

## Proverbial wealth

The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel: To know wisdom and instruction, to perceive the words of understanding, to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, judgment, and equity; to give prudence to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion – A wise man will hear and increase learning, and a man of understanding will attain wise counsel, to understand a proverb and an enigma, the words of the wise and their riddles. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction. (Pro 1:1-7)

My son, if you receive my words, and treasure my commands within you, so that you incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; yes, if you cry out for discernment, and lift up your voice for understanding, if you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; then you will understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding; He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk uprightly; He guards the paths of justice, and preserves the way of His saints. Then you will understand righteousness and justice, equity and every good path. (Pro 2:1-9)

My son, do not forget my law, but let your heart keep my commands; for length of days and long life and peace they will add to you. Let not mercy and truth forsake you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart, and so find favor and high esteem in the sight of God and man. Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and depart from evil. It will be health to your flesh, and strength to your bones. Honor the Lord with your possessions, and with the firstfruits of all your increase; so your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine. (Pro 3:1-10)

Happy is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gains understanding; for her proceeds are better than the profits of silver, and her gain than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies, and all the things you may desire cannot compare with her. Length of days is in her right hand, in her left hand riches and honor. Her paths are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, and happy are all who retain her. (Pro 3:13-18)

Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in the power of your hand to do so. Do not say to your neighbor, "Go, and come back, and tomorrow I will give it." When you have it with you. (Pro 3:27-28)

My son, if you have become surety for your friend, if you have shaken hands in pledge for a stranger, you are snared by the words of your mouth; you are taken by the words of your mouth. So do this, my son, and deliver yourself; for you have come into the hand of your friend: Go and humble yourself; plead with your friend. Give no sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids. Deliver yourself like a gazelle from the hand of the hunter, and like a bird from the hand of the fowler. (Pro 6:1-5)

People do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy himself when he is starving. Yet when he is found, he must restore sevenfold; he may have to give up all the substance of his house. (Pro 6:30-31)

"Receive my instruction, and not silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold; for wisdom is better than rubies, and all things one may desire cannot be compared with her. I, wisdom, dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge and discretion. The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverse mouth I hate. Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom; I am understanding, I have strength." (Pro 8:10-14)

"I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently will find me. Riches and honor are with me, enduring riches and righteousness. My fruit is better than gold, yes, than fine gold, and my revenue than choice silver. I traverse the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of justice, that I may cause those who love me to inherit wealth, that I may fill their treasuries." (Pro 8:17-21)

"Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a just man, and he will increase in learning. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. For by me your days will be multiplied, and years of life will be added to you. If you are wise, you are wise for yourself, and if you scoff, you will bear it alone." (Pro 9:9-12)

Treasures of wickedness profit nothing, but righteousness delivers from death. (Pro 10:2)

The rich man's wealth is his strong city; the destruction of the poor is their poverty. (Pro 10:15)

The labor of righteousness leads to life, the wages of the wicked to sin. (Pro 10:16)

The blessings of the Lord makes one rich, and He adds no sorrow with it. (Pro 10:22)

Dishonest scales are an abomination to the Lord, but a just weight is His delight. (Pro 11:1)

Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death. (Pro 11:4)

He who is surety for a stranger will suffer, but one who hates being surety is secure. (Pro 11:15)

The wicked man does deceptive work, but he who sows righteousness will have a sure reward. (Pro 11:18)

There is one who scatters, yet increases more; and there is one who withholds more than is right, but it leads to poverty. The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself. The people will curse him who withholds grain, but blessing will be on the head of him who sells it. (Pro 11:24-26)

The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise. (Pro 11:30)

Whoever loves instruction loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid. (Pro 12:1)

A righteous man regards the life of his animal, but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel. (Pro 12:10)

He who tills his land will be satisfied with bread, but he who follows frivolity is devoid of understanding. (Pro 12:11)

The wicked covet the catch of evil men, but the root of the righteous yields fruit. (Pro 12:12)

There is one who makes himself rich, yet has nothing; and one who makes himself poor, yet has great riches. (Pro 13:7)

Wealth gained by dishonesty will be diminished, but he who gathers by labor will increase. (Pro 13:11)

