

Proverbs

(Those who choose wisdom and follow God will be blessed in numerous ways.)



Proverbs 5

*For each man's ways are plain to the Lord's sight;
all their paths he surveys;
By his own iniquities the wicked man will be caught,
in the meshes of his own sin he will be held fast;
He will die from lack of discipline,
through the greatness of his folly he will be lost.*

Proverbs 5:21-23

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Knowledge is an accumulation of raw facts, but wisdom is the ability to see people, events, and situations as God sees them. In the Book of Proverbs, the mind of God is revealed in matters high and lofty and in common, ordinary, everyday situations as well. It appears that no topic escapes attention. Summarizing the Book of Proverbs is difficult for unlike many other books of Scripture, there is no particular plot or storyline found in its pages; nor are there any principal characters found in the book. It is wisdom that takes center stage— a grand, divine wisdom that transcends the whole of history, peoples and cultures. The theme of wisdom and its necessity in our lives finds its fulfillment in Christ. In Proverbs we are exhorted that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

Both the Latin and English translation of each line of the verse will be outlined, along with a brief Catholic explanation of that line of the verse.

Proverbs 5

{5:1} Fili mi, attende ad sapientiam meam, et prudentiæ meæ inclina aurem tuam,

{5:1} My son, pay attention to my wisdom, and incline your ear to my prudence,

¹ My son, pay attention to my wisdom, listen carefully to what I know;

{5:2} ut custodias cogitationes, et disciplinam labia tua conservent. Ne attendas fallaciæ mulieris.

{5:2} so that you may guard your thinking, and so that your lips may preserve discipline. Do not pay attention to the deceit of a woman.

² so that you may preserve discretion and your lips may guard knowledge. Take no notice of a loose-living woman,

{5:3} Favus enim distillans labia meretricis, et nitidius oleo guttur eius.

{5:3} For the lips of a loose woman are like a dripping honeycomb, and her voice is smoother than oil.

~ The word 'meretricis' can mean prostitute, but it can also, more often, refer to a woman who behaves like a prostitute: either a kept woman with only one lover, or a promiscuous woman with many lovers. The translation as 'loose woman' is a better fit for the meaning of the text. As is clear from the previous verse, this passage is not merely warning against prostitution, but against loose living.

³ for the lips of the adulteress drip with honey, her palate is more unctuous than oil,

{5:21} Respicit Dominus vias hominis, et omnes gressus eius considerat.

{5:21} The Lord beholds the ways of man, and he considers all his steps.

²¹ For the eyes of Yahweh observe human ways, and survey all human paths.

{5:22} Iniquitates suas capiunt impium, et funibus peccatorum suorum constringitur.

{5:22} His own iniquities take hold of the impious, and he is bound by the cords of his own sins.

²² The wicked is snared in his own misdeeds, is caught in the meshes of his own sin.

{5:23} Ipse morietur, quia non habuit disciplinam, et in multitudine stultitiæ suæ decipietur.

{5:23} He shall die, for he has not held to discipline. And by the multitude of his foolishness, he shall be deceived.

²³ For want of discipline, he dies, led astray by his own excessive folly.

End of Proverbs 5

{5:17} Habeto eas solus, nec sint alieni participes tui.

{5:17} Hold them for yourself alone, and do not let strangers be partakers with you.

~ When applied to doctrine, this verse and the previous one can be understood in a number of ways. Concerning doctrine, one can distribute it far and wide, sharing it in the streets. Or one can keep it to oneself, so that only you and God know your thoughts about the Faith. But in either case, one cannot 'let strangers be partakers' casting the pearls of true doctrine before those swine who ridicule and despise the truth.

~ It is not so unusual to have two consecutive verses that seem to contradict one another. This technique of writing causes the reader to think about the correct meaning of each verse. This is also seen later in Proverbs when the topic is responding to the foolish according to their folly.

¹⁷ let them be for you alone, and not for strangers with you.

{5:18} Sit vena tua benedicta, et lætare cum muliere adolescentiæ tuæ:

{5:18} Let your spring be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of your youth:

~ So then, rejoice in true doctrine with your beloved wife. Share the Faith with her. But also, this verse refers in a figurative manner to marital relations.

¹⁸ May your fountain-head be blessed! Find joy with the wife you married in your youth,

{5:19} cervæ charissima, et gratissimus hinnulus. Ubera eius inebrient te in omni tempore, in amore eius delectare iugiter.

