

Proverbs 22:5-16

⁵ Thorns and snares are in the way of the crooked; whoever guards his soul will keep far from them.

Back in **Proverbs 21:8** we learned that the way, or the path, the self-informed, self-defined, self-directed person is twisted and crooked. There's not only nothing straight about it; it's one that is strewn with **thorns and snares**.

Thorns = Thorn; thorn hedge; barb; fish hook. The concise Hebrew and Aramaic lexicon of the Old Testament defines it as **butcher's hook**.¹ God uses this exact Hebrew word when He foretells (via the prophet Amos) the brutality of Assyrians when they would lead the Northern kingdom of Israel into captivity.

Amos 4:2 The Lord God has sworn by his holiness that, behold, the days are coming upon you, when they shall take you away with hooks, even the last of you with fishhooks.

snares = a net, a snare.... Used metaphorically to speak of the thing by which any one falls, i.e. is led to destruction.²

Thorns and snares are in the way of the crooked —

God is informing us of the inescapable outcome of the self-informed, self-defined and self-directed life.

whoever guards his soul will keep far from them — A Christian cannot isolate himself from bent, broken, unredeemed people and at the same time live on mission. Some of you know Jesus because you were blessed to have parents who loved Jesus (more to say on that in the next verse); or

¹ Holladay, W. L., Köhler, L., & Köhler, L. (2000). *A concise Hebrew and Aramaic lexicon of the Old Testament*. Leiden: Brill.

² Gesenius, W., & Tregelles, S. P. (2003). *Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures*. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

siblings, or close relatives who loved Jesus. But a lot of people never had Gospel influence in the home. They came to know and love Jesus because a Christian, or Christians, stepped into their bent and broken life and loved them just as they were — and served them and told them of all that God did in the sending of His Son to save them.

HERE'S THE QUESTION — How do we live on mission and at the same time stay far from them? Can such a thing even be done? The answer is found by looking at Jesus — the ultimate and perfect missionary. He sat and ate meals with the tax collectors and prostitutes. He got face to face with men and women whose loves were bent and broken because they were living without Him and against Him! In a very real, tangible and personal way — Jesus got face to face with them. Yet He was in another way far from them! He was literally face to face with them — He literally rubbed shoulders with them, and broke bread with them — but He was always ***other-than!*** but He was always ***other-than***. He loved them with a love that was *other-than* any love they had known. Without ever compromising His holiness, the worst of sinners wanted to be with Him.

HERE'S THE POINT — We need the Holy Spirit to conform us to the heart and holiness of Jesus so that we might be face to face with men and women whose lives are shredded by thorns and caught in the snare of sin; so we might be vessels of God's grace and mercy — bringing the Gospel with us — and yet never follow them into the thorns and snares!

Luke 10:25-37 And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" ²⁶He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" ²⁷And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." ²⁸And he said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live."

²⁹But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" ³⁰Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. ³¹Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. ³²So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed

by on the other side. ³³But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. ³⁴He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' ³⁶Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" ³⁷He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."

6 Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.

Without a doubt, this is the best-known and most quoted verse in Proverbs on raising children.

Train up a child — The Hebrew word for **train** (*hānak*) means to dedicate. The word is sometimes used in the sense of "start." We can see that sense of the word when the grand opening of buildings or parks and monuments are opened with a "dedication."

This verse in **Proverbs 22:6** is the only place the verb form of the word is translated "train." When it comes to raising children you need to start them in the right direction. Hence the idea of "training" them. Like planting a tree. When it's a sapling you use a pole to train it — get it growing upright from the very beginning.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says that this word carries the idea of setting aside, narrowing, or hedging in. Raising children involves "narrowing" a child's conduct away from evil and toward godliness.

Train up a child in the way he should go — The way he should go is the way we **need** to go, the way we were **designed** to go, **created** to go: VERTICAL! We need to train them to live a life totally dependent upon God; a life dependent upon God as creator and redeemer; a life dependent upon God to inform, define and direct us. **If we are faithful** to that as

parents our children will have the tools to know the way to a relationship with God.

2 Timothy 3:15 and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

If we are faithful to that as parents our children will also have the tools to know the way they shouldn't go. There will come a day when they will need to own they way the should go as their way!

WHEN are we to do this? When they are young. HOW do we do this? By talking and walking — because children learn by hearing and seeing!

HEARING — *Deuteronomy 6:6-7 And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.*

I'll begin by saying this: We can only effectually speak to our kids with truth that we own — truth that owns us: *these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.*

Every moment in the day is a potential teaching moment. Pointing them to Jesus and depending upon Jesus in every situation, every circumstance. Showing them God in everyday life, how God is present in, concerned with, and has wisdom for everyday life.

