



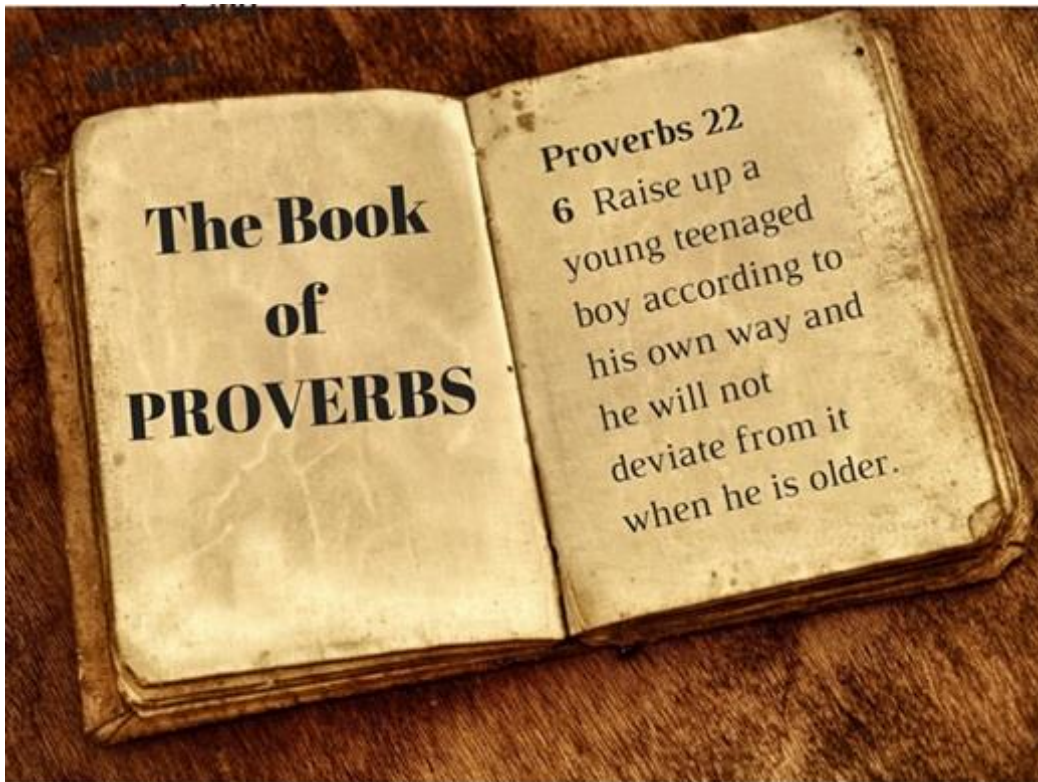
My Drift

Title: Bible – Proverbs

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The Book of Proverbs Overview

Proverbs is the chief volume in the biblical collection of wisdom literature, which also includes Ecclesiastes, Job, and portions of Psalms. The purpose of wisdom literature in the Bible is to teach rather than to relate a narrative. The Book of Proverbs contains thirty-one chapters, each comprised of twenty to thirty-five wise sayings that are each two poetic lines long. Most of the book is attributed to King Solomon; but, as the book itself indicates, the written teachings in their current form were probably collected no earlier than the reign of Hezekiah, King of Judah in the late eighth and early seventh centuries BC. Other sections of the text are attributed to additional, more obscure authors. However, it is safe to say that Proverbs represents the written record of an oral tradition of wise sayings with uncertain origins.

A proverb is a short, pithy saying that usually draws a comparison between two forms of behavior in order to impart moral or religious wisdom to its receiver. Some of the wise sayings in Proverbs also take the form of enigmatic or cryptic utterances that the receiver must interpret to understand the meaning. Biblical proverbs are religious, but they focus on concrete human experiences rather than divine revelation. Nevertheless, their judgments always entail a timeless quality, like the moral of a myth or a folktale. The biblical notion of wisdom implies acquiring skill or ability in the areas of justice and moral goodness—like a craftsmen learning a craft. In fact, Proverbs frequently instructs the listener to “get” or “buy” wisdom (4:5 and 23:23). The sayings in Proverbs are often addressed to young people, who are in the process of becoming wise. It is likely that the Book of Proverbs formed part of the education for Hebrew youth after the Israelite exile and return to the promised land.

