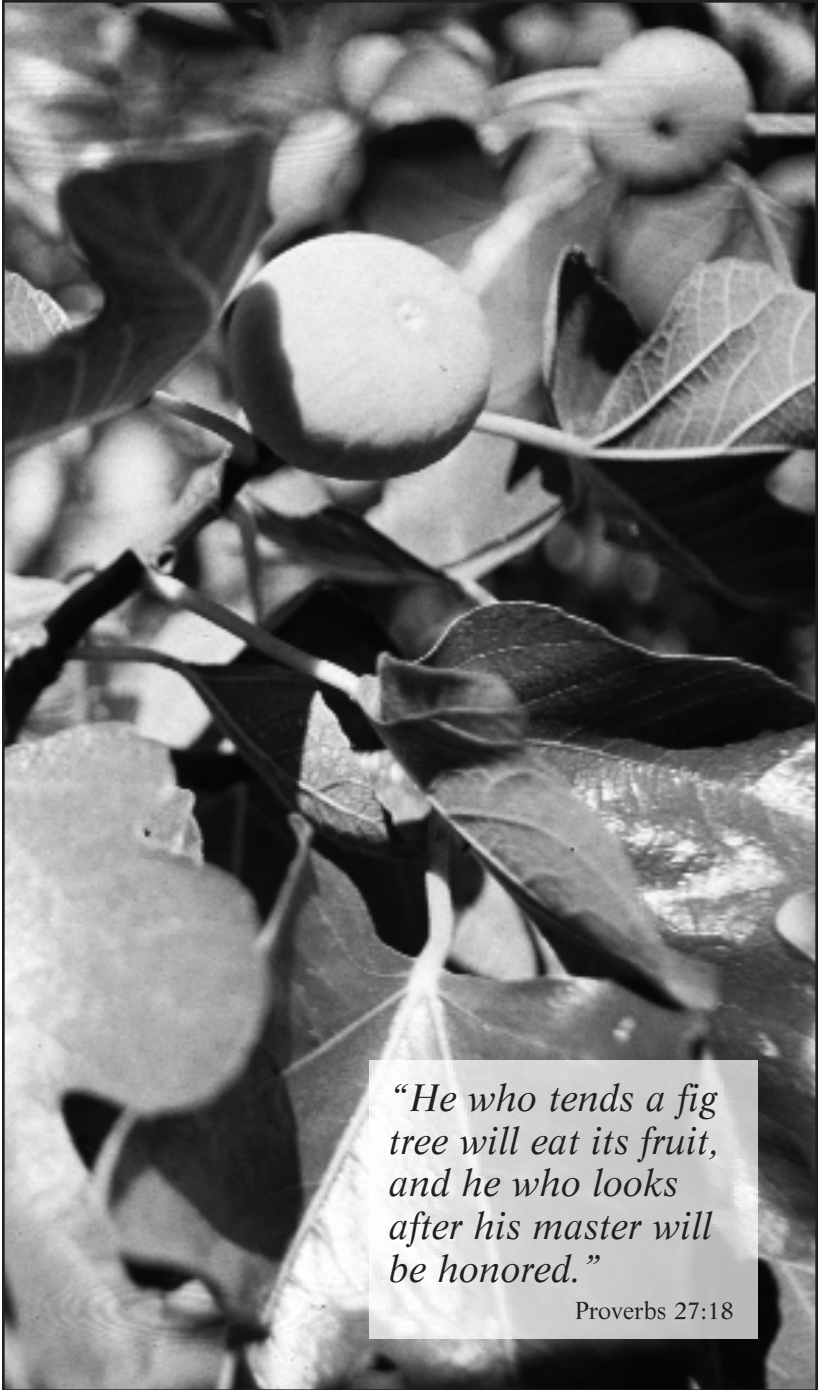
into the Word

LIVING

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WINDOW

on the Word



“He who tends a fig tree will eat its fruit, and he who looks after his master will be honored.”

Proverbs 27:18

Maximum Support

DAY 27

Proverbs 27

Have changing circumstances ever made your “best laid plans” impractical? Did you (a) proceed with the plans anyway, (b) adapt your plans to fit the circumstances, (c) abandon your plans entirely?

1. Which verse describes three major vices? Are they still regarded as vices today?
2. What is the difference between an enemy and a friend based on a proverb in this chapter?
3. What advice is given concerning friendship?
4. How are the prudent different from the simple?
5. Why are diligence, discipline and attention to detail important?

1. In light of verse 1, reflect on this statement: *Life provides minimal protection, but God provides maximum support.*

2. Who in your life “sharpens” you and how does that person do it? Are you a friend who “sharpens” another friend? How?
3. Which of your friends can point out your faults in a helpful way (v. 6)?
4. How does a word of praise or a compliment “test” us and our character (v. 21)?

*The first verse of this chapter, “Do not **boast about tomorrow**, for you do not know what a day may bring forth,” is clarified by James 4:13-16. The issue addressed is an arrogant presumption about one’s future without concern about God. Proverbs 27:20 indicates that **human desire** is never fully satisfied. Augustine of Hippo (A.D. 354-430) echoed that idea when he wrote: “Our heart is restless until it rests in You.”*

OPENING

up to the Word

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LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

I Confess!