A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children, but the wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous. (Pro 13:22)

Where no oxen are, the trough is clean; but much increase comes by the strength of an ox. (Pro 14:4)

He who despises his neighbor sins; but he who has mercy on the poor, happy is he. (Pro 14:21)

In all labor there is profit, but idle chatter leads only to poverty. (Pro 14:23)

Better is a little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure with trouble. Better is a dinner of vegetables where love is, than a fatted calf with hatred. (Pro 15:16-17)

He who is greedy for gain troubles his own house, but he who hates bribes will live. (Pro 15:27)

Commit your works to the Lord, and your thoughts will be established. (Pro 16:3)

Better is a little with righteousness, than vast revenues without justice. (Pro 16:8)

Honest weights and scales are the Lord's; all the weights in the bag are His work. (Pro 16:11)

How much better to get wisdom than gold! And to get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver. (Pro 16:16)

Better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud. (Pro 16:19)

Better is a dry morsel with quietness, than a house full of feasting with strife. (Pro 17:1)

A man devoid of understanding shakes hands in a pledge, and becomes surety for his friend. (Pro 17:18)

A wicked man accepts a bribe behind the back to pervert the ways of justice. (Pro 17:23)

He who is slothful in his work is a brother to him who is a great destroyer. (Pro 18:9)

Better is the poor who walks in his integrity than one who is perverse in his lips, and is a fool. (Pro 19:1)

He who has pity on the poor lends to the Lord, and He will pay back what he has given. (Pro 19:17)

What is desired in a man is kindness, and a poor man is better than a liar. (Pro 19:22)

The lazy man will not plow because of winter; he will beg during harvest and have nothing. (Pro 20:4)

Diverse weights and diverse measures, they are both alike, an abomination to the Lord. (Pro 20:10)

Do not love sleep, lest you come to poverty; open your eyes, and you will be satisfied with bread. (Pro 20:13)

"It is good for nothing," cries the buyer; but when he has gone his way, then he boasts. (Pro 20:14)

There is gold and a multitude of rubies, but the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel. (Pro 20:15)

Take the garment of one who is surety for a stranger, and hold it as a pledge when it is for a seductress. (Pro 20:16)

Bread gained by deceit is sweet to a man, but afterward his mouth will be filled with gravel. (Pro 20:17)

An inheritance gained hastily at the beginning will not be blessed at the end. (Pro 20:21)

Diverse weights are an abomination to the Lord, and dishonest scales are not good. (Pro 20:23)

The plans of the diligent lead surely to plenty, but those of everyone who is hasty, surely to poverty. (Pro 21:5)

Getting treasures by a lying tongue is the fleeting fantasy of those who seek death. (Pro 21:6)

The way of the guilty man is perverse; but as for the pure, his work is right. (Pro 21:8)

Whoever shuts his ears to the cry of the poor will also cry himself and not be heard. (Pro 21:13)

He who loves pleasure will be a poor man; he who loves wine and oil will not be rich. (Pro 21:17)

There is desirable treasure, and oil in the dwelling of the wise, but a foolish man squanders it. (Pro 21:23)

The desire of a lazy man kills him, for his hands refuse to labor. He covets greedily all day long, but the righteous gives and does not spare. (Pro 21:25-26)

A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, loving favor rather than silver and gold. (Pro 22:1)

The rich and the poor have this in common, the Lord is the maker of them all. (Pro 22:2)

By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches and honor and life. (Pro 22:4)

The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender. (Pro 22:7)

He who has a generous eye will be blessed, for he gives of his bread to the poor. (Pro 22:9)

He who oppresses the poor to increase his riches, and he who gives to the rich, will surely come to poverty. (Pro 22:16)

Do not rob the poor because he is poor, nor oppress the afflicted at the gate; for the Lord will plead their cause, and plunder the soul of those who plunder them. (Pro 22:22-23)

Do not be one of those who shakes hands in a pledge, one of those who is surety for debts; if you have nothing with which to pay, why should he take away your bed from under you? (Pro 22:26-27)

Do you see a man who excels in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before unknown men. (Pro 22:29)