Structure

The Book of Proverbs is divided into four main sections, with three additional sections, or appendices, included at the end. The first third of Proverbs is an extended lecture spoken by the personified voice of “Wisdom.” This section is the most conversational, narrative, and thematic portion of the book. Wisdom speaks in the first person and refers to the reader as “my child,” instructing the reader on various topics for wise living. The voice of Wisdom assumes different forms. On the one hand, Wisdom refers to itself in feminine terms, using the pronouns “she” and “her.” Wisdom describes itself as a woman standing on the city streets, crying out her warnings to the people. However, Wisdom also identifies itself with God. Pursuing Wisdom, it says, is the same thing as obeying God, and Wisdom claims to have been God’s partner in creating the world.

The next three sections of Proverbs contain the proverbs of Solomon and the sayings of the wise. The list of Solomon’s proverbs is made up of two lengthy sections, and the proverbs are very loosely organized by theme. The speaker usually assumes the voice and authority of a king. Many of the proverbs follow the formula of antithetical parallelism, a convention in which the proverb is stated in two poetic lines, and one line describes a type of good or wise behavior while the other describes its evil or foolish opposite. The “sayings of the wise” make up one small section and are less rhetorical, issuing more direct commands and advice to the reader.

The final three sections in Proverbs include the brief oracles of Agur and King Lemuel and a closing lesson on how to select a good wife. Agur and Lemuel’s

historical existence is unknown, but their cryptic sayings continue the demand for wisdom and the themes of temperance and justice that are common to the rest of Proverbs. The final passage praises all the traits of the good and “capable” wife (31:10). She is industrious, independent, strong, generous to the poor, and, most importantly, she “fears,” or obeys, God (31:30). Proverbs closes by calling for her family and the community to praise her.

Themes

Proverbs is largely concerned with the inevitability of God’s justice and the importance of prudence and moderation. Solomon’s proverbs maintain that wicked deeds will invariably lead to divine retribution and punishment during a person’s earthly life. People who slander others will have their tongues cut off, those who are lazy will have failing crops, and undue pride will lead to an individual’s downfall. One way to enjoy the favorable hand of God’s justice is to practice moderation and prudence. According to the proverbs, the moderate person avoids the excesses of the foolish, including excessive drinking, eating, sleeping, gossiping, and rage. A consistent way to demonstrate wise behavior is by choosing words shrewdly and carefully. The proverbs also praise those who prepare in advance, particularly those who build their homes in preparation for later circumstances. The most important sign of wisdom and prudence, however, is obedience and reverence to one’s parents.

The importance of women and femininity in Proverbs is unusual in the context of the Old Testament. In most Old Testament narratives, women play a role secondary to that of men. However, Proverbs suggests that women can use wisdom within a male-dominated society to assert their strength and independence. The final chapter gives license to the “good wife” to do everything from selling merchandise to performing home repair, and Solomon notes earlier that it is the “wise woman who builds her house” (14:1). Interestingly, the young men throughout Proverbs wander aimlessly, searching for the correct path but falling prey to seduction. Wisdom, personified as a woman, stands fast, stationed at the city gates or in the streets delivering messages as an oracle or soothsayer. The juxtaposition (an act or instance of placing close together or side by side, especially for comparison or contrast) of feminine Wisdom with God alters the vision of God from previous biblical books, in which God appears as an angel, a group of men, or in thunder and fire. The Book of Proverbs does not suggest that God is a woman or a being with a gender. Nevertheless, the feminine voice of Wisdom claims to be an integral part of God. Wisdom notes, “The Lord created me at the / beginning of his work / Then I was beside him, like a / master worker” (8:22–30). Wisdom

also affirms, “For whoever finds me finds life / and obtains favor from the Lord” (8:35). Wisdom is the source of life, a helper in creation, and a mediator between God and humankind. By assigning Wisdom a feminine quality, Proverbs suggests that femininity, in addition to masculinity, should be an important way in which we think about the order of the world.

