

## Proverbs 11-21 • References to “The LORD”

### Introduction

The Old Testament wisdom books (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Solomon, and Ecclesiastes) are the best “Bible dictionary” in existence. They use the Bible’s basic terms over and over again in practical situations so we don’t make the mistake of applying our own definition, but rather learn precisely God’s definition instead. For instance, the Bible uses different words for God’s Law such as “precepts”, “commandments”, “judgments”, “ordinances”, and many others. They all have specific meanings that are not identical to each other and are used to teach specific things about the overall character of God’s Word. Likewise, there’s a difference between “sinner”, “wicked”, “ungodly”, and the many terms that describes varying states of being at odds with God’s will and ways. The extensive use of these words in the wisdom literature provide the correct interpretation of their meaning and use throughout the whole of the Bible.

In this study, we’ll be looking specifically at proverbs attributed to Solomon where “the LORD” is mentioned to gain some insight into the character of God as revealed to the wisest man of all time. We will limit this study to 4 categories of proverbs that deal with “God’s Sovereignty”, “The Fear of the LORD”, “The Heart”, and “Abominations to the LORD”.

Commit your works to the LORD  
And your plans will be established. (16:3)

The LORD has made everything for its  
own purpose,  
Even the wicked for the day of evil.  
(16:4)

The mind of man plans his way,  
But the LORD directs his steps. (16:9)

The lot is cast into the lap,  
But its every decision is from the LORD.  
(16:33)

Many plans are in a man’s heart,  
But the counsel of the LORD will stand.  
(19:21)

Man’s steps are ordained by the LORD,  
How then can man understand his way?  
(20:24)

The king’s heart is like channels of water  
in the hand of the LORD;  
He turns it wherever He wishes. (21:1)

The horse is prepared for the day of  
battle,  
But victory belongs to the LORD. (21:31)

### God’s Sovereignty

**Q: What is being stated here as to who is really in charge? Is this limited to just Believers?**

A: **God** is really in charge and He’s in charge of **everyone**. Mentioned in just these few verses are not only Believers but the wicked—that is, non-Believers. No one is left out.

**Q: What is implied about man and who he believes is in charge?**

A: It’s implied from man’s actions that he thinks he is master of his own destiny by such references as “*man plans his way*” and “*the horse is prepared*”. This is contrasted to the reality of God’s superceding will:

- “*The LORD made everything for its purpose*” (16:4)
- “*...the LORD directs his steps*” (16:9)
- “*...its [the lot’s or “chance”] decision is from the LORD*” (16:33)
- “*Man’s steps are ordained*” (20:24)

**Q: How does 19:21 shed light on the difference between what might be perceived by man versus God’s reality?**

A: The greater, overriding force at work is God’s will, which cannot be overcome by man. Proverbs 21:31 even teaches this is true of those that are on the side of carrying out His will.

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.*

*Ephesians 1:3-6*

**Q: So how does the first Proverb listed (16:3) indicate one goes about ensuring the success of their work and plans?**

A: They are first committed to the sovereignty and authority of God; then everything that follows is according to God’s will, not one’s own.

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He who walks in his uprightness fears the LORD,  
But he who is devious in his ways despises Him. (14:2)

In the fear of the LORD there is strong confidence,  
And his children will have refuge. (14:26)

The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life,  
That one may avoid the snares of death. (14:27)

Better is a little with the fear of the LORD  
Than great treasure and turmoil with it. (15:16)

The fear of the LORD is the instruction for wisdom,  
And before honor comes humility. (15:33)

By lovingkindness and truth iniquity is atoned for,  
And by the fear of the LORD one keeps away from evil. (16:6)

The fear of the LORD leads to life,  
So that one may sleep satisfied,  
untouched by evil. (19:23)

Sheol and Abaddon lie open before the LORD,  
How much more the hearts of men! (15:11)

The plans of the heart belong to man,  
But the answer of the tongue is from the LORD. (16:1)

All the ways of a man are clean in his own sight,  
But the LORD weighs the motives. (16:2)

The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold,  
But the LORD tests hearts. (17:3)

The foolishness of man ruins his way,  
And his heart rages against the LORD. (19:3)

Every man's way is right in his own eyes,

**Point:** *Even the wisest man in the world did not come into existence except by the will of God and to fulfill His purposes. Nothing will ever result from a relationship with God if it doesn't proceed from our absolute acknowledgment that our will must be subordinate to His will, our ways to His. Everything else proceeds from this point first.*

## **The Fear of the LORD**

**Q: What is the meaning of the biblical phrase "fear of the LORD"?**

A: It's having a clear and complete knowledge of who God is and rendering the proper respect in our attitude, actions, and choices knowing full well that He is King, Creator, and the One True God. It comes about as the result of knowing God's person and character more and more and allowing that knowledge to shape our behavior.

**Point:** *This is why understanding God's sovereignty comes first, so that our acknowledgment proceeds from the proper starting point, that all things are subordinate to His will and ways.*

**Q: What are some of the ways that the fear of the LORD is shown to be evident in one's life?**

- Walking "in his uprightness", an expression describing obedience to God's Word and ways. (14:2)
- In being a refuge for one's children, who recognize and respond to the quality of a parent's relationship with God. (14:26)
- By seeking heavenly treasure more than earthly treasure. (15:16)
- By actively shunning and running away from evil. (16:6)

Notice that the common denominator for these things is that they're all conscience, behavioral choices. They all come about because we choose to obey the One who is greater while rejecting all other options.

