

# Proverbs Lesson 17

## Proverbs Chapter 17

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**Introduction:** Proverbs Chapter 17 shows the contrast of goodness and folly. This continues with more verses which are mostly parallel in character.

### I. Little with Quietness is a Blessing

*(Pro 17:1) Better is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, than an house full of sacrifices with strife.*

*(Pro 17:2) A wise servant shall have rule over a son that causeth shame, and shall have part of the inheritance among the brethren.*

The analogy is quite simple. It is far better to live in modest circumstances having peace than in the big time with trouble. A house full of sacrifices refers to one able to afford the finest meats purchased from a temple—meats offered but not needed for sacrifice. It is far better to live in obscurity with peace and happiness than with fame or fortune with pressure and conflict.

In ancient homes, especially of the middle class and up, there was a well-established social order. Sons in a family usually had rank over household servants and were heirs to the family inheritance.

The point here however, is that a wise servant likely would have greater rights and inheritance than a prodigal son who caused his father grief. The greater point is that wisdom will bring promotion and foolishness brings disgrace and loss.

*(Pro 17:3) The fining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold: but the LORD trieth the hearts.*

*(Pro 17:4) A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips; and a liar giveth ear to a naughty tongue.*

Gold and silver were gathered and refined in crucibles which determined their degree of purity. In like fashion, the Lord looks upon the hearts of His people. All men and women that are used by God invariably go through a time of testing. The Lord has given us His Word and the Spirit of God (crucibles) to guide us and teach us.

Jack Graham is quoted as saying “Wealth is what you have that money can't buy

and death can't take away.” God and God alone is the giver of both spiritual and worldly wealth.

In verse 4, we find that the ungodly tend to listen to and believe deception. Likewise, liars are predisposed to give credence to corruption.

*(Pro 17:5) Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker: and he that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished.*

*(Pro 17:6) Children's children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers.*

Those who hold poor people in derision taunt God. God is their defender. One who has no regard for the impoverished will answer to God. Likewise, those who rejoice over the calamity of another will answer to God.

Just as grandfathers are ‘proud’ of their grandchildren, so ‘dads’ are the ‘pride’ of their children. *Please note that the words proud and pride are used here in the colloquial sense.*

*(Pro 17:7) Excellent speech becometh not a fool: much less do lying lips a prince.*

*(Pro 17:8) A gift is as a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it: whithersoever it turneth, it prospereth.*

The thought is an irony that borders upon sarcasm. A lying prince (one in leadership) reduces himself to the level of a fool. Even as excellent speech is rare for a fool, so ought lying lips be for a prince.

*“A gift is as a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it: whithersoever it turneth, it prospereth.”*

A true gift is valuable for whoever has it. Wherever one turns, it is a blessing.

## **II. Sin Needs to be Confessed**

*(Pro 17:9) He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends.*

*(Pro 17:10) A reproof entereth more into a wise man than an hundred stripes into a fool.*

The thought is not of covering up one’s own sin, but rather of not advertising the fault of another. When we love someone, we will not blab their shortcomings. Moreover, gossip can drive a wedge between closest of friends. Love covers a multitude of sins. See I Peter 4:8.

*1Pe 4:8 And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity*

*shall cover the multitude of sins.*

Verse 10 teaches that a wise man will receive criticism and make changes. A fool can receive severe corporal punishment and be unfazed. The point is that a word to the wise is sufficient, whereas fools never learn.

*(Pro 17:11) An evil man seeketh only rebellion: therefore a cruel messenger shall be sent against him.*

*(Pro 17:12) Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man, rather than a fool in his folly.*

Evil men advocate rebellion. However, in due season, they reap harsh and cruel repercussions. A sow-bear who has her cubs taken from her is not a happy creature. The sacred writer suggests that it is better to meet such a creature than run into a fool in the height of his folly. A fool in the heat of passion or a fit of anger is a nasty individual.

*(Pro 17:13) Whoso rewardeth evil for good, evil shall not depart from his house.*

*(Pro 17:14) The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water: therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with.*

*“Whoso rewardeth evil for good, evil shall not depart from his house.”* David did good to Saul who returned evil for the goodness of his servant. In due season, Saul reaped a long and bitter harvest. Unjust actions bring harsh consequences.

There are two views of verse 14 as to the metaphor, though there is no difference as to its meaning. Some have suggested that the letting out of water refers to diverting a stream for irrigation. Though the diversion begins small, the current of the water soon washes out the channel and much more water than bargained for arrives.

The other view is more base, but more likely. When one relieves himself, it is difficult to stop the flow once started. And so it is with strife. Once started, a conflict is difficult to end. The advice of the proverb is wise. Back away from contention before it gets out of hand.

*(Pro 17:15) He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the LORD.*

*(Pro 17:16) Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?*

Those who portray right as wrong and condemn those who do what is right are abominable to God. He has a curse for these in Isaiah 5:20. The modern world abounds with such perversion. Homosexuality is portrayed as a civil right and Bible-believing Christians are portrayed as bigoted.

Palestinian terrorists are portrayed as freedom fighters while Israeli defenders are painted as evil. The devil has turned the values of right and wrong upside down and it is an abomination to God.