Summary



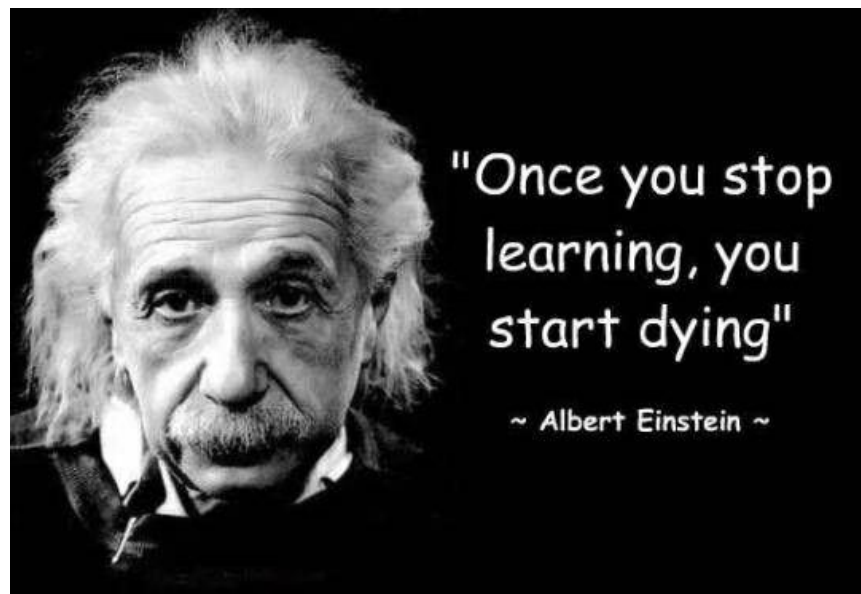
31 Powerful Lessons from the Book of Proverbs

1. Wise men never stop learning

“Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance...” — Proverbs 1:5

This message is stressed a lot in the book of Proverbs. *Wise men take correction, they listen to what people have to say, and never stop getting wiser.* The fool rejects the advice of others. If you wish to be wiser or smarter, learn how to take criticism.

Even if you are more knowledgeable or of a higher rank in a certain field; listen to everyone and see if you can learn from what they are saying. Don't let your ego get in the way of your self-improvement.



2. If you seek wisdom, you will find it

“...if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.” — Proverbs 2:4–5

You can't expect to be walking through life and eventually get a pile of wisdom dumped on your head. You also can't expect to continually search for it and never find it. *If you prioritize wisdom higher than wealth, the Bible promises that you will find it.*

This message is constantly stressed throughout the book of Proverbs; wisdom makes herself available, but it is our job to seek her out with all of our heart.

3. Stay humble

“Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and turn away from evil.” — Proverbs 3:7

If you are blessed with wisdom beyond your years, always stay in a humble mindset. The Bible is very clear that God resists the proud but blesses a humble heart.

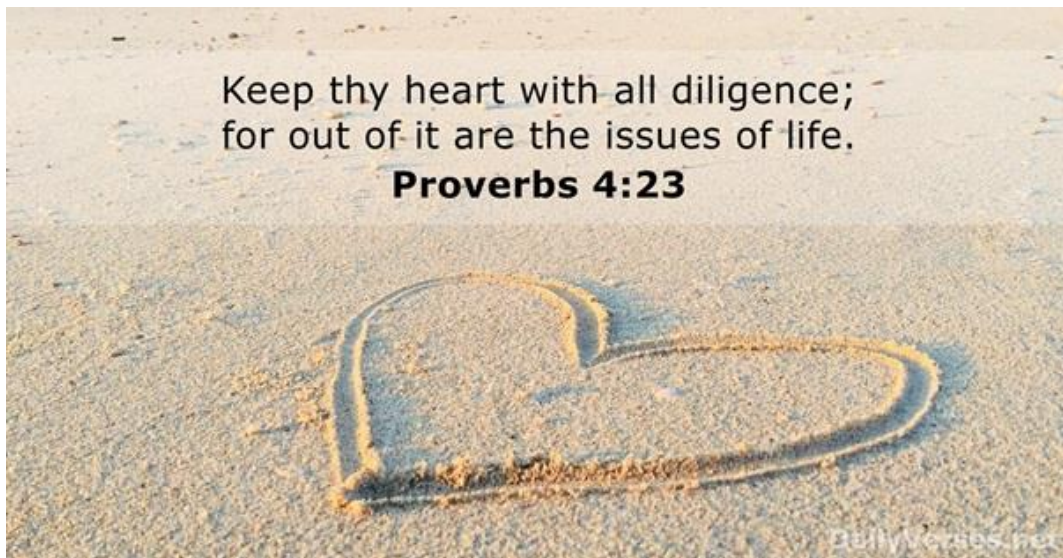
Pride comes before the fall. If you find yourself getting swollen up because of your accomplishments, remember where your blessings come from.