Do not overwork to be rich; because of your own understanding, cease! Will you set your eyes on that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away like an eagle toward heaven. (Pro 23:4-5)

Buy the truth, and do not sell it, also wisdom and instruction and understanding. (Pro 23:23)

Through wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches. (Pro 24:3-4)

Prepare your outside work, make it fit for yourself in the field; and afterward build your house. (Pro 24:27)

Do not be a witness against your neighbor without cause, for would you deceive with your lips? Do not say, "I will do to him just as he has done to me; I will render to the man according to his work." (Pro 24:28-29)

I went by the field of the lazy man, and by the vineyard of the man devoid of understanding; and there it was, all overgrown with thorns; its surface was covered with nettles; its stone wall was broken down. When I saw it, I considered it well; I looked on it and received instruction: A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest; so shall your poverty come like a prowler, and your need like an armed man. (Pro 24:30-34)

Do not go hastily to court; for what will you do in the end, when your neighbor has put you to shame? Debate your case with your neighbor, and do not disclose the secret to another; lest he who hears it expose your shame, and your reputation be ruined. (Pro 25:8-10)

Whoever falsely boasts of giving is like clouds and wind without rain. (Pro 25:14)

By long forbearance a ruler is persuaded, and a gentle tongue breaks a bone.  
(Pro 25:15)

Take the garment of him who is surety for a stranger, and hold it in pledge when he is surety for a seductress. (Pro 27:13)

Be diligent to know the state of your flocks, and attend to your herds; for riches are not forever, nor does a crown endure to all generations. When the hay is removed, and the tender grass shows itself, and the herbs of the mountains are gathered in, the lambs will provide your clothing, and the goats the price of a field; you shall have enough goats' milk for your food, for the food of your household, and the nourishment of your maidservants. (Pro 27:23-27)

A poor man who oppresses the poor is like a driving rain which leaves no food.  
(Pro 28:3)

Better is the poor who walks in his integrity than one perverse in his ways, though he be rich. (Pro 28:6)

One who increases his possessions by usury and extortion gathers it for him who will pity the poor. (Pro 28:8)

Like a roaring lion and a charging bear is a wicked ruler over poor people.  
(Pro 28:15)

A ruler who lacks understanding is a great oppressor, but he who hates covetousness will prolong his days. (Pro 28:16)

He who tills his land will have plenty of bread, but he who follows frivolity will have poverty enough! (Pro 28:19)

A faithful man will abound with blessings, but he who hastens to be rich will not go unpunished. (Pro 28:20)

A man with an evil eye hastens after riches, and does not consider that poverty will come upon him. (Pro 28:22)

Whoever robs his father or his mother, and says, "It is no transgression," the same is companion to a destroyer. (Pro 28:24)

He who gives to the poor will not lack, but he who hides his eyes will have many curses. (Pro 28:27)

Whoever loves wisdom makes his father rejoice, but a companion of harlots wastes his wealth. (Pro 29:3)

The righteous considers the cause of the poor, but the wicked does not understand such knowledge. (Pro 29:7)

Whoever is a partner with a thief hates his own life; he swears to tell the truth, but reveals nothing. (Pro 29:24)

Two things I request of You (Deprive me not before I die): Remove falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches – feed me with the food allotted to me; lest I be full and deny You, and say, “Who is the Lord?” Or else I be poor and steal, and profane the name of my God. (Pro 30:7-9)

The leech has two daughters – Give and Give!  
There are three things that are never satisfied, four never say, “Enough!”:  
The grave, the barren womb, the earth that is not satisfied with water – and the fire never says, “Enough!” (Pro 30:15-16)

Open your mouth for the speechless, in the cause of all who are appointed to die. Open your mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy. (Pro 31:8-9)

### The Virtuous Wife

Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies. The heart of her husband safely trusts her; so he will have no lack of gain. She does him good and not evil all the days of her life. She seeks wool and flax, and willingly works with her hands. She is like the merchant ships, she brings her food from afar. She also rises while it is yet night, and provides food for her household, and a portion for her maidservants.

