

The Book of Proverbs, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 10: A Good Name and the Words of the Wise

Proverbs 22:1–24:34

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

The doctrine at stake in this lesson is how the wisdom of God actually works in the life of an accountable person, and the chief flashpoint is Proverbs 22:6. A proverb is a general principle, an inspired observation of how life ordinarily unfolds under God's moral order, not a mechanical promise that guarantees a particular outcome. When we treat 22:6 as an iron-clad contract, we either become proud when our children walk faithfully or crushed when they wander, as though God had broken His word. Scripture will not let us do either. Each soul stands accountable for its own choices (Ezekiel 18:20); there is no inherited guilt and no fatalistic predestination that overrides a person's responsibility before God. Godly training is a real and weighty calling, but a grown child is a moral agent who answers to the Lord. The same realism keeps us from the false gospel that the righteous never suffer; Job suffered, and the cross stands as the final proof that faithfulness and pain can share the same road.

These chapters also press the deity and lordship of Christ into the everyday by anchoring our worth and our compassion in the Creator. "The Lord is the Maker of them all" (22:2) levels every social ranking and grounds human dignity, the dignity of rich and poor, born and unborn, friend and enemy, in the God who made us. The call to defend the poor at the gate (22:22–23), to rescue those being led to death (24:11–12), and to refuse to gloat over a fallen enemy (24:17–18) all point forward to the Lord who rescued us while we were perishing and prayed for those who crucified Him (Matthew 5:44; Matthew 25:34–40).

So the formational aim is twofold. First, to settle the heart of every believer, and especially every parent, on the fear of the Lord rather than on guaranteed results, so that we labor faithfully and trust God with outcomes, free from both presumption and false guilt. Second, to turn the class inward to the secret life of the heart, "as he thinks within himself, so is he" (23:7), and outward to the perishing and the poor, until a good name is not a mask we wear but the fruit of a heart being formed by Christ all the day long (23:17).

Question 1

Student Question:

In 22:1–2, why does Proverbs rank a good name above great riches, and what does it mean for how we value people that "the rich and the poor meet together; the Lord is the Maker of them all"?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The section opens with a verse that quietly reorders our whole value system: “A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold” (22:1). The Hebrew simply says “a name,” and the context supplies the rest; a good name, a reputation for integrity and trustworthiness. Solomon is not despising wealth, which Proverbs often treats as a blessing, but he is ranking it. Money can be inherited, stolen, or lost overnight, while a good name is earned slowly, choice by choice, and once formed it opens doors that gold cannot buy.

Then comes the great leveler: “The rich and the poor meet together; the Lord is the Maker of them all” (22:2). Whatever distance the world puts between bank accounts, the Maker stands behind both. This is human dignity grounded not in achievement but in creation. The wealthy man did not make himself, and the poor man is not less God’s handiwork. The verse cuts pride down to size and lifts the lowly up to their true worth in one stroke, and it lays the foundation for everything these chapters say about the poor.

Notice how the two verses belong together. A good name is precisely what is at risk when a powerful person tramples a weaker one, and the reason such trampling is so serious is that both bear the image of the same Creator. Reputation and dignity are not separate themes here; they are the front and back of the same coin. The way you treat the person the world ranks beneath you is writing your name in heaven’s ledger.

For a church of Christ congregation, this is bedrock Genesis theology carried into daily ethics. We are not self-made, and no one we meet is beneath the dignity of having been made by God. That truth should govern how we speak of the poor, the immigrant, the unborn, the elderly, and even our rivals. The Lord is the Maker of them all.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- A good name is chosen, not stumbled into; it is the cumulative fruit of repeated faithful choices (22:1).
- Proverbs ranks reputation above riches without despising honest wealth elsewhere in the book.
- “The Lord is the Maker of them all” (22:2) grounds human dignity in creation, not in social status.
- Rich and poor share one Creator, one mortality, and one final Judge, which levels human pride.
- Reputation and human dignity are linked: how we treat the lowly is how we guard or lose our own good name before God.

