

# The Pathway to Eternal Wisdom

## [Part 29]

**Proverbs 29:12** [NIV] *“If a ruler listens to lies, all his officials become wicked.”*

A leader who loves to be flattered and listens to slanderers, causes his servants to become liars and false accusers, seeking to gain the leader’s favour.

Two thoughts are expressed in this Proverb, a leader must exercise discernment as to the truth or otherwise of what they are being told. [**Proverbs 16:10; Proverbs 20:8**]

Secondly, a regime where truth is **not** valued rapidly becomes corrupt.

**Proverbs 29:13** [NIV] *“The poor man and the oppressor have this in common: The LORD gives sight to the eyes of both.”*

To this reminder of common blessings from the Creator God [**Proverbs 22:2**], adds a common origin [**Job 30:23**], we all have a common end. [**2 Samuel 14:14; Ecclesiastes 8:8; Hebrews 9:27**]

**Matthew 5:43-48** [NIV] *“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”*

Jesus goes beyond the social implications of this Proverb to the spiritual, by placing His followers at the giving end as well as the receiving end, of such a process.

**Proverbs 29:14** [NIV] *“If a king judges the poor with fairness, his throne will always be secure.”*

The test of a person in authority, and their hidden strength, is the extent to which they keep faith with those who can put least pressure on them.

**Proverbs 29:15, 17** [NIV] *“The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother.” ... “Discipline your son, and he will give you peace; he will bring delight to your soul.”*

We have been shown in Proverbs the benefits of loving but firm discipline in the family. [**Proverbs 13:23; Proverbs 23:13-14**] In this Proverb the subject of neglect is addressed.

Children who are left alone, because **no** adult can be bothered with them are unlikely to be a credit to their parents.

The mother is singled out, perhaps because she has most to do with the training of the young child.

On the other hand where there is loving training and discipline [**v17**] children can give parents rest from anxiety, they become a delight, something to be enjoyed. [**Psalms 127:3-5; Proverbs 17:6**]

**Proverbs 29:16** [NIV] *“When the wicked thrive, so does sin, but the righteous will see their downfall.”*

As often in the presentation of Godly Wisdom we are encouraged to look at the end of any situation. Nothing will last for ever in this physical life, **not** even an evil and corrupt government. [**Proverbs 28:12, 28; Proverbs 29:2; Habakkuk 2:2-4, 12-14**]

**Proverbs 29:18** [NIV] *“Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; but blessed is he who keeps the law.”*

This Proverb is addressing spiritual darkness because of lack of teaching and understanding of God’s revelation to all humanity, the Christian Bible and our only Saviour Jesus Christ, who is light that has come into a darkened world.

**1 Samuel 3:1** [NIV] *“The boy Samuel ministered before the LORD under Eli. In those days the word of the LORD was rare; there were not many visions.”*

This happened in the time of Samuel, when Eli, the God-appointed judge of Israel, had grown old and lost control of his sons who should have been upholding God’s Word.

**Amos 8:11-12** [NIV] *“‘The days are coming,’ declares the Sovereign LORD, ‘when I will send a famine through the land, not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the LORD. Men will stagger from sea to sea and wander from north to east, searching for the word of the LORD, but they will not find it.’”*

**This lack of revelation from God’s Word the Christian Bible is with us today, and as warned in Proverbs all lack of restraint has been cast aside.**

Only when Jesus Christ the light that came into this world returns will this light of revelation shine strongly once more. [**John 1:1-8; John 8:12; John 9:5**]

The Gospel Message is an open vision, which reveals Jesus Christ as our only Saviour, exposes sin in our lives and humbles us to a place of repentance, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

**John 16:7-8** [NIV] *“But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment:”*

Revealing to all humanity that there will be a time of judgement for every human being by their Creator and Sustainer. [**John 1:3; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:3**]

**Proverbs 29:19, 21** [NIV] *“A servant cannot be corrected by mere words; though he understands, he will not respond.” ... “If a man pampers his servant from youth, he will bring grief in the end.”*

These verses refer to slave mentality. [**Proverbs 17:2; Proverbs 19:10; Proverbs 25:13; Proverbs 30:10; Proverbs 30:21-23**]

Any servant or slave who is **not** disciplined, just like a child, will be rebellious, also if they are pampered will bring grief to their parent or master, forgetting their place.

**Psalms 19:12-14** [King James] *“Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.”*

Christians as disciples, servants of God who have been disciplined by Him, are warned to always remember our place, and **not** act presumptuously.

The Creator God is eternal, we have been created out of the dust on the ground which we now tread underfoot and will return to that dust after a short period of time. [**Genesis 3:19**]

**Proverbs 29:20** [NIV] *“Do you see a man who speaks in haste? There is more hope for a fool than for him.”*

A fool is one who speaks before they have considered the effect of what they are about to say on those who will hear their words. [**Proverbs 12:23; Proverbs 15:2, 14**]

**Proverbs 29:22-23** [NIV] *“An angry man stirs up dissension, and a hot-tempered one commits many sins. A man’s pride brings him low, but a man of lowly spirit gains honour.”*

This is **not** a temporary state but the general disposition, and the end result is many sins.