The sacred writer asks in verse 16, *“Why do fools view wisdom as too costly to obtain, especially when he has no interest in it?”* In other words, fools have no interest in wisdom. They think it’s of no value. Therefore, they ignorantly continue on in their folly.

*(Pro 17:17) A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.  
(Pro 17:18) A man void of understanding striketh hands, and becometh surety in the presence of his friend.*

A true friend will love his friend, no matter what. A true brother will be there to help when adversity comes. The proof of love is a willingness to help another when trouble comes.

The thought in verse 18 is uncertain with two alternatives in view. One is that a man void of understanding with a clap (i.e., an ancient practice somewhat analogous to the snapping of one’s fingers) will agree to be surety (co-sign a loan) for a friend.

The thought is of the folly of being a co-signer for a friend. The alternative view is of one void of understanding will threaten violence with his fists and ends up being in debt as a result. In either sense, there is folly in hasty reactions.

### **III. Those Loving Strife Love Transgression**

*(Pro 17:19) He loveth transgression that loveth strife: and he that exalteth his gate seeketh destruction.  
(Pro 17:20) He that hath a froward heart findeth no good: and he that hath a perverse tongue falleth into mischief.*

*“He loveth transgression that loveth strife: and he that exalteth his gate seeketh destruction.”* One who loves sin will certainly have strife. It is the natural consequence thereof. The gate appears to be the office or position a man has attained. John Gill suggests that the gate in question refers to one’s mouth. Exalting one’s own position continually or having a big mouth will find destruction.

In verse 20, the thoughts at hand are, one who is crooked will find nothing but trouble and one with a rebellious tongue will fall into even more trouble. The word translated as froward (vqe ‘iqqesh) has the sense of ‘crooked’ or ‘perverse.’ The word translated as perverse (ph haphak) has the sense of ‘rebellious.’ A rebellious heart and a big mouth lead to nothing but trouble.

*(Pro 17:21) He that begetteth a fool doeth it to his sorrow: and the father of a fool hath no joy.*

*(Pro 17:22) A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones.*

Fools are not born, they develop as such by the neglect of their parents. The greater thought is of a parent who allows his son to become a fool. Such a parent will reap sorrow for his neglect in properly training his son.

A cheerful heart is very therapeutic whereas a wounded spirit causes one to wither away. The word translated as broken {akn 'nake' } also has the sense of 'wounded' which fits the context here.

In the Bible, we are repeatedly commanded to rejoice. The injunction is active and not passive. We can lift our spirits rather than wallow in despair with a wounded spirit. The choice is ours. The difference is profound. When one rejoices, everything looks better. When one nurses hurt feelings, everything looks worse.

*(Pro 17:23) A wicked man taketh a gift out of the bosom to pervert the ways of judgment.*

*(Pro 17:24) Wisdom is before him that hath understanding; but the eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth.*

The thought is of one taking a bribe from his 'vest pocket' and handing it surreptitiously to a judge. Such a person is described as wicked. To distort justice with a bribe is an abomination.

Once again the principle in verse 24 is set forth how that wisdom develops from understanding. As we gain knowledge and reflect on it, it leads to understanding. From that base develops wisdom. See also Proverbs 14:6, 33.

*Pro 14:33 Wisdom resteth in the heart of him that hath understanding: but that which is in the midst of fools is made known.*

In contrast, fools look for the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. They focus on hare-brained and idealistic schemes rather than on developing understanding of the issues of the life and the wisdom that comes therefrom. Wise men develop wisdom through study, reflection, and work. Fools try to find short cuts.

*(Pro 17:25) A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him.*

*(Pro 17:26) Also to punish the just is not good, nor to strike princes for equity.*

A foolish son brings grief and bitterness to his parents. Twin lessons are at hand. Fools should realize how they hurt their parents. Parents should take every step

possible to train their son so that he does not become a fool.

Fools are not born. They become such from parental neglect in training godly principles and discipline. It should be noted that children today spend less time with parents and are trained by resources outside the home.

Twin follies are described in verse 26. Many rulers have learned that punishing a just man backfires. The ruler loses political support therefrom. On the other hand, to strike out at a governmental official (even verbally) is not good.

Lashing out angrily at an official to try and bring about fairness rarely accomplishes that goal. It just makes the official irritated and hardens his heart to your cause. Grievous words stir up anger.

*(Pro 17:27) He that hath knowledge spareth his words: and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit.*

*(Pro 17:28) Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding.*

*“He that hath knowledge spareth his words: and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit.”* A paraphrase of these twin thoughts is how that a wise man will either keep his mouth shut or say little. Also, a wise man (i.e., a man of understanding) will maintain a good attitude. Bad attitudes never bring about desired change.

In short, a wise person will be short on words and long on a good spirit. In similar fashion, even fools are well thought of when they keep their mouths shut. Moreover, one who keeps his mouth shut is considered to have understanding. The moral is simple, the less said the better.

Norman Vincent Peale said “Let nothing disturb you. Let nothing frighten you. Everything passes away except God. God alone is sufficient.”

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*Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.*

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**Practice Random Acts of Kindness. Each act spreads, and many will be blessed.**