

The Book of Proverbs

Lesson 10: A Good Name and the Words of the Wise -- Proverbs 22:1–24:34

Stop and think for a moment about what people will say about you when you are not in the room. Not your résumé, not your bank balance, not the square footage of your house, but the quiet verdict friends and neighbors reach about the kind of person you are. Proverbs opens this section by setting that verdict on the scales against everything we usually scramble after: “A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold” (22:1). Solomon is not naïve about money; he simply knows that a reputation built on character outlasts a fortune built on luck. You can lose every dollar and still walk into a room with a good name. You can gain the whole world and have people lower their eyes when you pass.

And then, in a single verse, the floor of the room levels out under all of us. “The rich and the poor meet together; the Lord is the Maker of them all” (22:2). The banker and the day laborer share the same Maker, breathe the same air, and will stand before the same Judge. That truth ought to soften how we treat the people the world ranks below us. It is why these chapters keep circling back to the poor, the cheated, and the perishing, and why God Himself promises to plead their cause. We are not self-made; we are God-made, every one of us, and that levels our pride and lifts our compassion in the same breath.

This lesson also carries us across an invisible seam in the book. Around 22:17 the voice shifts from Solomon’s tight one-line proverbs into a warmer, fatherly section the Bible itself labels “the words of the wise.” Here wisdom leans in close. It talks to parents about training a child, to the tempted about the cup of wine that bites like a serpent, to the comfortable about the neighbor being dragged toward death, and to the bitter about the strange grace of not gloating when an enemy falls. These are not abstract maxims; they are a hand on your shoulder, steering you toward the life that lasts.

Underneath all of it runs one quiet, searching line: “For as he thinks within himself, so is he” (23:7). The heart is the headwaters. Long before a good name shows up in the eyes of the neighbors, it is forming in the secret thoughts of a man or woman who fears the Lord. That is the heart of this whole passage. God is not finally after our reputation but after our hearts, because what we treasure and dwell on in private becomes the person everyone eventually meets. So as we walk through these chapters, keep asking the deeper question: not just what do I look like, but what am I becoming on the inside, before the God who made the rich and the poor alike.

Group Discussion: When you picture someone with a genuinely “good name,” who comes to mind, and what specific qualities make their reputation worth more to you than their wealth or success ever could be?

Personal Reflection: If your private thoughts this past week were broadcast on a screen, what would they reveal about the person you are quietly becoming, and where do you most need God to reshape what you dwell on?

Read Proverbs 22:1–24:34

Study Questions

1. 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”?
2. 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?
3. 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?
4. 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?
5. 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”?

6. 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?
7. 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?
8. 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?
9. 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?
10. 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?

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: Ezekiel 18:20, the soul who sins shall die and each person bears his own guilt rather than inheriting another's; Romans 15:4, whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction; Matthew 25:34-40, caring for the hungry and imprisoned is done unto Christ; Matthew 5:44, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you; Deuteronomy 6:6-7, parents are to teach God's words diligently to their children.

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