

## Proverbs Week #156 (14:20-21)

*The poor is disliked even by his neighbor, but the rich has many friends. Whoever despises his neighbor is a sinner, but blessed is he who is generous to the poor. (Proverbs 14.20–21 ESV)*

I want to start today's lesson with a review from the start of our study together. We are given in the first chapter of Proverbs the aim of this book's collection of wisdom. The 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
- 4) To impart shrewdness to the morally naive [לָתֵת 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.

**Learn:** Proverbs need to be understood, learned, and applied. These verses describe the different attitudes people have towards those who are rich and poor. They remind us that our thoughts have consequences. As a general rule, people try to act nicely to those who are rich and harshly towards those who are poor. But the person who is generous to the poor is blessed.

**Discern:** How are we to know how to apply this teaching to ourselves and to our families? I had the honor of previewing a speech that a godly young man was to read at his college graduation. He warned of the dangers of moral relativism in our nation. The culture around us does not like anyone defining absolutes in matters of truth or morality. Keith Green illustrated this problem in his song *The Prodigal Son Suite*. He expands the story of the prodigal son. As you listen to the song you hear the wayward son being approached by a new friend. In regard to the new friend's immoral lifestyle the son, "...asked him, wasn't that sinful?" and his reply was "...no, it isn't that bad." For us and our sons and daughters, the need to stay connected to God and His standards of right and wrong is as important as ever.

**Receive:** These verses describe two possible outcomes. Each is based upon whether or not one receives and keeps wisdom. These words received correctly develop godly skills in our lives.

**Impart:** *"A good man leaves an inheritance for his children's children, but a sinner's wealth is stored up for the righteous."* (Prov 13:22) I want to stress once again that these lessons are meant to be learned in the context of multi-generational discipleship. Whether you are young or old, if you think the world exists for your pleasure alone then you are in danger of being like the foolish person whose life ends up in ruins. Those who receive God's love are those who can in turn impart that love to others. How wise are you in the skills of loving God and loving others?