4. Wisdom will eventually reward you

“The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight. Prize her highly, and she will exalt you; she will honor you if you embrace her. She will place on your head a graceful garland; she will bestow on you a beautiful crown.” — Proverbs 4:7–9

There will be sometimes in life that you will have to say no to wealth or material possessions in the name of wisdom. However, *if you seek wisdom above all else, you will eventually reap the rewards.*

If you seek wisdom first and foremost, then the benefits will follow. These benefits are more than just wealth; yes, they are even much more significant than wealth. Wisdom is to be esteemed much more highly than wealth.



5. Stay away from temptations

“Keep your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house.” — Proverbs 5:8

This verse is speaking of the door of an adulteress, which is good advice in general, but really this lesson can be applied to all areas of life. If you are dieting, don’t keep junk food lying around.

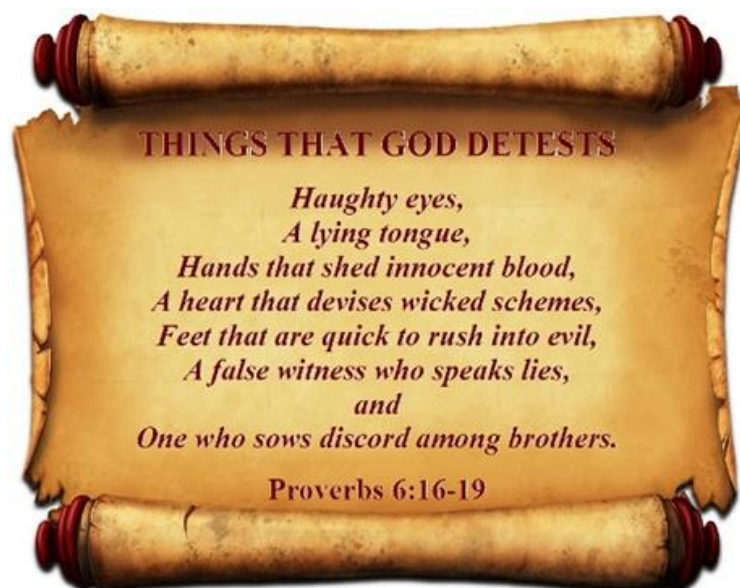
Make no provision for your temptations. Turn your phone off while you are working. *Get rid of all distractions.* Don’t make any provisions for the flesh.

6. Work, work, work

“Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise. Without having any chief, officer, or ruler, she prepares her bread in summer and gathers her food in harvest. How long will you lie there, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want like an armed man.” — Proverbs 6:6–11

Wise men are always at work. Don’t waste your time watching Netflix and playing video games. If you don’t want to live your life in poverty, you must develop a strong work ethic. Be like the ant.

You may not see the results immediately. You may not be in a place where you need to work hard to support yourself. But you will go through different seasons. When hard seasons come, those that spent time developing themselves in the good seasons will flourish.



7. Don't let lust destroy you

“Let not your heart turn aside to her ways; do not stray into her paths, for many a victim has she laid low, and all her slain are a mighty throng. Her house is the way to Sheol, going down to the chambers of death.” — Proverbs 7:25–27

Pornography or any other form that lust manifests itself in can seem harmless or attractive at first, but they are very dangerous and very destructive.

Not only will they mess you up, but they will destroy your relationships. Stay away from lust; *it is a trap that will eventually be the death of you.*

Really, you should stay away from anything that promises you instant gratification for minimal effort. That's what video games, pornography, gambling, drugs, etc. all have in common. They instantly gratify your desires but require little effort on your part. Stay away from all forms of these things.