She considers a field and buys it; from her profits she plants a vineyard. She girds herself with strength, and strengthens her arms. She perceives that her merchandise is good, and her lamp does not go out by night. She stretches out her hands to the distaff, and her hand holds the spindle. She extends her hand to the poor, yes, she reaches out her hands to the needy.

She is not afraid of snow for her household, for all her household is clothed with scarlet. She makes tapestry for herself; her clothing is fine linen and purple. Her husband is known in the gates, when he sits among the elders of the land. She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies sashes for the merchants. Strength and honor are her clothing; she shall rejoice in time to come.

She opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness. She watches over the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her:

“Many daughters have done well, but you excel them all.”

Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates. (Pro 31:10-31)

## Ecclesiasticus

To fear the Lord is the first step to Wisdom. Wisdom is given to the faithful in their mothers’ wombs. She has lived with us from ancient times, and generations to come will rely on her. To fear the Lord is Wisdom at her fullest; she satisfies us completely with her gifts and fills our homes and our barns with all that our hearts can desire. To fear the Lord is the flower of Wisdom that blossoms with peace and good health. She sends knowledge and understanding like the rain, and increases the honour of those who receive her. To fear the Lord is the root of Wisdom; her branches are long life. (Sir 1:14-17)

Stay with the Lord; never abandon Him, and you will be prosperous at the end of your days. (Sir 2:3)

If you respect your father, you can make up for your sins, and if you honour your mother, you are earning great wealth. If you respect your father, one day your own children will make you happy; the Lord will hear your prayers. If you obey the Lord by honouring your father and making your mother happy, you will live a long life. Obey your parents as if you were their slave. Honour your father in everything you do and say, so that you may receive his blessing. When parents give their blessing, they give strength to their children's homes, but when they curse their children, they destroy the very foundations. (Sir 3:3-9)

My son, be humble in everything you do, and people will appreciate it more than gifts. The greater you become, the more humble you should be; then the Lord will be pleased with you. The Lord's power is great, and he is honoured by those who are humble. (Sir 3:17-20)

Many people have been misled by their own opinions; their wrong ideas have warped their judgement. (Sir 3:24)

Intelligent people will learn from proverbs and parables. They listen well because they want to learn. (Sir 3:29)

Giving to the poor can make up for sin, just as water can put out a blazing fire. Anyone who responds to others with acts of kindness is thinking of the future, because he will find help if he ever falls on hard times. (Sir 3:30-31)

My son, don't prevent the poor from making a living, or keep them waiting in their need. Never give a hungry person any cause for resentment or anger. Don't add to the troubles of someone who is already desperate. If he is in need, don't put off giving to him. Don't refuse to help a beggar who is in distress. Don't turn your back on a poor person or give him any reason to curse you. If he becomes so bitter that he does curse you, his Creator will hear his prayer. (Sir 4:1-6)

Bow your head to men of authority. Listen to what the poor have to say, and answer them politely. Protect people from those who want to wrong them, and be firm in your judgements. Be like a father to orphans, and provide widows with the help their husbands can no longer give them. Then you will be like a son of the Most High, and He will love you more than your own mother does. (Sir 4:8-10)

Take advantage of opportunities, but guard yourself against evil. Don't underrate yourself. Humility deserves honour and respect, but a low opinion of yourself leads to sin. Do not let others have their way at your expense; do not bring on your own ruin by giving up your rights. Never hesitate to speak out when the occasion calls for it. Don't hide your wisdom. Your wisdom and education can be known only by what you say. Do not, however, go against the truth, and remember that you do not know everything. Don't be ashamed to confess your sins; there's no point in trying to stop a river from flowing. Don't allow yourself to be dominated by someone who is stupid or show partiality to influential people. Stand up for what is right, even if it costs you your life; the Lord God will be fighting on your side. Don't be quick to speak or lazy and negligent in your work. Don't act like a lion at home or be suspicious of your servants. Don't stick out your hand to get something if you're going to be tightfisted when the time comes to pay it back. (Sir 4:20-31)

