

**Marking the Path of Life and the Path of Death**  
**Proverbs 12:15-23**  
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**INTRODUCTION**

**Proverbs 12:15** The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise.

This passage opens with the all-important distinction between folly and wisdom: teachability. Notice that the one who is the most wrong is also the most confident, and the one who is most likely to be right is the one who is most eager to listen. "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble (Jas 4:6)." *Be teachable!*

From this starting point, the Doctrine of Life lines out the path of death and the path of life. The true student will be able to discern their path by these signposts. And if one has strayed from the path of life these words instruct us on the way back.

Proverbs is poetry - masterfully written to reward those who pay attention. In this passage, the path of life and the path of death, wisdom, and folly, are woven together. Each line contains a statement about wisdom and a statement folly, and the order is reversed each line. So, Vs 16 speaks of "a fool" and then "a prudent man" and the next verse speaks of "He that speaketh truth" and "false witness deceit."

16 ¶ **A fool's wrath is presently known:** but a prudent man covereth shame.

17 ¶ He that speaketh truth sheweth forth righteousness: **but a false witness deceit.**

18 ¶ **There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword:** but the tongue of the wise is health.

19 ¶ The lip of truth shall be established for ever: **but a lying tongue is but for a moment.**

20 ¶ **Deceit is in the heart of them that imagine evil:** but to the counsellors of peace is joy.

21 ¶ There shall no evil happen to the just: **but the wicked shall be filled with mischief.**

22 ¶ **Lying lips are abomination to the LORD:** but they that deal truly are his delight.

23 ¶ A prudent man concealeth knowledge: **but the heart of fools proclaimeth foolishness.**

*Mark the signposts of wisdom and folly, follow the path of wisdom, and teach others to do the same!*

**Proverbs 12:16-23**

**Vs 16 Wrath → folly, discretion → wisdom** Uncontrolled anger is a mark of foolishness and must be dealt with as sin (Jas 1:20) but it also unprofitable. "Prudent" in the KJV Proverbs means to have common sense, to be "savvy," or to have a good head for business. For example "The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going (Prov 14:15)."

So the point of this is not just that uncontrolled anger is ungodly, but it also hurts your success in life. *Seek God's help controlling your temper, for your good!*

**Vs 17-19 True healing words → wisdom, false hurtful words → folly** Truth and righteousness cannot be separated. Evil words do great harm. But the best words are not those who do no harm, the

best words are those that heal.

“A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words, thou shalt be condemned (Matt 12:35-37).”

Your words go before you to the Judgment. Speech may be the greatest power that God has given us.  
*Use words wisely; use them to heal!*

**Vs 20 Sowing evil → folly, peacemaking → wisdom** Deception is in the heart of those who plow seeds of evil. But those who sow peace find joy. Deception, evil, and folly go together just as wisdom, peace, and joy go together.

“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God (Matt 5:9).”

“But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace (Jas 3:14-18).”

*“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord (Heb 12:14)!”*

**Vs 21 Righteousness → safety, wickedness → calamity**

Proverbs reflect the general pattern of life that good living is safer than evil living. But it is also true that God uses everything for the good of those who love Him.

**Vs 22 Lying → God's hatred, truth → God's friendship**

God cannot be at peace with lying because God cannot lie (Titus 1:2).

*If you want safety and friendship with God, prioritize truth and righteousness!*

## CONCLUSION

**Vs 23 Compare Vs 16 and Vs 23.** The parallelism helps us see that this is the conclusion of a section. The skillful person is careful about what he says; even if he knows the answer he does not just immediately blurt it out. And the fool pours out foolish words without thinking. Again we see an odd reversal like the one in Vs 15: he who gives the most advise, mostly gives bad advice.

*Be careful that you don't just listen to the person who talks the most. And even if you know that right thing to say, don't be in a hurry to talk!*

*Mark the signs of the path of life: discretion, true, healing words, peacemaking, goodness, and honest!*