**Point:** *If we properly recognize God's sovereignty, it will be visibly evident by our respect of His person and power by submitting to His will and ways. To "fear the LORD" is to apply the knowledge of God's authority and divinity to our daily life, living to please Him rather than our self.*

## **The Heart**

**Q: What do 16:2, 17:3, and 21:2 altogether describe? Why is this significant?**

A: God judges the heart. Biblically speaking, the heart is always associated more with faithfulness than simple knowledge. Just as one's commitment to a relationship is measured by the devotion of the heart, so faithfulness is determined.

**Point:** *Although it begins with embracing the knowledge of God's sovereignty over us and further established in our proper respect for Him based solely on Who He is, the true measure of these things actually taking hold in a life is the degree of commitment—faithfulness—from the heart. It's the difference between a casual, working relationship and a loving one.*

**Q: How does 19:3 contrast the obedient person from the disobedient?**

A: This shows that both obedience and disobedience are expressions of one's faithfulness, the inclination of one's heart. When one rebels against God, it's not merely an intellectual exercise, but a matter of the heart.

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But the LORD weighs the hearts. (21:2)

The perverse in heart are an abomination to the LORD,  
But the blameless in their walk are His delight. (11:20)

Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD,  
But those who deal faithfully are His delight. (12:22)

The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD,  
But the prayer of the upright is His delight. (15:8)

The way of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD,  
But He loves one who pursues righteousness. (15:9)

Evil plans are an abomination to the LORD,  
But pleasant words are pure. (15:26)

Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD;  
Assuredly, he will not be unpunished. (16:5)

He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous,  
Both of them alike are an abomination to the LORD. (17:15)

Differing weights and differing measures,  
Both of them are abominable to the LORD. (20:10)

Differing weights are an abomination to the LORD,  
And a false scale is not good. (20:23)

**Application:** *If you were brought before God right now, on what basis do you think He would judge you? Do you think that knowledge alone will help, or even things you've done? How well do you consider the quality of your heart's devotion will be the deciding factor?*

*"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'"*

Matthew 7:21-23

## **Abominations to the LORD**

**Point:** *If we acknowledge God for who He is, respect and fear Him for who He is, and live faithfully according to His will and ways from our heart because of who He is, we will not just want to know but fanatically avoid those things that He has made known that are absolutely off limits and offensive to Him.*

**Q: What types of people are listed as being completely unacceptable to God? What are their defining characteristics?**

- "The perverse in heart" (11:20)
- "...the wicked" (15:8 & 15:9)
- "Everyone who is proud in heart" (16:5)
- "He who justifies the wicked" (17:15)
- "...he who condemns the righteous" (17:15)

These all describe people whose hearts are actively opposed not just to God's will and ways, but His person and authority.

**Q: What types of people are contrasted as being acceptable to Him?**

- "...the blameless in their walk are His delight" (11:20)
- "...those who deal faithfully are His delight" (12:22)
- "...the prayer of the upright is His delight" (15:8)
- "...He loves one who pursues righteousness" (15:9)

These all describe people whose hearts are committed to God's will and ways, who actively make conscience, behavioral choices to pursue **His** desires rather than their own.

**Q: What are some of the behaviors listed that clearly identify someone as being unacceptable to God?**

- "Lying lips" (12:22)
- "Evil plans" (15:26)
- "...proud in heart" (16:5)
- "...justifies the wicked...condemns the righteous" (17:15)
- Operates "a false scale" (20:23)

Together they combine to show someone steeped in pride and committed to satisfying their self over everything else. These are not just sinful "slip-ups", but a life actively working against the kingdom of God and exclusively for one's self.

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**Q: What are some of the behaviors listed that we want to be clearly identified with that indicate a right relationship with Him?**

- "...blameless in their walk" (11:20)
- "...deal faithfully" (12:22)
- "...prayer of the upright" (15:8)
- "...pursues righteousness" (15:9)
- "...pleasant words" (15:26)
- Does not use "differing weights and differing measures" (20:10 & 20:23)

Note that they describe someone that is embracing both tablets of the Law, to not just love God, but others as well.

## **Epilogue**

*Some people feel like these chapters of Proverbs in particular are difficult to digest because they seem so "randomly" put together. Some would prefer to see all the Proverbs grouped together into logical categories. (For the Record: We used less than half of all the verses in Proverbs that refer to "the LORD" and limited the categories in order to make the study manageable.) But consider that God is not a God of confusion and has laid out the Bible according to His will and ways. Therefore the "randomness" of these chapters has a divine purpose.*

*I would suggest that one of those purposes is so that as we read them, those verses that relate most to the condition of our heart at the time of each reading will "jump out" at us and all others will be relatively ignored. Perhaps all the verses having to do with speech seem to leap off the page at you, or all the verses on money, or prayer or so on and so forth. Re-visiting Proverbs from time to time may provide specific insights into your own spiritual journey and whatever issues currently need to be addressed; and they may change each time we read through it.*