Anger in itself is **not** wrong, the Creator God is angry at times. [**Ephesians 5:6; Colossians 3:5-6**]

The difference between human anger, as mentioned in this Proverb, and Godly anger is the direction of that anger and the motive behind that anger, with God it is against anything that will harm His created children.

As mentioned in **v23** pride is one thing that can prompt anger for our ego is bruised, this is why Satan is angry. [**Revelation 12:12**]

Uncontrolled anger is a sign of weakness of character. [**Proverbs 16:32; Proverbs 19:11; Ecclesiastes 7:9; James 1:19**]

**Proverbs 29:24** [Amplified Bible] *“Whoever is partner with a thief hates his own life, he falls under the curse, pronounced upon him who knows who the thief is, but discloses nothing.”*

This could mean that when called to testify, says nothing, which will involve him in the sin of perjury.

Within this verse is the whole of the dramatic sequence that is found in **Proverbs 1:10-19**.

Within this verse is also the sin of being a receiver of goods that you know have been stolen.

**Proverbs 29:25** [NIV] *“Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe.”*

Fear, whether in a general apprehension or fear of what other people will say or think, is a powerful and crippling emotion.

The way of release is to put your trust in the Creator God, who will give us the security we long for. [**Proverbs 18:10; Isaiah 51:12; Luke 12:4-5**]

Many are ashamed to own Jesus Christ now and He will **not** own them on the day of judgement. [**Luke 13:24-27; Luke 12:8; Matthew 10:32**]

All who place their trust in Jesus Christ now will be saved from that snare.

**Proverbs 29:26** [Amplified Bible] *“Many crave and seek the ruler’s favour, but the wise man waits for justice from the Lord.”*

Kings and rulers are expected to be just [**Proverbs 16:10**] but over-reliance on them is misplaced, the only unfailing source of justice is the Creator God. [**Psalms 96:13; Ecclesiastes 3:17; Romans 2:16; Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians 4:5**]

**Proverbs 29:27** [NIV] *“The righteous detest the dishonest; the wicked detest the upright.”*

The wicked and the upright equally detest each other, they have, or at least should have, nothing in common whatsoever.

Jesus Christ exposed the wickedness of humans, yet prayed for the wicked as they were crucifying Him. [**Luke 23:34**]

We are to love our enemies but hate what they do and are.

**Proverbs 30:1** [King James] *“The words of Agur the son of Jakeh, even the prophecy: the man spake unto Ithiel, even unto Ithiel and Ucal,”*

This chapter of Proverbs owes its vividness largely to the author’s profound humility confessed in **verses 1-9**. He expresses both his detestation of arrogance in all its forms and his fascinated, candid observation of the world and its ways.

**Proverbs 30:2-4** [NIV] *“I am the most ignorant of men; I do not have a man’s understanding. I have not learned wisdom, nor have I knowledge of the Holy One. Who has gone up to heaven and come down? Who has gathered up the wind in the hollow of his hands? Who has wrapped up the waters in his cloak? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and the name of his son? Tell me if you know!”*

Human speculation is worthless, is presented with an undertone of irony at the expense of the average human’s self-assurance. **Verses 3-4** show that it springs from a pressing awareness of the ignorance and narrow experience of a mere human and the author in particular.

In his own way the author affirms that reverence of the Creator God is the beginning of all true knowledge. [**Proverbs 1:7; Proverbs 9:10; 1 Corinthians 8:2**]

Because of the Creator God’s infinite nature, certain aspects of His nature will always remain a mystery to the finite human mind. Job was asked similar questions by God. [**Job chapters 38-41**] The author longs for a future revelation of the Creator God.

**Proverbs 30:5-6** [NIV] *“Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Do not add to his words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar.”*

The answer to the author’s question in **v4** is that God has revealed Himself **not** only in His physical creation but in His Word, the Christian Bible, which is tried and tested to be true and complete.

This revelation through the Word of God brings with it more than knowledge, it encourages a commitment to the Creator God Whom we can trust totally. [**Psalms 37:5; Psalms 118:8; Proverbs 3:5**]

**Proverbs 30:7-9** [NIV] *“Two things I ask of you, O LORD; do not refuse me before I die: Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, ‘Who is the LORD?’ Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonour the name of my God.”*

There are similarities to this prayer and that which Jesus Christ taught [**Matthew 6:9-13**], and the attitude that the apostle Paul expressed. [**Philippians 4:11-13**]

The first part of the prayer is for honesty and integrity to be developed in our character.