Discussion Prompts

- What in your life would you sacrifice your good name to protect, and what does that reveal about your treasure?
- When did you last catch yourself ranking a person by wealth or status rather than as God’s handiwork?

- How would believing “the Lord is the Maker of them all” change one relationship this week?

Question 2

Student Question:

Where are you most tempted to chase riches, status, or appearances at the cost of your good name or your integrity before God, and what would it look like to choose the better thing this week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Verse 6 is among the most loved and most misquoted verses in Proverbs: “Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.” Generations of parents have clung to it as a promise, and just as many have been crushed by it when a child wandered, concluding either that God failed or that they did. We have to handle this verse with great care, because how we read it touches both our doctrine and our hearts.

First, the genre. Proverbs are general principles, distilled observations of how life usually goes under God’s wise order, not absolute guarantees with no exceptions. Proverbs 26:4 and 26:5 sit side by side giving opposite counsel precisely because a proverb is wisdom for a situation, not a law of physics. So 22:6 commends faithful, godly training and observes its ordinary fruit: a child shaped early in the right way tends, by God’s design, to keep that path. It does not promise that every well-trained child will be saved, because that would override the child’s own accountability.

Second, the doctrine of personal responsibility. Scripture is clear that “the soul who sins shall die,” and the son does not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father the guilt of the son (Ezekiel 18:20). There is no inherited guilt and no fatalism here. A grown child is a moral agent who stands before God on his own. Faithful parents plant and water; they cannot guarantee the harvest, because the child has a will of his own and an account of his own to give.

This double truth is a gift. It guards godly parents from presumption, the smug assumption that the right technique guarantees the right result, and from false guilt, the crushing lie that a child’s wandering proves a parent’s failure or God’s broken promise. The same realism reminds us that the righteous can still suffer; Job was upright and suffered, and the cross is the supreme case of a righteous One who suffered. Wisdom calls parents to labor faithfully and entrust the outcome to the Lord, keeping the fear of the Lord central all the day (23:17).

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Proverbs 22:6 is a general wisdom principle, not an iron-clad guarantee of a child’s salvation.
- A proverb observes how life usually unfolds under God’s order; 26:4–5 shows proverbs are situational, not absolute.

- Personal accountability stands firm: each soul bears its own guilt and answers for its own choices (Ezekiel 18:20).
- There is no inherited guilt, original sin, or fatalism that erases a grown child's responsibility.
- The verse frees parents from both presumption (technique guarantees results) and false guilt (a child's wandering proves failure).
- The righteous can still suffer, as Job and the cross both testify; faithfulness does not guarantee ease.
- Faithful training remains a serious calling; parents plant and water, but God and the child's own will are involved in the harvest.

Discussion Prompts

- Have you read 22:6 as a promise or a principle, and how has that reading shaped your hope or your guilt?
- How does Ezekiel 18:20 protect parents from carrying guilt that belongs to a grown child alone?
- What does faithful training look like for you right now, while leaving the outcome with God?

Question 3

Student Question:

Read 22:6 carefully. Is "train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it" an iron-clad guarantee, or a general principle of wisdom, and how does the difference shape the way godly parents both labor and trust?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Tucked among these verses is a steady stream of concern for the poor. "Whoever has a bountiful eye will be blessed, for he shares his bread with the poor" (22:9). The "bountiful eye" is the opposite of the stingy, grasping eye; it is a generous way of seeing that notices need and responds. Generosity here is not a grudging duty but an outlook, a heart trained to look outward.

The concern sharpens into warning: "Do not rob the poor, because he is poor, or crush the afflicted at the gate, for the Lord will plead their cause and rob of life those who rob them" (22:22-23). The "gate" was the place of public justice, where the powerful could bend the law against the weak. God puts Himself between the predator and the prey. To exploit the poor is to pick a fight with their Defender, and He does not lose.

This flows straight out of 22:2. Because the Lord is the Maker of the poor, an assault on them is an affront to Him. The same God who made the rich man's hands made the poor man's hunger visible, and He watches the gate. Generosity and justice are not optional add-ons to wisdom; they are evidence that we have grasped who God is.

