

*"By the blessing of the upright a city is exalted, but by the mouth of the wicked it is overthrown. Whoever belittles his neighbor lacks sense, but a man of understanding remains silent. Whoever goes about slandering reveals secrets, but he who is trustworthy in spirit keeps a thing covered."* (Proverbs 11:11–13 ESV)

*The Proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel: to learn wisdom and moral instruction, and to discern wise counsel. To receive moral instruction in skillful living, in righteousness, justice, and equity. To impart shrewdness to the morally naïve. Proverbs 1:1-4*

We are given here a purpose for this inspired collection of proverbs. These few verses establish the goal and result which enrolling in its course of study will produce. What lofty goals these verses provide! God inspired lofty goals -- to attain wisdom and discipline, to apply what we learn, and to help others learn. Can that be done? Can we actually make such an acquisition in this life? The answer is a resounding YES!

**Action Items – Learn, discern, receive, impart:**

Memorize these four things and make them goals for this study.

- 1) To learn wisdom and moral instruction [לְדַעַת חֵכְמָה וּמוֹסָר – to know wisdom and discipline]
- 2) To discern wise counsel [לְהַבִּין אֲמָרֵי בִינָה to cause to understand the speech of understanding]
- 3) To receive moral instruction in skillful living [לְקַחַת מוֹסֵר הַשְּׂכִל [to take the discipline of the wise], in righteousness, justice, and equity
- 3) To impart shrewdness to the morally naïve [לָתֵת לְפִתְאִים עָרְמָה to put or set to the naïve craftiness]

How we use our mouths will make a difference to those who are around us. Our friends, family, and even those who live in our cities will be impacted by what we say and don't say. Do you believe that? Wisdom tells us that blessings will cause a city to become exalted and the words that come from the wicked will cause a city to be overthrown. It is important to know that our actions are significant. How do we know the difference between words that could tear down a city and words that could build up a city? That might be too hard to understand. How do we know the difference between words that build us up and tear us down? It is often said, "Sticks and stone may break my bones, but words will never harm me." I don't believe that saying. Words can do great harm and we are wise when we discipline ourselves in how we use them.

The next phrase states, "*Whoever **belittles** his neighbor lacks sense.*" The Hebrew word for "belittles" is the word בוז *buz*. It describes the attitude of fools towards wisdom (Prov 1:7). This may be why it is hard for the naïve and fools to learn to be wise. It is hard to embrace things we don't like or we believe have little to no value. This Hebrew word is also used in other verses in Proverbs. The importance of parent/child relationships in these verses focuses on the attitudes we have towards our parents. When I say children, I am not necessarily referring only to the young people in our community. Even adults have parents who should not be despised or belittled. Listen to the words of warning given by Wisdom in the following verses.

"Listen to your father who begot you, and **do not despise** your mother when she is old." (Proverbs 23:22 NAS95)

"The eye that mocks a father and **scorns** a mother, the ravens of the valley will pick it out, and the young eagles will eat it." (Proverbs 30:17 NAS95)

One who is naïve lacks sense. When we use common sense we recognize the right things to do at the right time. Being able to sense that words are fitting or not fitting is not always easy. People who are slanderers have little to no restraint. They make it their pastime to speak the faults of others to anyone who will listen. Slanderers and the naïve need a shut off valve for their lips and training on how to use them before they speak. Scripture teaches us to dwell on words that are pure, right, noble, and true (Phil 4:8).