

# Proverbs

## Words of Truth

Lesson #9 for February 28, 2015

Scriptures: Proverbs 22:17-29; 23; 24; Exodus 22:21-27; Ephesians 5:20; Ezekiel 33:8.

1. As Christians we like to present the softer side of God. We love to talk about how He reaches out to sinners, places His arms around them, and loves them. But, what about His “justice side”? The biblical word for *justice* is the same as the word for *righteousness*. Does *justice* mean that we will get what is due to us? Does God administer justice? How?
2. Read Proverbs 22:23. Does God “threaten” or “spoil the lives of” people? How is God’s “justice” expressed? What will God’s “justice” mean at the end of our world’s history?
3. Read Proverbs 22:17. Does this verse suggest that these proverbs originated from someone else? Did Solomon collect them and add them to his “inspired” record? There are hints that some of these ideas may have originally come from some wisdom literature from Egypt. How does that impact your understanding of inspiration if Solomon actually borrowed these ideas from an uninspired source? Was that plagiarism? Is it possible for uninspired sources to utter words of true wisdom? If something is true for Egyptians, would it not be true for the rest of us as well? What is ultimate truth? Trying to determine the true authorship of a biblical passage is what some would call “higher criticism”! If we refuse to use “higher criticism,” then we cannot reject the Apocrypha or even the pseudepigrapha!
4. What are we supposed to do with all of these wise sayings? Read Proverbs 22:17-18. When Solomon suggested that we are supposed to incline our ears, doesn’t that mean we are supposed to listen or perhaps read and study carefully? Does that imply that we should carefully concentrate on what we are hearing and learn it? To be honest, we must recognize that real listening implies that we do our best to integrate the truths that we are hearing into our lives. Proverbs 22:18 suggests that these wise sayings are supposed to be integrated into our deepest, innermost parts. Shouldn’t these sayings impact our behavior as well? As 21<sup>st</sup>-century Seventh-day Adventists, are we listening to and obeying God’s words?
5. Is that the failing of the Laodicean church? What would happen if we as Seventh-day Adventists today were studying our Bibles as carefully as did William Miller and the early Adventist pioneers? Is the reason that we are still here 170 years after the Great Disappointment that we have not done this?
6. Read Proverbs 22:19-21. A careful, prayerful reading of Scripture should lead us to greater trust in the Lord, and *trust* is another word for faith. Realizing the impact of these words should give us conviction about the truth. How does that work? The most important truth of all is the good news about our heavenly Father.
7. But, there is more to do than just listening and being convicted about the truth. Serious Christians will accept the responsibility of sharing what they have learned.
8. Why are you a Christian and a Seventh-day Adventist? Have you carefully thought through that question? Could you actually list a number of reasons why you are certain that the core beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church are the right ones? What would be the top three reasons why you are a Seventh-day Adventist? How many reasons can you give?
9. What does the world think of Seventh-day Adventists as a group? Do they look at us and praise God? (Matthew 5:16) The Seventh-day Adventist Church was founded on what was called “present truth.” What is present truth? Are we presenting “present truth”?
10. Read Proverbs 22:22-23; 23:10; Matthew 25:31-46; and James 1:27. In both the Old Testament and the New Testament, we are warned against taking advantage of widows, orphans, and the poor. These passages suggest that if we try to cheat orphans or the poor, God will act on their behalf. Do any atheists help widows and orphans? Do we want to find ourselves in opposition to God? Would it be correct to say that robbing the poor is not just a criminal act, it is a sin against the Lord? (Compare 2 Samuel 12:13.) What will happen to those who oppose God? Will He burn them forever? Or, just as long as they deserve? Or, not at all?
11. Satan always wants us to focus on what appear to be immediate gains instead of looking at the

long-term consequences. Why do you think that is? Are any of the long-term consequences in Satan's favor? There are many verses in the Bible (See Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 and Revelation 20:12-13.) including Proverbs 23:11 suggesting that God will keep a precise and careful listing of not only our characters but also all our good and evil deeds throughout life. When God judges each person in the end, His judgments will be fair and complete. Moses understood that and wrote about it in Job 19:25.