For us, this lands as both comfort and command. It comforts the overlooked: their cause has a Champion in heaven. And it commands the comfortable: share your bread, refuse to exploit, and defend the weak at whatever “gate” you have influence in. This same heart will reach its fullness in the Christ who said that to feed the hungry is to feed Him (Matthew 25:34–40).

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The “bountiful eye” (22:9) is a generous way of seeing that notices need and shares bread.
- Robbing or crushing the poor at the gate (22:22–23) is exploiting the weak through unjust power.
- God personally pleads the cause of the poor and judges those who prey on them.
- Because the Lord is the Maker of the poor (22:2), mistreating them is an offense against Him.
- Generosity and justice are evidence of true wisdom, not optional extras.

Discussion Prompts

- Whose hunger or hardship are you positioned to see and respond to right now?
- Where do you have influence at a “gate,” and are you using it to defend or to exploit?
- How does knowing God pleads the cause of the poor change your urgency to act?

Question 4

Student Question:

If you are a parent, grandparent, or mentor, how does seeing 22:6 as a faithful calling rather than a magic formula free you from both presumption and false guilt about the choices a child makes?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

“The words of the wise” (beginning at 22:17) urge us to lean in: “Incline your ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply your heart to my knowledge.” Wisdom is not absorbed passively; it must be received with an inclined ear and an applied heart. The teacher even says he has written these things so that our trust may be in the Lord (22:19). The aim of all this practical counsel is not mere cleverness but a heart anchored in God.

Within this section comes one of the most searching lines in the book: “For as he thinks within himself, so is he” (23:7). In context it warns against the stingy host whose smiling words hide a grudging heart; his real self is in his thoughts, not his manners. But the principle reaches far beyond that scene. What a person dwells on in private is what he truly is. The inner life is not a private add-on to the outer life; it is the headwaters from which the outer life flows.

This is why wisdom keeps reaching past behavior to the heart. A good name (22:1) is finally the public overflow of a private interior. You cannot fake your way into character; you can only

become, slowly, what you habitually think and treasure. The smiling host with the grudging heart proves that polished manners cannot cover a stingy soul forever.

For the believer, this verse is both a warning and an invitation. It warns us that hidden resentment, lust, greed, and pride are quietly making us into something, even while our manners stay smooth. And it invites us to let God do His deepest work where it counts most, in the secret thoughts, so that what people eventually meet is a heart genuinely shaped by Him.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Wisdom must be actively received, with an inclined ear and an applied heart (22:17).
- The goal of the words of the wise is trust in the Lord, not mere cleverness (22:19).
- “As he thinks within himself, so is he” (23:7) teaches that the inner life is the true self.
- Polished manners cannot permanently cover a grudging or corrupt heart.
- Character, and a good name, is the public overflow of private thoughts and treasures.

Discussion Prompts

- What do your private, unguarded thoughts reveal about who you are actually becoming?
- Where are your outward manners smoother than your inner heart toward someone?
- What would it mean to invite God into the secret place of your thinking this week?

Question 5

Student Question:

In 22:9 and 22:22–23, how does God reveal His own heart toward the poor, and why does He warn so sternly against robbing or crushing them “at the gate”?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The words of the wise speak tenderly but firmly about 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” (23:13–14). To modern ears this can sound harsh, but it must be read within the whole counsel of Proverbs, where discipline is always an expression of love, never of cruelty. The very next chapters and the rest of Scripture frame correction as the careful, restrained act of a parent who wants the child’s good, not the venting of a parent’s anger.

The point is not the severity of the instrument but the seriousness of the formation. A child left entirely to his own impulses is not being loved; he is being neglected. Loving discipline, applied with self-control and warmth, shapes a soul toward life. The same logic appears when Hebrews says the Lord disciplines those He loves, and that no discipline seems pleasant at the time but later yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness (Hebrews 12:5–11).

We should be careful here on two sides. On one side, we must not use this verse to baptize anger, harshness, or anything that wounds rather than corrects; that is the opposite of the love

Proverbs intends. On the other side, we must not throw out the principle altogether: children genuinely need loving boundaries and correction, and to withhold all correction is itself a failure of love.