SEEING — They are very sharp listeners! They are like sponges. But our lives need to reinforce what we say.

Proverbs 20:7 The righteous who walks in his integrity— blessed are his children after him!

It **doesn't say** that the man who merely **talks** about what he believes will be a blessing to his children. God wants us to **talk** to our kids about our faith in Jesus, and our faith in the Word of God. But our lives need to be

consistent with the things they've heard us say. Paul urges us to have a life that's consistent with the Gospel.

***Ephesians 4:1-3** I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, **urge** you to **walk** in a **manner worthy** of the calling to which you have been called, ²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

Our lives should help our kids see what that vertical connection looks like. The way we live should make the vertical life tangible. We should be the living exposition of what we've taught them.

Dads, moms — you will BLESS your kids when you *live as though* God loves you so much that He became man and stood in your place because you had put yourself in God's place. Your kids will be blessed when your professed faith translates into worship. Parents, when all that you are — all that you do — all that you could ever hope to become is poured out to Jesus and for Jesus — your kids will be blessed!

If our **walk** doesn't match our **talk** we won't be a blessing to our kids! We can actually stumble them — drive them away from the Gospel. Once again — we are pointed to our **utter dependency** on the person and power of the Holy Spirit — *Galatians 5:25* **If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.**

even when he is old he will not depart from it — There are a lot of godly, sincere moms and dads who will say that they followed the front end of this proverb to the absolute best of their ability — but their children have walked away from the Lord. Is the Word of God not true? Did God promise something and not deliver?

This proverb is not absolute guarantees in all times for every parent and child **because** it expresses a truth that is **conditioned upon** a human response. The parent has a role to play. The parent can fail in that role and yet the grace of God can meet that child while they're walking on that crooked path of **verse 5**. Conversely, a parent can be totally faithful to their responsibility but the child must own the truth. God gives the child the freedom to accept or embrace the Gospel. Once Gospel truth is

personally owned, personally believed, they will not ultimately depart from it because it's the Lord's work to preserve them.

7 The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is the slave of the lender.

In the fallen, broken economy of the world, wealth is abused in exerting dominion over the poor. In God's redeeming economy wealth serves!

The term **slave** can have the sense of "servant."³ In other words, the person who borrows money doesn't necessarily become a literal slave, but he does have an obligation to the lender. Some translations read this as a simile — "and people who take loans are *like* slaves to those who lend."

8 Whoever sows injustice will reap calamity

Galatians 6:7 NLT *Don't be misled—you cannot mock the justice of God. You will **always** harvest **what** you plant.*

"The person who plants injustice like someone plants a crop, the thing he will see from it is trouble."⁴

and the rod of his fury will fail.

Fury is translated from a word that means "overflowing rage." Most commentators explain this as "the tyranny of bad and powerful men" or "oppression of others."⁵ In some languages the sense of this line is expressed as "he won't be able to hurt others any more."⁶

³ Reyburn, W. D., & Fry, E. M. (2000). *A handbook on Proverbs* (p. 465). New York: United Bible Societies.

⁴ Reyburn, W. D., & Fry, E. M. (2000). *A handbook on Proverbs* (p. 466). New York: United Bible Societies.

⁵ Reyburn, W. D., & Fry, E. M. (2000). *A handbook on Proverbs* (p. 466). New York: United Bible Societies.

⁶ Reyburn, W. D., & Fry, E. M. (2000). *A handbook on Proverbs* (p. 466). New York: United Bible Societies.

God is informing those who suffer under such power that whatever the wicked achieve through the rage of their tyranny won't last — their brutal oppression and manipulation will be exhausted. (Apply to home, school, work.)

9 Whoever has a bountiful eye will be blessed, for he shares his bread with the poor.

a bountiful eye — is a Hebrew idiom. An idiom is a group of words that over time are used in such a way that they take on a meaning that would never be deduced from the individual words (e.g., *raining cats and dogs*). This idiom can be understood to mean — “a generous man” (Scott, niv), “those who are generous” (nrsv), and “one who is kindly” (reb).⁷

Out of his generosity he shares his bread. Remember, bread in Solomon’s day was the staple of life! Our generosity is directly linked to our understanding of grace! The more personally and clearly we understand just how generous God is in the giving of His Son to save us, the more generous we become.

2 Corinthians 8:1-2; 9 *We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, ²for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.....⁹For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.*

Our generosity is also limited when we make created things ultimate things. The Gospel changes that, and frees us to be generous!