12. Not too long ago, some atheists in London placed the following slogan on some city buses: "There is probably no God. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life." If they claim to be atheists, shouldn't they have stated with certainty, "There is no God"? Why did they say, "There is probably no God"? Clearly, it is their goal to "eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die." (See Ecclesiastes 8:15 and Luke 12:19.) Does that imply that it is perfectly okay to cheat and steal as long as we do not get caught? They obviously do not want to believe that there will be any final judgment conducted by God!
13. Some years ago Morris Venden asked some kindergarteners whether they would choose: 1) \$100 when they would be 21 years old, or 2) 25 cents now. They all chose the 25 cents now! Why? Because they could buy some gum with 25 cents right then! Is God a killjoy?
14. How would you personally respond to the atheist's bus slogan? Is there any reason to be afraid of God? Why are people afraid of God? Why do they want to put Him out of their thinking? Why do people want to avoid responsibilities? In our day, if we were truly Christian, could we act like one of the disciples? What would a Peter or Paul or Stephen from the New Testament do in our setting today? They took their lives in their hands and jumped right into sharing the gospel without asking anyone to pay them or even help them!
15. How should the awareness of an end-time judgment impact the behavior of Christians? Should it impact our behavior even more than it does? Do we really believe that those who do what is right will be rewarded in the end?
16. Read Proverbs 23:17; 24:1-2, 19-20. What do these verses imply about the final results of evil and wickedness? Have you ever been tempted to envy the wicked? Sometimes, it seems like the righteous are losers. But, is that true in the long term?
17. What is our attitude about our favorite sin or sins? What is a favorite sin? Do we really detest the sin itself? Or, do we, like so many other people, wish we could do the sin without experiencing the consequences? If the sin does not have bad consequences, is it a sin?
18. How can we learn to hate sin because it is sin? Do we understand that it is destructive? Think of all the evil that has resulted from that first sin in the Garden of Eden. Think what Jesus did to answer the questions that Satan posed against God. Are we going to despise that incredible price which He paid? Or, do we choose to believe that the death of Christ will take care of everything and that we do not need to worry about our sins? So many Christians in our day think that they can go on sinning and pray and be thankful that the Lord is so forgiving! Is that God's plan for our lives? Or, is His plan for our lives that we look at His life and death, begin to comprehend the enormous implications of that experience, and change our behavior? Does God's forgiveness mean that we can go on sinning?
19. One of the greatest sins in the developed world is the sin of overindulging in appetite. What we drink and what we eat can be incredibly dangerous. Read Genesis 3:1-7; Romans 5:12; and Genesis 9:21. Some of the earliest and most important sins recorded in Scripture have to do with eating and drinking. Does the Bible say that overeating is a sin?
20. Read Proverbs 23:29-35. What an incredible description of a hangover after drinking too much. And all the alcoholic can think about is getting another drink! But, it is doubtful that any of those who begin drinking have any notion of becoming drunkards. However, statistically, it is true that one in seven people who takes his/her first drink will end up becoming an alcoholic.
21. Look at these words from Ellen White.

The man who has formed the habit of drinking intoxicating liquor, is in a desperate situation. He cannot be reasoned with, or persuaded to deny himself the indulgence. His stomach and brain are diseased, his will power is weakened, and his appetite uncontrollable. The prince of the powers of darkness holds him

in bondage that he has no power to break.—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1162.

22. Read Proverbs 23:1-8. Compare Proverbs 31:4-7. We do not have to eat or drink something that is naturally a poison such as alcohol in order to suffer the consequences. Morbid obesity—which is becoming the epidemic of the developed world—has terrible health consequences. Beyond hypertension, diabetes, and back and knee problems, those who are morbidly obese have a greatly increased risk of heart attacks, strokes, even cancer.
23. We do not have any photographs of King Solomon. We do not know if his eating habits led to obesity or not. But, he suggested that overeating is like putting a knife to one's throat. So, he must have had a good understanding of some of these problems.
24. Do you know anyone whose life has been ruined by alcohol or morbid obesity? How many people's lives are being cut short by alcohol or gluttony?
25. Read Ezekiel 33:8. What is implied by that verse? Compare 1 John 3:4; Romans 14:23; and James 4:17. We all know that it is easy to sin by doing what is wrong. Is it also possible to commit sin by failing to do what is right? We called those *sins of omission*.
26. A terrible example of the sin of omission took place several years ago in New York City.

Years ago, in a big Western city, a woman was being attacked at night on a street. She cried out for help; dozens heard her, yet not one person even bothered to call the police. Most people looked out the window and then went back to whatever they were doing. Soon the woman's cries stopped. Later, she was found dead, stabbed numerous times.

Were the people who heard her cries but did nothing responsible for her death? Though they hadn't attacked her themselves, did their inaction kill her? (*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* p. 77 for Thursday, February 26, 2015.)

27. Read Proverbs 24:11-12,23-28. Do these verses extend our responsibilities? Are we now responsible not only for what we do, but also for what we could have done and what we did not report even though we knew? In Leviticus 5:1, Moses warned us about inaccurate reporting or failure to report something that we know happened.
28. Have you ever known of a case of someone who misrepresented the truth in court? Why is that considered to be such a serious crime?
29. It is easy for us as Christians to isolate ourselves in our small cocoons and pretend that everything is okay. In light of our expanded definition of *sin*, is it our responsibility to do anything about world hunger, war, injustice, racism, or economic oppression? What is God expecting of us?