The second part is the wise understanding of what danger there can be for us in wealth and poverty.

The poor can be faced with physical and spiritual hazards but the rich can also face spiritual problems as Jesus Christ pointed out to His disciples. [**Matthew 19:23-24**]

Our lives are more likely to be effective in the hands of our Creator God to fulfil His purpose for our lives, if we are neither poor or rich.

**Proverbs 30:10** [Amplified Bible] *“Do not accuse and hurt a servant to his master, lest he curse you, and you are held guilty of adding to the burdens of the lowly.”*

Slander is always a punishable offence, it is seriously wrong to make trouble for anyone, especially so when the target of our unkindness is in **no** position to retaliate or defend themselves, and they do **not** even come under our authority.

**Proverbs 30:11-14** [King James] *“There is a generation that curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother. There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness. There is a generation, O how lofty are their eyes! and their eyelids are lifted up. There is a generation, whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men.”*

Four types of people are listed here, it could be that one sin leads to another in this list.

The disrespect of parents is strongly condemned in Proverbs. [**Proverbs 28:24; Proverbs 30:17; Proverbs 15:20; Proverbs 20:20**]

This disrespect for parents could lead to this self-deception and self-righteousness [**v12**], and personal pride [**v13**].

**Psalms 73:6** [NIV] *“Therefore pride is their necklace; they clothe themselves with violence.”*

This personal pride leads to violence as we see in the next verse in **Proverbs 30:14**.

Pride is seen to corrupt a person’s attitude towards other people.

An arrogance which is deaf to any correction and sinks to violent greed, expressed in the unscrupulous use of power to gain their own ends at the expense of the most unprotected members of society.

The picture is of a dangerous wild beast, hungry for prey and ready to snatch its victims whoever they are and wherever it finds them.

**The breakdown of family life and the lack of a moral father figure as head of the family has at this time in much of the Western world led to what is described in these verses.**

**Proverbs 30:15-16** [NIV] *“The leech has two daughters. ‘Give! Give!’ they cry. There are three things that are never satisfied, four that never say, ‘Enough!’:” the grave, the barren womb, land, which is never satisfied with water, and fire, which never says, ‘Enough!’”*

What we have just seen in previous verses leads to permanent dissatisfaction for what is driving their lives is more pleasure and possessions as they become leeches on parents and society as a whole.

Such people will never experience the satisfaction of work well done and the blessings that come from helping people who are in need, both physically and spiritually.

**Proverbs 30:17** [NIV] *“The eye that mocks a father, that scorns obedience to a mother, will be pecked out by the ravens of the valley, will be eaten by the vultures.”*

The theme of the enormity of arrogance, which has dominated the chapter up to this point, is brought to its grim climax. Many who have come to a bad end in life realised that their wicked lifestyle began with despising their parents or **not** receiving the discipline that every young child needs from loving parents.

**Proverbs 30:18-20** [NIV] *“There are three things that are too amazing for me, four that I do not understand: the way of an eagle in the sky, the way of a snake on a rock, the way of a ship on the high seas, and the way of a man with a maiden. This is the way of an adulteress: She eats and wipes her mouth and says, ‘I’ve done nothing wrong.’”*

The “*three things ... four*” is a poetic way of saying this is **not** a complete list. This is the start of things within the world that the reader is invited to become a keen observer.

The first three wonders are connected by the way they all move without leaving a trace and their means of propulsion are wonderful to observe. The fourth may refer to the mysterious unseen force which causes two people to fall in love.

What **verse 20** describes is anything but wonderful for there is **no** love involved, the adulteress regards her act with a man as **no** more significant than a meal or a means to pay for a meal, and sees **no** wrong in it.

This is a shrewd comment on human capacity to deceive ourselves and pass off our sins as nothing to feel guilty about.

**Proverbs 30:21** [NIV] *“Under three things the earth trembles, under four it cannot bear up:”*

This may be sarcastic, for the people referred to in the next verses are all of humble position who come into power and influence and are unable to handle their new position.

**Proverbs 30:22-23** [NIV] *“a servant who becomes king, a fool who is full of food, an unloved woman who is married, and a maidservant who displaces her mistress.”*

A slave can have **no** idea how to cope with the responsibility of an office, since they have **only** ever done as they were told. A fool never knows when to stop, lacks discipline in every aspect of life due to their stupidity and obstinacy.

An unloved or unsought woman who has born the stigma of being unmarried then acquires a husband, and the maid who at that time was unlikely to inherit property, but she might well supplant her mistress in the affections of her husband, and so virtually take her place in the household.

All four situations have the potential for breeding arrogance, pretentiousness and conceited behaviour, that leads to divisions.

**Proverbs 30:24-28** [NIV] *“Four things on earth are small, yet they are extremely wise: Ants are creatures of little strength, yet they store up their food in the summer; conies are creatures of little power, yet they make their home in the crags; locusts have no king, yet they advance together in ranks; a lizard can be caught with the hand, yet it is found in kings’ palaces.”*

Four things that are small but show initiative and wisdom.