Love versus Lust



8. Anybody can become wise

“To you, O men, I call, and my cry is to the children of man. O simple ones, learn prudence; O fools, learn sense.” — Proverbs 8:4–5

If you are immature or lack discipline, *you don't have to spend the rest of your life living that way.* God knows that I am far from being mature or wise, but I am asking him for direction and for wisdom. I know that He is blessing me.

The Bible promises wisdom for all that seek it. It is not beyond the reach of anyone who truly desires it and is willing to sacrifice for it. Wisdom is to be esteemed above all else; spend your time searching for it.

9. Listen to people when they correct you

“Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you; reprove a wise man, and he will love you.” — Proverbs 9:8

This one is hard to swallow, but it’s very important. It can be hard to take correction from someone, especially when they are younger than you or lack experience. However, *a wise man will stay humble and listen to what anyone has to say.*

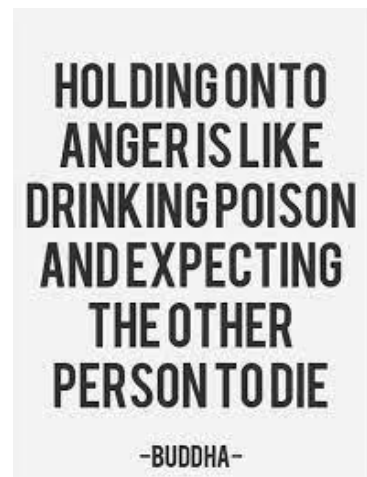
Wise men love to learn and will take any opportunity they can get to better themselves, even if it means setting their ego aside.

10. Don’t hold resentment or grudges

“Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses.”
— Proverbs 10:12

If someone has wronged you but repented, do not dwell on what they did to you. Move on and give them another chance; you will reap the benefits.

There is no reason to continue to stir up strife. Let love prevail and be wise. You and everyone else will be better off for it.



11. Be honest

“A false balance is an abomination to the Lord, but a just weight is his delight.” — Proverbs 11:1

It can be tempting to be a little dishonest in order to gain a profit. If you value wisdom and integrity, however, *your honesty won’t go unnoticed.*

12. The rulers are the hard workers

“The hand of the diligent will rule, while the slothful will be put to forced labor.” — Proverbs 12:24

The capitalists and millionaire entrepreneurs are the ones who put it in the immense sacrifice and long hours of work.

Maybe you’re content with working a stable, good-paying 9–5 job. That’s

great! But if you're complaining about where you're at and finding yourself jealous of those who've experienced enormous financial success, then you should probably consider putting in the work first.

The slothful ones don't make it.

You can't get to the top of the ladder without climbing the rungs.

13. Stay away from get-rich-quick schemes

"Wealth gained hastily will dwindle, but whoever gathers little by little will increase it." — Proverbs 13:11

Be patient. Even if you're not bathing in gold after a year of blood, sweat, and tears, stick with it. Wealth will come little by little and then grow exponentially. And this doesn't just apply to wealth. This goes for relationships, skills, habits, etc.

14. Surround yourself with wise people

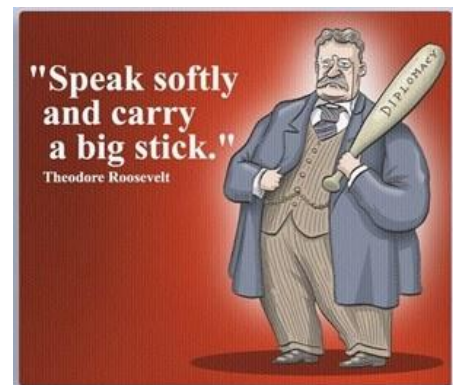
"Leave the presence of a fool, for there you do not meet words of knowledge." — Proverbs 14:7

You will become like the people you hang around with. If you know that your friend is one who often makes bad decisions, cut off that relationship. *Stick with people who challenge you and encourage you to grow.*

15. Speak softly and carry a big stick

"A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." — Proverbs 15:1

If you find yourself in a heated argument, do not respond by shouting. *Speak gently and sensibly, and you will both be more likely to reach a conclusion.*



16. Wealth is not the aim of the game

"Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues with injustice." — Proverbs 16:8

If you are pursuing wealth or some financial breathing room, never do so at the sacrifice of your character or integrity. A good name is worth much more than great riches. Gain and grow your wealth patiently and honestly. Don't ruin your name while chasing dollars.