Proverbs 28

OPENING
up to the Word

Do you make it a practice to confess your shortcomings and sins? How do you do that? Through prayer? By speaking to a trusted friend or a minister?

DIGGING
into the Word

What is said about: (a) the person with a guilty conscience, (b) those who try to tempt the righteous, (c) a friend's rebuke, (d) injustice, (e) family relations, (f) disregarding warnings, (g) seeking the will of God, (h) the wealthy?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Use elements of this chapter to conduct a self-examination by asking yourself these questions:

Do I oppress the poor in any way (v. 3)?

Is my heart constantly open to God (v. 14)?

Am I quick to admit my wrongs (v. 13)?

Do I take advantage of people with less power (v. 15)?

2. Think about the similarities between verse 23 and this statement from Edmund Burke (1729-1797): "Flattery corrupts both the receiver and the giver."

3. In what ways do you help the poor? Has your life been blessed by doing so?

WINDOW
on the Word

We have all sinned (Ro 3:23). Proverbs 28:13 tells us that whoever confesses and renounces sin will receive mercy.

Confession, or acknowledgement of sin, is a significant theme in both the Old and New Testaments (Lev 16:21; Lev 26:40; Ac 19:18; Jas 5:16; 1Jn 1:9). Alphonsus Liguori (1686-1797) made a wise observation: "For a good confession three things are necessary: an examination of conscience, sorrow and a determination to avoid sin."

Control Yourself!

DAY 29

Proverbs 29

Are there any circumstances that make it hard for you to maintain self-control? Can you improve your reactions?

What do these proverbs tell us about: (a) stubbornness, (b) justice, (c) anger, (d) the righteous, (e) pride, (f) the wicked, (g) good rulers and bad rulers, (h) discipline?

1. "If you leap into a well, Providence is not bound to fetch you out," noted Thomas Fuller (1654-1734). How does his statement shed light on verse 1?

2. How would you assess the moral climate of your culture? Do the "righteous thrive" or are the "wicked" ruling? What is the impact of leaders on a nation's morale?

3. In what ways does this statement from Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) help us understand verse 11: "Anybody can become angry—that is easy; but to be angry with the right person, and to the right degree, and at the right time, and for the right purpose, and in the right way—that is not within everybody's power and is not easy."

4. Look over this chapter again. Which proverb most appeals to you? Which proverb most bothers your conscience?

*This chapter refers to kings and rulers, but it also speaks about **individual responsibility**. Although we may not be powerful leaders entrusted with care of many people, we do have an obligation to manage the kingdom of our own heart and soul. Several proverbs stress the importance of practicing emotional self-control: verses 11, 20 and 22.*

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LIVING
out the Word

WINDOW
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Poetic Wisdom From an Ancient Sage

Proverbs 30

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you known any wise, educated or gifted individuals who were also humble and unassuming?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Agur professed ignorance of the ways of God (vs. 2-4). What point was he making?
2. After an affirmation of God's word (vs. 5-6), Agur offered a prayer (vs. 7-9). Compare this with portions of the Lord's prayer (Mt 6:9-13).
3. What four evil behaviors do you see in verses 11-14? What word would you use to describe each of these evils?
4. Paraphrase the amazing things in nature cited in verses 18-19 and 24-28.

LIVING
out the Word

1. How has the Bible, the word of God (v. 5) been a "shield" providing safety and refuge for you?
2. Verses 21-23 refer to the abuse of position and authority by those who are unequipped to handle it. Have you ever been victimized by someone in authority? How did you deal with the situation?

WINDOW
on the Word

*The identity of **Agur the son of Jakeh** has been debated by scholars. Some believe this is merely another name for Solomon. Most likely he was a respected sage living at the same time as, or possibly later than, Solomon. The word translated "oracle" in verse 1 can also mean "Massa," a place in northern Arabia. The language of this chapter is highly poetic and reminiscent of that of the book of Job.*

A Wife of Noble Character

DAY 31

Proverbs 31

Verses 10-31 describe the wife of noble character in the Hebrew culture of the 10th century B.C. Do the character attributes mentioned in these verses remind you of anyone you know?

1. What acts of mercy are called for in verses 1-9?
2. What characteristics do you see in verses 10-31 that describe a wife of noble character in that ancient Hebrew culture? In what ways is this, or is this not, a realistic model for a Christian woman today?

1. Who in our society is described by verse 8? What are some of the ways that you can “speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves”?
2. Identify a biblical woman—Old or New Testament—who exemplified verse 20.

*Verses 10-31 form an **acrostic**, a poetic device in which each succeeding verse begins with the next letter of the 22-letter Hebrew alphabet. The woman described here is probably a **composite portrait of the ideal wife** in that culture—an inspiration for young Hebrew women. In practical reality, it would be impossible for any human being to consistently accomplish everything listed in this passage. This is not, therefore, intended to be used as a yardstick for husbands to exhort their wives. Nor is it intended to be a standard that is unattainable and only causes frustration and guilt. Rather, this passage is an idealization of industriousness and resourcefulness from which Christians of either sex or any generation may gain inspiration and motivation.*

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