

Enlightened Through Observation: Viewing Others in the Proper Perspective

Getting focused

We find simple principles reiterated in this chapter. It has been said that three principles in teaching are repeat, repeat, repeat. The fundamental element which will ensure our prosperity is our heart's desire. These desires must be molded through careful consideration of what God desires of us. This attitude is easy to develop when we realize that, "for a righteous man may fall seven times and rise again, but the wicked shall fall by calamity" (24:16).

Three fundamental essentials for spiritual shelter: wisdom, understanding, and knowledge

Read Proverbs 24:1-10

Building a life for oneself involves developing relationships. Our perception of what is "cool" forms our opinions and pursuits. When we are attracted to the company of those who reject godly activity, we take our first step toward foolish behavior. We may find ourselves intrigued by the immoral activity of acquaintances, but if we allow this to develop into a relationship (fellowship) our spiritual strength will fail.

Home ownership has long been considered the "American dream." Verses 3 and 4 use this analogy to increase our desire for righteous things. Our shelter from the world is built, established, and furnished in the ways of righteousness. Those devoid of this truth can only pursue the possessions of others, for they have no sense to obtain them themselves. Those who constantly attempt to make themselves feel better by degrading others are contemptible.

How to respond to your uninformed friends

Read Proverbs 24:11-20

Our actions and reactions to those with whom we come in contact speak volumes about our character. Knowledge and wisdom are not limited to personal applications but must be

"Through **wisdom** a house is **built**, and by understanding it is established; by **knowledge** the rooms are filled with all **precious and pleasant riches.**"

- Proverbs 24:3-4

Memorize and meditate

“Those who rebuke the wicked will have delight, and a good blessing shall come upon them.”

- Proverbs 24:25

shared and demonstrated before those who do not know truth. Verse 11 implies we ought not rush to judgment toward those who are without God. Additionally, verses 17 and 18 instruct us to avoid a vengeful spirit. “Beloved do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord. Therefore, ‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.’ Do not be overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:19-21).

One of the most influential characteristics of Christianity is the positive view of the future. This optimistic outlook is based upon the joy that knowledge delivers to your soul and the assurance that the ultimate end of your life is heaven. The number seven in Scripture often represents completeness or the totality of a thing. The message of verse 16 is that we shall rise above every adversity and trial. The doom of the wicked is certain. Though they may seem to prosper for the moment, “there will be no future for the evil man; the lamp of the wicked will be put out” (v. 20).

Reprove error, respect all men, and honor those in positions of authority

Read Proverbs 24:21-29

A real problem in our formative years of adulthood is allowing prejudice to creep in and distort our perception of others. Right and wrong must be determined by absolute principles and not be relative to the individual involved. It is easy to excuse sinful behavior of friends while pointing out the flaws of our enemies.

Those “given to change” (v. 21) refers to those who rebel against the powers that be. Honor must be given to civil rule that does not interfere with service to God. Acts 17:26-27 explains why we are to respect the governing authority. Also, this command is elaborated upon in Romans 13:1-7.

We must love all men. “Let love be without hypocrisy” (Romans 12:9). Prejudicial judgment will lead to our own condemnation (Matthew 7:1, 2). This does not mean no judgment is to be made, but we must make righteous judgments. “Those who rebuke the wicked will have delight, and a good blessing will come upon them” (v. 25).

Wisdom also comes through observation

Read Proverbs 24:30-34

Little can be added to the illustration of this text. The main point we would like to observe is that knowledge was imparted in this manner: "I looked on it and received instruction" (v. 32).

We can be assured of the destination of laziness without going there. Remember one purpose of this study is to know the result of wrong decisions before we make them. Observing the foolishness of others is a pathway to wisdom.

Questions to consider

1. Describe the various ways we may judge others. _____

2. Why, or in what way, do those who rebuke the wicked "delight?" _____