Held in balance, 23:13–14 calls parents to a costly, patient love that is willing to say no, to correct, and to shape, for the sake of the child's long-term good. It is the same love that trains up a child in the way he should go (22:6), and it always aims at saving and forming the soul, never at crushing it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Discipline in Proverbs is an act of love for the child's good, never a license for anger or cruelty.
- To withhold all correction is not kindness but neglect (23:13).
- The aim of discipline is to shape and save the soul toward life, not to wound it (23:14).
- The whole counsel of Scripture frames correction with self-control, warmth, and restraint (Hebrews 12:5–11).
- Loving boundaries and correction work together with the faithful training of 22:6.

Discussion Prompts

- How do you tell the difference between correcting in love and reacting in anger?
- Where have you seen loving discipline, given or received, bear good fruit over time?
- What boundary is love asking you to hold for someone in your care, even when it is hard?

Question 6

Student Question:

Who are the poor, overlooked, or cheated people within reach of your life right now, and what is one concrete way you could share bread or defend their cause this month?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

These chapters give a sustained, vivid warning against drunkenness and gluttony: "Be not among drunkards or among gluttonous eaters of meat, for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty" (23:20–21). Then comes the famous passage on "wine when it is red" (23:29–35), one of the most striking pictures in Scripture. It begins with a riddle, "Who has woe? Who has sorrow?" and answers, "Those who tarry long over wine." It warns, "Do not look at wine when it is red... In the end it bites like a serpent and stings like an adder."

We should handle this passage with restraint, letting it say exactly what it says and not more. Its concern is the mastery of appetite. Wine that begins as a sparkle in the cup ends as a serpent's bite; the man it has captured sees strange things, speaks perverse things, and wakes only to

seek another drink. The portrait is not of a single glass at a meal but of a person enslaved, whose craving now runs his life.

Tie this back to 23:7, “as he thinks within himself, so is he.” Drunkenness and gluttony are not first failures of the throat but of the heart; they are appetites that have climbed up off the table and onto the throne. Wisdom guards what we crave because what we crave will eventually rule us. The serpent does not begin with a bite; it begins with a glittering, attractive cup.

For us, the application widens past wine to any appetite that masters us, whether food, drink, screens, money, or attention. The danger is the same: a craving that promises pleasure and delivers slavery. The wise person keeps appetite in its place as a servant, never a master, and brings every craving under the lordship of Christ before it bites.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Proverbs warns vividly against drunkenness and gluttony as paths to ruin (23:20–21).
- The “wine when it is red” passage pictures appetite turned into slavery (23:29–35).
- Handle the passage with restraint: its concern is the mastery of craving, not merely a single drink.
- Drunkenness and gluttony are first failures of the heart, tied to “as he thinks within himself” (23:7).
- Any craving, food, drink, screens, money, attention, can climb from servant to master.
- Wisdom keeps appetite under the lordship of Christ before it bites like a serpent.

Discussion Prompts

- Which appetite in your life has begun acting like a master rather than a servant?
- How does seeing sin as a glittering cup that ends in a serpent’s bite change your guard?
- What would it look like to bring one specific craving under Christ’s lordship this week?

Question 7

Student Question:

Looking at 23:7 together with the warnings against drunkenness and gluttony in 23:20–21, 29–35, how do these passages teach that the inner life of the heart shapes the outward life, and why does wisdom guard what we crave?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Twice the words of the wise steer us back to the same anchor: “Let not your heart envy sinners, but continue in the fear of the Lord all the day. Surely there is a future, and your hope will not be cut off” (23:17–18). Envy of the wicked is an old and persistent temptation. The sinner often seems to prosper, to get away with it, to enjoy what the faithful deny themselves, and the heart whispers, why bother being good?

Wisdom answers not with a denial of the problem but with a longer view. Continue in the fear of the Lord “all the day,” every day, all the way through, because there is a future. The fear of the Lord is the steady center that keeps envy from pulling the heart off course. It is reverent trust that God sees, God judges, and God keeps His own, even when present appearances argue otherwise.