Don't rely on money to make you independent. Don't think to have everything you want, and then spend your energy trying to get it. Don't think that no one can exercise authority over you; if you do, the Lord is certain to punish you. Don't think that you can sin and get away with it; the Lord does not mind waiting to punish you. Don't be so certain of the Lord's forgiveness that you go on committing one sin after another. Don't think that His mercy is so great that he will forgive your sins no matter how many they are. He does show mercy, but He also shows His furious anger with sinners. Come back to the Lord quickly. Don't think that you can keep putting it off. His anger can come upon you suddenly, and you will die under His punishment. Don't rely on dishonest wealth; it will do you no good on that day of disaster. (Sir 5:1-8)

Be certain about what you believe and consistent in what you say. Don't try to please everyone or agree with everything people say. Always be ready to listen, but take your time in answering. Answer only if you know what to say, and if you don't know what to say, keep quiet. Speaking can bring you either honour or disgrace; what you say can ruin you. Don't get a reputation for being a gossip, and don't tell tales that will hurt people. Just as thieves will suffer disgrace, so liars will suffer severe condemnation. Do nothing destructive, whether it seems insignificant or not, and do not be an enemy when you should be a friend. (Sir 5:9-15)

A loyal friend is like a safe shelter; find one, and you have found a treasure. Nothing else is as valuable; there is no way of putting a price on it. A loyal friend is like a medicine that keeps you in good health. Only those who fear the Lord can find such a friend. A person who fears the Lord can make real friendships, because he will treat his friends as he does himself. (Sir 6:14-17)

My son, learn to value Wisdom while you are young, and you will still be able to find her when you grow old. Work as hard to find Wisdom as a farmer works to plough and sow his fields; then you can expect a good harvest. You will have to work at it for a while, but you will soon be enjoying what you have earned. Undisciplined people find Wisdom's demands too hard and don't have enough determination to meet them. Her requirements are a burden heavier than they are willing to bear, and they quickly lay them aside. 'Discipline' means just that – discipline, and not many people are able to discipline themselves. (Sir 6:18-22)

My son, you can learn if you want to. You can be clever if you are determined to be. If you are willing to listen, you will learn and become wise. Go where the old people are; find someone who is wise, and stay with him. Be ready to listen when religious people speak, and don't miss anything that shows insight. (Sir 6:32-35)

Devote all your time to studying the Lord's commands and thinking about them. He will give you the insight and wisdom you are looking for. (Sir 6:37)

If you do no wrong, no wrong will ever come to you. Do not plough the ground to sow seeds of injustice; you may reap a bigger harvest than you expect. (Sir 7:1-3)

Don't commit the same sin twice. The punishment you get the first time ought to be enough. Don't think that God Most High is going to take into account how very generous you are and so accept any offering you decide to make. Never get tired of praying, and never miss a chance to give to the poor. (Sir 7:8-10)

In an official assembly, don't get up and talk a lot of nonsense. And don't repeat yourself when you pray. (Sir 7:14)

Don't try to avoid farm work or other hard labour; the Most High has given us these jobs to do. Don't join forces with a crowd of sinners; remember that the Lord's punishment is sure to come. Be very humble, because the decay of death awaits us all. Don't betray a friend for money. Don't betray a real friend for all the gold in the world. Don't miss your chance to marry a wise and good woman. A gracious wife is worth more than gold. Don't ill-treat servants who do their work well, or employees who do their best for you. Show the same love to wise servants that you would show to yourself, and let them have their freedom. Take good care of any animals you own. If they make money for you, keep them. (Sir 7:15-22)

Give your help to the poor, and the Lord will give you His perfect blessing. Be generous to every living soul, and be gracious to the memory of the dead. Show sympathy to those who have lost a loved one, and mourn with them. Do not hesitate to visit the sick. You will be loved for things like these. Whatever you do, remember that some day you must die. As long as you keep this in mind, you will never sin. (Sir 7:32-36)

You should not lend anything to someone more powerful than you. If you do, you might as well consider it lost. You should not guarantee anyone else's loan to an extent that you cannot afford. You must be prepared to pay any such guarantee. (Sir 8:12-13)

Never abandon old friends; you will never find a new one who can take their place. Friendship is like wine; it gets better as it grows older. (Sir 9:10)

