

Proverbs Week #146 (14:1)

The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish tears it down with her own hands. (Proverbs 14.1 NAS95)

Before we look at this week's verse, I want to review the first few verses of the book of Proverbs in order to refocus our attention on the goals and purposes of this book.

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 naive. Proverbs 1:1-4 (NET)

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 וּמוֹסֵר – to know wisdom and discipline]
- 2) To discern wise counsel [לְהַבִּין אִמְרֵי 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 naive [לְתַת לַפְתָּאִים עֲרָמָה – to put or set to the naive craftiness]

Help make Wisdom a top priority in your family and our community. Start by letting the Bible define what Wisdom is, does, and teaches. I want to suggest that a major part of doing something with what we learn from the book of Proverbs involves changing the way we think about things and the way we act. In that respect, the actions to be done are more what the Proverbs do for us than what we do for them. They are here to serve us. Our responsibility is to listen and learn from them (which in reality is listening to and learning from God) and to grow in maturity according to the standards God sets for us in them.

Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; unless the LORD guards the city, the watchman keeps awake in vain. (Psalms 127.1 NAS95)

“Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. “And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. “Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. “The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell — and great was its fall.” (Matthew 7.24–27 NAS95)

Our focus in today's verse contrasts a wise woman (we might say grandmother, mother, wife, or even daughter) who builds her house and the foolish one who tears it down with her own hands. [These verses might apply to men as well but for a moment let us consider the efforts of a wife or mother.] The conclusion of the *Eshet Chayil* in Proverbs 31 envisions the “works” of the virtuous wife (woman) praising her in the gates. In Proverbs 6:20 the wise son is instructed not to allow his mother's *torah* (instruction) to depart from him (in this context he is also told to guard the commands of his father). If the son will listen and treasure this teaching, he is told that it will guide him when he walks, protect him when he lies down, and speak to him when he rises. The faithful service of mothers (and fathers) can build up families. This proverb places two choices before us and expects us to grow in wisdom. We are to consider our own contributions and choose the wise way. Our desire should be to build our houses as God designed them and not work to tear them down.