This is the central theme of the whole book reasserting itself. From 1:7, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, and here it is the cure for envy and the ground of hope. The faithful are not promised an easy road, but they are promised a future that will not be cut off. That promise reaches its fullness in the resurrection hope secured by Christ.

So when the success of the godless tempts you to abandon the narrow way, this passage hands you the antidote: not bitterness, not imitation, but a deeper, all-day fear of the Lord that trusts the final reckoning to Him. The good name and the formed heart we have been tracing are sustained by exactly this reverent trust.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Envy of prospering sinners is a real and recurring temptation of the heart (23:17).
- The antidote is to continue in the fear of the Lord “all the day,” every day (23:17).
- The fear of the Lord is the central theme of Proverbs (1:7) and the steady cure for envy.
- Wisdom answers envy with a longer view: there is a future, and hope will not be cut off (23:18).
- The faithful are not promised ease but a secure future, fulfilled in the hope Christ secures.

Discussion Prompts

- Whose apparent success tempts you to envy or to abandon the narrow way?
- What would it mean to live in the fear of the Lord “all the day,” not just on Sunday?
- How does the promise of a future that will not be cut off steady your heart today?

Question 8

Student Question:

What appetite or craving, whether food, drink, screens, money, or attention, has begun to master you instead of serving you, and what would surrender of that craving to Christ look like?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

“Buy truth, and do not sell it; buy wisdom, instruction, and understanding” (23:23). The image is of a marketplace. Truth is worth paying for, and once you have it, it is never for sale. You may have to spend time, comfort, popularity, or convenience to acquire truth, but you must never trade it away, not for ease, not for acceptance, not for a quieter life.

This stands against the spirit of every age that treats truth as negotiable, something to be adjusted to fit the crowd or the moment. Wisdom says truth has a fixed value that does not fluctuate with opinion. You buy it at cost and you hold it at all cost. The same verse pairs truth with wisdom, instruction, and understanding, because truth is not a single fact to bank but a treasure to keep acquiring.

For a church of Christ congregation, this verse undergirds our high regard for the authority of Scripture. God's revealed truth is not ours to edit, soften, or sell off to suit the culture. We buy it, by study, by submission, by sometimes costly obedience, and we refuse to sell it, even when holding it makes us unpopular. The Lord Jesus is Himself the truth (John 14:6), and to sell the truth is finally to betray Him.

Notice how this fits the whole lesson. A good name, a formed heart, courage to defend the poor and rescue the perishing, all of it rests on a refusal to negotiate with the truth. People who will sell the truth will eventually sell everything else. People who buy it and keep it become the kind of person whose name is worth more than gold.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Truth is worth paying a real cost to acquire (23:23).
- Once held, truth is never to be sold, traded, or softened for acceptance or ease.
- Truth has a fixed value that does not fluctuate with culture or opinion.
- This grounds a high regard for the authority of Scripture, which we do not edit to suit the age.
- To sell the truth is finally to betray Christ, who is Himself the truth (John 14:6).

Discussion Prompts

- What has holding to the truth cost you, and what has selling it tempted to gain you?
- Where are you tempted to soften God's truth to keep peace or popularity?
- What truth do you need to "buy" more deeply through study and obedience this season?

Question 9

Student Question:

Proverbs 22:6 is the verse most often misread as an absolute promise. Drawing on the whole passage, explain how a proverb works as a general observation of life under God's order rather than an unbreakable guarantee, and tie this to 23:17 (continue in the fear of the Lord all the day), to Ezekiel 18:20 (each soul bears its own accountability), and to the reality that even the righteous can suffer. How does this guard us from both presumption and despair while keeping the fear of the Lord at the center?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Now the words of the wise reach two of their most piercing commands. First, the call to rescue: “Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, ‘Behold, we did not know this,’ does not he who weighs the heart perceive it?” (24:11–12). Wisdom forbids the comfortable shrug of the bystander. To see people being dragged toward destruction and do nothing is not innocence; it is a guilt that the God who weighs hearts perceives.