Get to know the people round you as well as you can, and take advice only from those who are qualified to give it. Engage in conversation with intelligent people, and let the Law of the Most High be the topic of your discussions. Choose righteous people for your dinner companions. Your chief pride should be your fear of the Lord. Skilled workers are admired for the things they make, and leaders' wisdom is proved by their words. Someone who speaks rashly and recklessly is feared and hated by everyone in town. (Sir 9:14-18)

Pride has its beginning when a person abandons the Lord, his Maker. Pride is like a fountain pouring out sin, and whoever persists in it will be filled with wickedness. That is why the Lord brought terrible punishments on some people and completely destroyed them. (Sir 10:12-13)

When you do your work, don't make a show of your skill, and don't try to put on an act when you are in trouble. It is better to work and have more than you need than to go about boasting but hungry. My son, keep your self-respect, but remain modest. Value yourself at your true worth. There is no excuse for a person who runs himself down. No one respects a person who has no respect for himself. Poor people can be honoured for their good sense, and rich people can be honoured for their wealth. (Sir 10:26-30)

My son, don't get involved in too many things. If you try to do too much, you will suffer for it. You won't be able to finish your work, and you won't be able to get away from it either. For instance, here is someone who never stops working like a slave, but gets further behind all the time. On the other hand, someone else may be very poor and not up to his task. He may be slow, and he may need help, but the Lord is pleased with him and pulls him out of his bad situation. When he is back on his feet again, everyone is astounded. (Sir 11:10-11)

Everything comes from the Lord: Success and failure, poverty and wealth, life and death. Wisdom, understanding, knowledge of the Law, love, and the doing of good deeds – all these come from the Lord. (Sir 11:14-15)

The Lord's gifts to religious people are gifts that endure. If He approves of you, you will always be successful. Someone may grow rich by working hard and denying himself pleasure, but what does he get for it? He says to himself, "Now I can finally sit back and enjoy what I have worked for." But he has no idea how long it will be before he must die and leave his wealth to others. (Sir 11:17-19)

Stand by your duty and stick at it; grow old at your work. Don't be jealous of what sinners achieve; just stick to your own work, and trust the Lord. It is very easy for the Lord to make a poor person suddenly rich. Devout people will receive the Lord's blessing as their reward, and that blessing can be given in a moment. (Sir 11:20-22)

When you do a good deed, make sure you know who is benefiting from it; then what you do will not be wasted. You will be repaid for any kindness you show to a devout person. If he doesn't repay you, the Most High will. No good ever comes to a person who gives comfort to the wicked; it is not a righteous act. Give to religious people, but don't help sinners. Do good to humble people, but don't give anything to those who are not devout. Don't give them food, or they will use your kindness against you. Every good thing you do for such people will bring you twice as much trouble in return. The Most High Himself hates sinners, and He will punish them. Give to good people, but do not help sinners. (Sir 12:1-7)

*Clearly in this advice: A righteous person is someone who loves righteousness, and the works of righteousness; who may accidentally sin sometimes, but they are quick to repent of the sin, and to ask for forgiveness from the Lord. A sinner is someone who loves sin, habitually practices the works of sin, and does not worry about the consequences of sinning. (leigh)*

If you touch tar, it will stick to you, and if you keep company with arrogant people, you will come to be just like them. Don't try to lift something too heavy for you, and don't keep company with people who are richer and more powerful than you. (Sir 13:1-2)

There is nothing wrong with being rich if you haven't sinned to get there. But there is nothing sinful about being poor, either. Only the ungodly think so. It's what is in your heart that makes the expression on your face happy or sad. If you feel cheerful, you will look cheerful, although making up proverbs calls for some intense thought. (Sir 13:24-26)

It isn't right for someone who is selfish to be rich. What use is money to a stingy person? If you deny yourself in order to accumulate wealth, you are only accumulating it for someone else. Others will use your riches to live in luxury. How can you be generous with others if you are stingy with yourself, if you are not willing to enjoy your own wealth? No one is worse off than someone who is stingy with himself; it is a sin that brings its own punishment. (Sir 14:3-6)

Some people are too stingy to put bread on their own table. My son, treat yourself as well as you can, and bring worthy offerings to the Lord. Remember that death is coming for you some day, and you haven't been told when that will be. Before that day comes, be kind to your friends; be as generous as you can. Don't deny yourself a single day's happiness. If there is something you want to do and it is lawful, go ahead!

