

Proverbs Week #151 (14:10-13) Part 1

The heart knows its own bitterness, and a stranger does not share its joy. The house of the wicked will be destroyed, but the tent of the upright will flourish. There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end in the way of death. Even in laughter the heart may be in pain, and the end of joy may be grief. (Proverbs 14.10–13 NAS95)

I will be teaching from these four verses this week and next week (ב"פ). We learn in the beginning of Proverbs that a wise person will hear and increase learning (Prov. 1:5). As we learn, we will become skilled in understanding proverbs, figures, and the words of the wise and their riddles. This is one of our four stated goals (to learn, **to discern**, to receive, to impart) and in the verse below the same Hebrew word translated “understand” is also translated as “to discern” in Prov. 1:2. The process of growing in wisdom includes learning what words mean and understanding the importance of stories and/or figures of speech.



To understand a proverb and a figure, The words of the wise and their riddles. (Proverbs 1.6 NAS95)

"On the horizontal human plane bitterness and joy a merism representing the full gamut of emotions are known by the concerned person alone. To be sure, there are outward circumstances for all to see (see v. 11), but appearances are deceptive (see v. 13). The heart knows its own (napšô, a deeply emotional periphrasis for the pronoun “self”); bitterness (or heartache, such as barrenness [1 Sam. 1:10], deceptive theft [Gen. 27:34], personal suffering and hardship [Job 7:11; Isa. 38:15], etc.) And in its joys [see 10:28; 12:20] a stranger [or outsider, zār; see 2:16–20] does not take part. One’s emotional-intellectual-religious-moral motions are too complex, too inward, and too individualistic to be experienced by others or even to represent them adequately to others (cf. 1 Cor. 2:11). Only God ultimately knows the human heart (Prov. 15:11; 16:2; 21:2; 24:12). The proverb infers the dignity and significance of each individual and, to accept being misunderstood (cf. 1 Sam. 18:20; 2 Sam. 6:16; 2 K. 4:27), cautions against evaluating others by outward appearances and to be true to one’s own heart (cf. Job 19:27). Its truth also drives us with Hannah to pray to the compassionate High Priest, who knows us better than we do ourselves (1 K. 8:38; John 14:16, 17; Heb. 4:15–16). Nevertheless, in spite of our limitations, other Scriptures encourage sympathy to others (cf. Rom. 12:15)."¹



Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. (Romans 12.15–18 ESV)

Each one of us is given a unique soul. We have been granted life from our Creator and in our deepest parts only He knows what we need, think, and feel. Because He is a loving and faithful God we can fully trust in Him. Others may not fully understand either our joy or our sorrow but God does. We might get frustrated or disappointed when others don’t fully understand us. Knowing this truth should not stop us from trying to connect with others who are either in times of joy or grief or allowing others to share in ours. We don’t need to fully understand how someone is feeling to be supportive and helpful. Next week we will look at beginnings, endings, and the right kind of planning.

¹ Waltke, Bruce K. The Book of Proverbs, Chapters 1–15. New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Accordance electronic edition, version 1.3. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004.