Second, the call to love even an enemy: “Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and let not your heart be glad when he stumbles, lest the Lord see it and be displeased” (24:17–18). This is one of the most countercultural lines in all of wisdom. Every instinct says to celebrate when the one who wronged us goes down. God says no. The heart that gloats over a fallen enemy is a heart God is watching with displeasure.

Put these two together and you have the very shape of the gospel. We were the ones being led away to death, and Christ refused to shrug; He rescued us at the cost of Himself. And we were His enemies, and He did not gloat over our ruin but prayed for us and died for us. Jesus commands, “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matthew 5:44), and to see the hungry and imprisoned rescued is to minister to Him (Matthew 25:34–40).

This is the heaviest and most Christ-shaped soil in the whole lesson. The rescuing heart and the enemy-loving heart are not natural to us; they are the fruit of being rescued and forgiven ourselves. Wisdom will not let us hide behind ignorance about the perishing, nor behind satisfaction at an enemy’s fall. The God who weighs the heart is forming in His people the very mercy He showed us at the cross.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- We are commanded to act, not shrug, when people are being led toward death (24:11).
- Claimed ignorance is no excuse before the God who weighs the heart (24:12).
- Gloating when an enemy falls displeases the Lord (24:17–18).
- These commands mirror the gospel: Christ rescued us when we were perishing and loved us as enemies.
- Jesus explicitly commands love of enemies and prayer for persecutors (Matthew 5:44).
- To rescue the hungry and imprisoned is to minister to Christ Himself (Matthew 25:34–40).
- The rescuing, enemy-loving heart is supernatural fruit, formed in those who have been rescued and forgiven.

Discussion Prompts

- Who is being led toward destruction within your reach, and what shrug are you tempted to hide behind?
- Whose fall would you secretly rejoice over, and how does God’s displeasure reframe that?
- How does remembering that Christ rescued you as His enemy reshape your heart toward yours?

Question 10

Student Question:

In 24:11–12 we are told to rescue those being led to death, and in 24:17–18 not to rejoice when our enemy falls. Name one specific way the Lord Jesus, who rescued us when we were perishing and prayed for His enemies, is forming this same rescuing, enemy-loving heart in you through this passage?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The section closes with a parable from a walk past a lazy man's land: "I passed by the field of a sluggard... and behold, it was all overgrown with thorns; the ground was covered with nettles, and its stone wall was broken down" (24:30–34). The wise man looks, considers, and receives instruction. The sluggard did nothing dramatic; he simply kept saying, "A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest," and the slow result was ruin creeping in like an armed man.

The genius of the picture is its gradualness. Nobody plants thorns; they grow on their own when the diligent work is left undone. Poverty came "like a robber" precisely because neglect needs no effort. The sluggard's failure was not a single catastrophe but a thousand small surrenders to ease, each one harmless-looking, adding up to a broken-down wall and a field of weeds.

This is a fitting capstone for the whole lesson, because everything we have studied, a good name, a formed heart, faithful training, generosity, truth held fast, the rescue of the perishing, is built or lost the same way the field is: slowly, by small daily choices. The heart that thinks, "a little slumber," about its character will wake one day to thorns. The fear of the Lord is not sustained by grand gestures but by steady, all-day faithfulness (23:17).

So wisdom sends us home not with a single heroic resolve but with a call to diligence in the small things. Tend the field of your heart and life today, in the unglamorous, repeated faithfulness that keeps thorns from taking over. That is how a good name is grown, and how a heart is kept for the Lord.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The sluggard's ruin came gradually, through small repeated surrenders to ease (24:30–34).
- Thorns and a broken wall grow on their own when diligent work is neglected.
- Poverty arrives "like a robber" because neglect requires no effort.
- The wise man learns by observing the consequences of folly and applying his heart.
- Character, like a field, is built or lost slowly through small daily choices, fitting the whole lesson's themes.

Discussion Prompts

- What “field” in your life is slowly growing thorns through small neglects?
- Where are you telling yourself “a little slumber” about your character or duties?
- What is one small, daily act of diligence that would tend your heart for the Lord?