Some day all that you have worked for will be divided up and given to others. So be generous; but also be willing to receive from others. Enjoy yourself, for you will not find any pleasures in the world of the dead. (Sir 14:10-16)

If you want to, you can keep the Lord's commands. You can decide whether you will be loyal to Him or not. He has placed fire and water before you; reach out and take whichever you want. You have a choice between life and death; you will get whichever you choose. The Lord's wisdom and power are great and He sees everything. He is aware of everything a person does, and He takes care of those who fear Him. He has never commanded anyone to be wicked or given anyone permission to sin. (Sir 15:15-20)

The Lord is merciful, but He can also become angry. He can be overwhelming in His forgiveness or in His anger. His punishment is as severe as His mercy is great. He judges people by what they have done. No sinner can escape with what he has stolen. The Lord will reward the patience of devout people. Every righteous person will be rewarded; everyone will get what he deserves. (Sir 16:11-16)

When we give to the poor, the Lord considers it as precious as a valuable ring. Human kindness is as precious to Him as life itself. (Sir 17:22)

How great is the Lord's merciful forgiveness of those who turn to Him! But this is not the nature of human beings; not one of us is immortal. Nothing is brighter than the sun, but even the sun's light fails during an eclipse. How much easier it is for human thoughts to be eclipsed by evil! The Lord can look out over all the stars in the sky. Human beings? They are dust and ashes. (Sir 17:29-32)

Know what you are talking about before you speak, and give attention to your health before you get ill. Examine your conscience before the Lord judges you; then when that time comes, He will forgive you. Humble yourself before you are punished with sickness. When you have sinned, show repentance. (Sir 18:19-21)

Don't be controlled by your lust; keep your passions in check. If you allow yourself to satisfy your every desire, you will be a joke to your enemies. Don't indulge in luxurious living; the expense of it will ruin you. Don't make yourself a beggar by borrowing for expensive banquets when you haven't enough money of your own. If you do, you will never get rich; if you don't pay attention to small matters, you will gradually ruin yourself. (Sir 18:30-19:1)

Generosity will sometimes do you no good, but at other times it will repay you double. (Sir 20:10)

If a person is too poor to afford sin, he can rest without a guilty conscience. You can lose all your self-respect by being reluctant to speak up in the presence of stupidity. If you promise a friend something because you are too bashful to say no, you're making an enemy needlessly. (Sir 20:21-23)

Speak wisely, and you will get ahead in the world. Influential people appreciate good sense. They will excuse your errors if they like you, so cultivate the soil and reap the harvest! (Sir 20:27-28)

Have you sinned, my son? Don't do it again, and pray for forgiveness for what you have already done. Avoid sin as if it were a snake. If you get too near, it will sink its teeth into your soul like a lion, and destroy you. Every lawless act leaves an incurable wound, like one left by a double-edged sword. (Sir 21:1-3)

Someone who borrows money to build a house is just collecting stones for his own tomb. (Sir 21:8)

A merchant can hardly avoid doing wrong; every salesman is guilty of sin. Many people have sinned while looking for a profit; if you want to be rich you have to keep blinkers on your eyes. It is hard to remove a peg that is stuck between two stones of a house, and it is just as hard to remove dishonesty from buying and selling. Unless you are determined in your fear of the Lord, your house is going to come down on you. (Sir 26:29-27:3)

Don't you fence in your property? Don't you lock up your money? Well, be just as careful with what you say. Weigh every word, and have a lock ready for your mouth. Someone may be waiting for you to slip, and if you are not careful, you will stumble over your own words and fall down in front of him. (Sir 28:24-26)

Be kind enough to lend to your neighbour when he needs help. You are keeping the Lord's commands if you help him. If he needs something, lend it to him. And when you are in debt, pay it back as soon as you can. If you meet your obligations, you will always be able to borrow what you need. (Sir 29:1-3)

Nevertheless, be understanding with those who are poor. Don't keep them waiting for your generosity. The Lord has commanded us to help the poor; don't refuse them the help they need. (Sir 29:8-9)