QUOTE: Tim Keller — *I have many good things in my life—family, work, spiritual disciplines, etc. But none of these good things are ultimate things to me. None of them are things I absolutely have to have..... I no longer serve them as my main hope, my source of meaning, happiness, security, and significance....*

⁷ Reyburn, W. D., & Fry, E. M. (2000). *A handbook on Proverbs* (p. 466). New York: United Bible Societies.

The generous man is a blessed man. He's generous because he IS blessed; *blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus*. He's also blessed because He receives the joy of being a part of God's redeeming economy.

Acts 20:35 remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

He is blessed because he senses the pleasure of God, senses God smiling on his generosity. He's blessed because he's laid up treasures in heaven. He will ultimately be blessed to hear Jesus say, *"Well done good and faithful servant."*

¹⁰ Drive out a scoffer, and strife will go out, and quarreling and abuse will cease.

This is big stuff for those in leadership! Here God is informing us and directing us.

God is informing us that the scoffer is fuel for the fire of strife and contention.

God is directing us as to how to eliminate strife, quarreling and abuse. Find the source — the person who speaks ill of others, and in so doing instigates and perpetuates conflict, dissension and contention — and drive them out.

It is the job, the responsibility, of those in leadership to ensure that the flock of God is free from contention and strife. This doesn't mean drive out anyone who isn't in lock-step agreement with leadership. It's possible for there to be disagreement and not have strife. The scoffer is the person who wants there to be strife. At first — the only thing that can be seen is absence of unity and peace and the presence of strife and the conflict. It takes love, patience, courage and discernment to get to the source of it all. Not every-one caught up in the conflict needs to be removed. Sheep are sheep. They go where they're led. They need to be corrected in love,

shown what went wrong so they can take personal responsibility for their own heart issues and the part they played in it.

The key is to discover the scoffer — the source — and remove them. The KJV reads it as “cast them out.” This is important: Cast them out doesn’t mean “cast them off.” We are not to cast them off; cast them adrift as if they are no longer members of the Body of Christ. We’re to remove them from the privileges and blessings of fellowship so they will see the value and blessedness of the local church and the how precious it is to God so they can repent and be restored. The point is for them to be reconciled with God — come into line with God’s agenda!

We need to pray for such a person. We need to hate the sin and pity the sinner.

¹¹ He who loves purity of heart, and whose speech is gracious, will have the king as his friend.

Once again we’re tethered to **Proverbs 4:23**. Gracious speech flows from a pure heart! Bitter, fault-finding, condemning words can never flow from a heart that’s pure, a heart that’s been transformed by grace.

Jesus said, “Blessed are the pure in heart for they (and they alone) will see God! The man or woman whose heart has been washed in the blood of Jesus and transformed by grace — and from that heart speaks with grace, will have the King of kings as their Friend.

¹² The eyes of the Lord keep watch over knowledge, but he overthrows the words of the traitor.

The Lord overthrows those who want to overthrow our faith. He’s there, fighting for us, standing with us.

¹³ The sluggard says, “There is a lion outside! I shall be killed in the streets!”

The lazy person is going to make up any excuse to avoid work!

14 The mouth of forbidden women is a deep pit; he with whom the Lord is angry will fall into it.

forbidden woman = a woman other than your wife.

Sometimes you look at a man destroyed by sexual sin, a man ruined by adultery, and you wonder, “How in the world did he end up in ruin?” He’s a man who has constantly refused to listen to the Lord. Instead of listening listening to the Lord he was listening the enticing words of a woman that God said was forbidden. The anger of the Lord is expressed in this way: “If that’s what you want, that’s what you get.”

15 Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him.

DON’T MISS THIS PARENTS — By the very nature that your child inherited from Adam and Eve, there is **folly bound up** in his little heart. It’s not lying on the surface needing to be skimmed of. It's **bound** there. And it’s treacherous. It’s the folly that rebels against the wisdom and ways of God. It’s the folly that rebels against mom and dad. And it needs to be removed. How? The Word of God says that part of that process involves the rod.

Please be very sensitive to the issues surrounding corporal punishment. But do not throw out the dictates of God I’m quite confident that as God inspired Solomon to write this, He was fully aware of the prevailing social and legal conditions of the early 21st century. And if He really wanted to He could have said, “Except at the end of the 20th century — then you're going to have to stop spanking your kids.”

16 Whoever oppresses the poor to increase his own wealth, or gives to the rich, will only come to poverty.