Ants can teach us about preparation for future [**Proverbs 6:6-8**], conies [hyrax or rock badger] knows how to live safely in rock crevices.

Locusts organise themselves with devastating effectiveness without, apparently, having a leader.

A lizard is so small you can pick it up with one hand, but its perseverance and capability are such that it can aspire to royal residences, a picture of audacity.

The overall lesson for us is that **not** physical size or strength, but wisdom in the use of what abilities we have that can lead to success.

**Proverbs 30:29-31** [NIV] *“There are three things that are stately in their stride, four that move with stately bearing: a lion, mighty among beasts, who retreats before nothing; a strutting cock, a he-goat, and a king with his army around him.”*

There is no moralising or philosophising in these verses, only perception of the Creator God’s power and wisdom.

We are left enriched if we have eyes to see why the Creator God has given us these animals and how when a leader has confidence in those he leads and they have confidence in their leader it is a sight worth observing.

**Proverbs 30:32-33** [NIV] *“If you have played the fool and exalted yourself, or if you have planned evil, clap your hand over your mouth! For as churning the milk produces butter, and as twisting the nose produces blood, so stirring up anger produces strife.”*

A concluding call to humility.

Humility has already been the undercurrent of this chapter and has already commended itself, directly or by contrast, as reverence [v1-9], restraint [v10-17], wonder [v18-31], is finally manifested as peaceable behaviour. [v32-33]

**Proverbs 31:1-2** [NIV] *“The sayings of King Lemuel, an oracle his mother taught him: O my son, O son of my womb, O son of my vows,”*

Lemuel means “devoted to God” and the mention of “son of my vows” is a term used of the child born to Hannah [1 Samuel chapter 1], therefore he was a very special child and her desire was he should avoid what is wrong.

**Proverbs 31:3** [NIV] *“do not spend your strength on women, your vigour on those who ruin kings.”*

First, the destructive relationships with undesirable and untrustworthy women, as those dealt with in **Proverbs chapters 2, 5-7 and chapter 9**.

**Proverbs 31:4-5** [NIV] *“It is not for kings, O Lemuel, not for kings to drink wine, not for rulers to crave beer, lest they drink and forget what the law decrees, and deprive all the oppressed of their rights.”*

Second, the danger of excessive drinking, expanded in **Proverbs 23:29-30**. The reason is that such loose living affects the power of sound judgement.

**Proverbs 31:6-7** [NIV] *“Give beer to those who are perishing, wine to those who are in anguish; let them drink and forget their poverty and remember their misery no more.”*

It is difficult to know whether these verses are serious or cynical. If serious, they are saying that strong drink does have its uses, however temporarily, in dulling the pain, misery of those wretched times in life.

If cynical, they are a reminder to the ruler that he has better things to do than to drown his sorrows.

**Proverbs 31:8-9** [NIV] *“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.”*

The king is to speak out for those who are unable to speak for themselves. That is those on the point of death or those left destitute as orphans and widows. [James 1:27] To be a powerful advocate for such people, **not** just in word but in action. [Psalms 45:4]

**Proverbs 31:10-31** [NIV] *“A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies. Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value. She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life. She selects wool and flax and works with eager hands. She is like the merchant ships, bringing her food from afar. She gets up while it is still dark; she provides food for her family and portions for her servant girls. She considers a field and buys it; out of her earnings she plants a vineyard. She sets about her work vigorously; her arms are strong for her tasks. She sees that her trading is profitable, and her lamp does not go out at night. In her hand she holds the distaff and grasps the spindle with her fingers. She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy. When it snows, she has no fear for her household; for all of them are clothed in scarlet. She makes coverings for her bed; she is clothed in fine linen and purple. Her husband is respected at the city gate, where he takes his seat among the elders of the land. She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies the merchants with sashes. She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come. She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue. She watches*

*over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: 'Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all.' Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised. Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate."*

The setting of these verses is a comfortable, what we call “middle class” home. This woman is an example of excellence and is more precious than jewels for she is irreplaceable. [v10]

She has her husband’s trust and confidence. [v11]

A lifelong partnership and commitment to her husband. [v12]

She has a considerable household to manage. [v15]

She also has a successful career. [v16, v18, v24]

Her husband is among the local leaders in the community. [v23]

She is well spoken of by local leaders. [v31]

Her children and husband hold her in great respect. [v28]

She fears the Creator God. [v30]

Proverbs begins with a command to fear the Creator God [Proverbs 1:7], and ends with a woman who fulfils that command.

**Proverbs is very valuable for every generation for it, in a practical way, shows us how to obtain Godly Wisdom, make good decisions and live according to God’s ideal lifestyle.**