A good man is willing to guarantee his neighbour's debts. Only someone who has lost all sense of decency would refuse to do so. If someone does this favour for you, don't forget it; he has risked his good name for you. (Sir 29:14-15)

Guaranteeing loans has ruined many prosperous people and caused them unsettling storms of trouble. Influential people have lost their homes over it and have had to go wandering in foreign countries. (Sir 29:17-18)

It is better to be poor, but strong and healthy, than to be rich, but in poor health. A sound healthy body and a cheerful attitude are more valuable than gold and jewels. Nothing can make you richer or give you greater happiness than those two things. (Sir 30:14-16)

Worrying about money will make you lose weight and lose sleep. Worrying about business will keep you from sleeping just as surely as a serious illness does. Rich people work hard to make a lot of money; then they can sit back and live in luxury. Poor people work hard and have nothing to show for it, and when they rest, they are still poor. No one who loves money can be judged innocent; his efforts to get rich have led him into sin. Many people have been ruined because of money, brought face to face with disaster. Money is a trap for those who are fascinated by it, a trap that every fool falls into. (Sir 31:1-7)

Food means life itself to poor people, and taking it away from them is murder. It is murder to deprive someone of his living or to cheat an employee of his wages. (Sir 34:21-22)

Keeping the Law is worth many offerings; it is a fellowship-offering in itself. Returning a kindness is like a grain-offering; giving to the poor is like a thanksgiving-offering. Keeping away from sin will please the Lord and make atonement for sin. But don't come to the Temple without an offering; the Law requires that you bring one. (Sir 35:1-5)

Praise the Lord by making generous offerings to Him; don't be stingy with the first of your crops. Be cheerful with every gift you make, and when you pay your tithes, do it gladly. Give to the Most High as He has given to you, just as generously as you can. The Lord always repays and will do it many times over. But don't try to bribe Him or rely on offerings that you have obtained dishonestly. He will not accept them. (Sir 35:8-11)

For the devout, His ways are straight; for the wicked, they are laid with traps. From the beginning He has made good things for the good and terrible things for sinners. The basic needs of life are these: water, fire, iron, and salt, flour, honey, and milk, wine, clothing, and oil. All these things are good for those who are devout, but they turn into evils for sinners. (Sir 39:25-27)

Acts of kindness and charity are as lasting as eternity. (Sir 40:17)

Gold and silver provide security, but good advice is better. Wealth and strength give confidence, but the fear of the Lord can give you even greater confidence. When you fear the Lord you need nothing more; it is all the support you need. The fear of the Lord is like a rich garden of blessings; you could not want a more glorious shelter. (Sir 40:25-27)

A person's body amounts to nothing, but a good reputation will last for ever. Protect your reputation; it will outlive you and last longer than a thousand treasures of gold. A good life lasts only a short time, but a good reputation will last for ever. My children, do as I teach you and live at peace. Wisdom that is not expressed is like a treasure that has been hidden – both are useless. (Sir 41:11-14)

Here are some things you should not be ashamed of: The Law of the Most High and His Covenant, judging even godless people fairly, sharing expenses with a business partner or a travelling companion, sharing an inheritance, using accurate weights and measures, making a profit, whether great or small, bargaining with a merchant, disciplining your children often, beating a disloyal slave until the blood flows. It is wise to lock things up if you cannot trust your wife or if too many people are around. Keep an accurate record of any deposits you make or of anything you give or receive. Don't hesitate to correct someone who is acting foolishly or an old man who goes about with prostitutes. All this is worthwhile advice, and if you follow it, everyone will approve of your behaviour. (Sir 42:1-8)

*These quotes come from the Book of Proverbs (NKJV), and the Book of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) from the Good News Bible (TEV) with Deutero-Canonical Books. I only paid R60 for this Bible, but the wisdom contained in the Book of Sirach alone, is worth paying thousands of rands for as it contains wisdom for life, which guards one against the many traps and pitfalls. If a youth can absorb the wisdom of the Books of Proverbs and Sirach, they will be very wise indeed!*

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2Ti 3:16-17)

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