Souls around us must be aroused and saved, or they perish. Not a moment have we to lose. We all have an influence that tells for the truth or against it. I desire to carry with me unmistakable evidences that I am one of Christ's disciples. We want something besides Sabbath religion. We need the living principle, and to daily feel individual responsibility. This is shunned by many, and the fruit is carelessness, indifference, a lack of watchfulness and spirituality.—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 99.1; *2 Spiritual Gifts* 200.1-2 (1860).

Talk faith, live faith, cultivate love to God; evidence to the world all that Jesus is to you. Magnify His holy name. Tell of His goodness; talk of His mercy, and tell of His power.—Ellen G. White, *Manuscript 42, 1890; Our High Calling*, p. 20.4; *Christ Triumphant* 127.5.

30. How good are we doing at witnessing? Remember that Bible study, prayer, and witnessing are the three things that we are absolutely told to do!
31. What is your understanding about God's omniscience? Do you really live as if you believe that God sees, hears, and understands everything we think, say, and do in addition to understanding our motives behind each of those things? Does that worry you? Should it? What would happen if we were to practice the presence of God every day? Are we to think of God

as just waiting for a chance to punish us? What attitude should we have toward God?

Everything that Christians do should be as transparent as the sunlight. Truth is of God; deception, in every one of its myriad forms, is of Satan; and whoever in any way departs from the straight line of truth is betraying himself into the power of the wicked one. Yet it is not a light or an easy thing to speak the exact truth. We cannot speak the truth unless we know the truth; and how often preconceived opinions, mental bias, imperfect knowledge, errors of judgment, prevent a right understanding of matters with which we have to do! We cannot speak the truth unless our minds are continually guided by Him who is truth. (*Mount of Blessing* 68.3; *RC* 71.5. Compare *Review and Herald*, November 18, 1890 par. 8.)

32. What do you think about the fact that Christ is to be our Judge as well as our Savior? Or, is it the Father who is the Judge? How do you understand John 3:17-21; John 5:27-29; and 12:47-48?
33. Are there times when it is appropriate to keep quiet about something that we may know very well? Is there a difference between openly telling everything you know and unnecessarily disclosing or volunteering information? Is there a time not to tell something we know? What about Rahab? What about those who hid Jews from the Nazis? Think of all the things that God knows that He does not talk about! (Jeremiah 31:31-34) Why is truth the only safe way to live one's life? What happens to us if we are caught telling a lie?
34. *Truth* means more than giving intellectual consent to known facts. *Truth* means acting with compassion and fairness and doing our best to prevent others from using money and power to overrule compassion and justice.
35. How well do we know God? Why do some of us talk so much about the "truth about God"? How many Christians have been deceived by Satan's lies? How many Christians are actually preaching Satan's lies as "gospel truth"?
36. Is there a time for keeping a secret? Sometimes, secrecy is essential for security. Is it all right to keep a secret? Like Rahab? Like those who hid Jews?
37. How would we like to have all the intimate details of our lives openly available on the Internet for anyone who wanted to read them? How would that impact our behavior? Sometimes, the truth hurts. How can we practice being truthful without hurting people? Or, can we? Is it easier to lie about our feelings than it is to lie about facts? Why is that?
38. Read Proverbs 22:17-29. This passage is a link between the discussion about judgment in Proverbs 20-22:16 and the passages about truth in Proverbs 23 and 24. Proverbs 23 is clearly intended to teach us to be truthful even when it is difficult to do so. Proverbs 24 goes on to suggest that we know in our inmost beings whether or not we have done what is right. Is that our conscience? Does everyone have a conscience? A reasonable one?
39. When talking about the "truth about God," what does that include? One of the most comprehensive and best brief definitions of the truth about God is as follows: "The good news is that God is not the kind of Person His enemies have made Him out to be."
40. But, in addition to that core truth, there is a second truth suggesting that sinners will end up in ruin. Deceit and arrogance will eventually produce their results.
41. There is a third truth that is hard for some people to accept. Hard work and perseverance will be rewarded. Isn't that what we are talking about when we discuss the endurance of the saints as described in Revelation 14:12?
42. Are we ever guilty of envying the world? What is it about the world that we envy? Moses chose rather to suffer affliction with the children of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. (Hebrews 11:25) Would you do the same? Or, are the pleasures of sin too attractive?

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Last Modified: February 3, 2015

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