17. Use trials to grow

"The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold, and the Lord tests hearts." — Proverbs 17:3

It's not easy to make it through tough times, but this verse says it well. *When we go through the furnace we will come out as gold.* Whenever you are struggling, know that you will come out of that situation, and when you do you will be stronger than you were before.

18. Be open-minded

"A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion." — Proverbs 18:2

Understand that often times you will be wrong. *Have the humility to let others change your mind and learn from your mistakes.*

19. Be slow to anger

"Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense." — Proverbs 19:11

Be known for being even-tempered. Don't let little things throw you off, and always be willing to give someone a second chance. When you wrong someone else they will also be forgiving towards you.

20. Take action

TAKE
ACTION!

"The purpose in a man's heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out." — Proverbs 20:5

Everybody has big dreams sitting around on the inside of them. Very few will actually *draw from that well and fulfill their purpose.*

21. Don't settle for short-term pleasures

“Whoever loves pleasure will be a poor man; he who loves wine and oil will not be rich.” — Proverbs 21:17

The reason that games are so popular is that they give us a sense of accomplishment with little effort. *Be wary of things that reward you for little work.* Don't give in to short-term temptations, but invest in the long-term.

22. Your reputation is more important than your net worth

“A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold.” — Proverbs 22:1

When you die, *do you want to be remembered for how much money you left behind or for being an honest and uplifting person?* This is why the book of Proverbs stresses the importance of honesty and integrity over wealth. They will always serve you better than money ever could.



23. Be a man of discipline

“Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you strike him with a rod, he will not die. If you strike him with the rod, you will save his soul from Sheol.” — Proverbs 23:13–14

Not only should you discipline your children, but practice self-discipline in your own life. *Let others praise you and be your toughest critic.* Don't accept your mistakes and strive to be better. You'll thank yourself later.

24. Do not seek revenge

“Do not say, ‘I will do to him as he has done to me; I will pay the man back for what he has done.’” — Proverbs 24:29

The best revenge is to *beat out the competition with hard work*. If you try to seek revenge against your enemy through name-calling or sabotage, it will not end well for you. Vengeance belongs to God.

25. Repay evil with good

“If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat, and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink, for you will heap burning coals on his head, and the Lord will reward you.” — Proverbs 25:21–22

Imagine a scenario where your competitor publicly shames you. If you respond with kindness, *you will be regarded as the hero and your enemy will be put to shame*. It’s very difficult to do so, but God will reward you for it.

26. Do not repeat your mistakes

“Like a dog that returns to his vomit is a fool who repeats his folly.” — Proverbs 26:11

Mistakes are inevitable; we’re all going to make them. Every once and a while you are going to “vomit.” But when you do, learn why that happened and resolve to never do it again. *The fool is not the one who makes a mistake, but the one who continually makes the same mistake without learning from it.*

27. Leave the bragging to your fans

“Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.” — Proverbs 27:2

Not only is an arrogant man resented by the majority of his viewers, but a compliment that comes from someone other than yourself is more credible. Do not brag; *let your actions speak for themselves*.

28. Don’t give in to fear

“The wicked flee when no one pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion.” — Proverbs 28:1

So often we run away when nothing is chasing us. Be as bold as a lion, and stand up to your fears. In most scenarios, *you will find that there was nothing to be scared of in the first place*.



29. People will support your integrity

“When the righteous increase, the people rejoice, but when the wicked rule, the people groan.” — Proverbs 29:2

What good is it to reach the top of the ladder if everyone is booing? This is why it's important to implement the previous lessons of character. Don't boast, be honest, stay humble, speak softly, etc. *You'll have everyone's support in your climb to success.*

30. Respect your parents

“The eye that mocks a father and scorns to obey a mother will be picked out by the ravens of the valley and eaten by the vultures.” — Proverbs 30:17

The Bible is big on obedience and respect when it comes to your parents. *Honor them with your words and your actions.*



31. Use discernment in choosing your partner

**“An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels.” —
Proverbs 31:10**



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