{5:19} a beloved doe and most pleasing fawn. Let her breasts inebriate you at all times. Be delighted continually by her love.

¹⁹ fair as a hind, graceful as a fawn: hers the breasts that ever fill you wit delight, hers the love that ever holds you captive.

{5:20} Quare seduceris fili mi ab aliena, et foveris in sinu alterius?

{5:20} Why are you seduced, my son, by a strange woman, and why are you kept warm by the bosom of another?

²⁰ Why be seduced, my son, by someone else's wife, and fondle the breast of a woman who belongs to another?

{5:4} Novissima autem illius amara quasi absinthium, et acuta quasi gladius biceps.

{5:4} But in the end, she is as bitter as wormwood, and as sharp as a two-edged sword.

⁴ but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword.

{5:5} Pedes eius descendunt in mortem, et ad inferos gressus illius penetrant.

{5:5} Her feet descend into death, and her steps reach even to Hell.

⁵ Her feet go down to death, Sheol the goal of her steps;

{5:6} Per semitam vitæ non ambulant, vagi sunt gressus eius, et investigabiles.

{5:6} They do not walk along the path of life; her steps are wandering and untraceable.

⁶ far from following the path of life, her course is uncertain and she does not know it.

{5:7} Nunc ergo fili mi audi me, et ne recedas a verbis oris mei.

{5:7} Therefore, my son, listen to me now, and do not withdraw from the words of my mouth.

⁷ And now, son, listen to me, never deviate from what I say:

{5:8} Longe fac ab ea viam tuam, et ne appropinques foribus domus eius.

{5:8} Make your way at a distance from her, and do not approach the doors of her house.

⁸ set your course as far from her as possible, go nowhere near the door of her house,

{5:9} Ne des alienis honorem tuum, et annos tuos crudeli.

{5:9} Do not give your honor to foreigners, and your years to the cruel.

⁹ or she will hand over your honour to others, the years of your life to a man without pity,

{5:10} Ne forte implentur extranei viribus tuis, et labores tui sint in domo aliena,

{5:10} Otherwise, outsiders may be filled with your strength, and your labors may be in a foreign house,

¹⁰ and strangers will batten on your property, and your produce go to the house of a stranger,

{5:11} et gemas in novissimis, quando consumseris carnes tuas et corpus tuum, et dicas:

{5:11} and you may mourn in the end, when you will have consumed your flesh and your body. And so you may say:

¹¹ and, at your ending, your body and flesh having been consumed, you will groan

{5:12} Cur detestatus sum disciplinam, et increpationibus non acquievit cor meum,

{5:12} "Why have I detested discipline, and why has my heart not been quieted by correction?

¹² and exclaim, 'Alas, I hated discipline, my heart spurned all correction;

{5:13} nec audivi vocem docentium me, et magistris non inclinavi aurem meam?

{5:13} And why have I not listened to the voice of those who guided me? And why has my ear not inclined to my teachers?

¹³ I would not attend to the voice of my masters, I would not listen to those who tried to teach me.

{5:14} Pene fui in omni malo, in medio ecclesiae et synagogae.

{5:14} I have almost been with all evil in the midst of the church and of the assembly."

¹⁴ Now I have come to nearly every kind of misery, in the assembly and in the community.'

{5:15} Bibe aquam de cisterna tua, et fluentia putei tui:

{5:15} Drink water from your own cistern and from the springs of your own well.

¹⁵ Drink the water from your own storage-well, fresh water from your own spring.

{5:16} Deriventur fontes tui foras, et in plateis aquas tuas divide.

{5:16} Let your fountains be diverted far and wide, and divide your waters in the streets.

~ This verse seems to contradict the previous and subsequent verses. The original Douay-Rheims version has a note that relates water to doctrine. My understanding of that note: distribute good doctrine far and wide among men of sincere intention, but not to those who make themselves to be foreigners to the truth.

~ The previous verse (5:15) refers to drinking water from ones own well. This can refer to doctrine, as verses 12 to 14 indicate. This can also refer to chastity and marriage, as the subsequent verses indicate. However, verse 5:16 cannot be taken to refer to sexuality, but only to doctrine. It often happens, as Scripture weaves together comments on a variety of related subjects, that some verses are to be understood more narrowly, and others more broadly.

¹⁶ Even if your fountains overflow outside, your streams of water in the public squares: