

## Proverbs 23 Commentary and Application

### Verses 1–3 – Self-Control at the Table

*“When you sit down to eat with a ruler, consider carefully what is before you; and put a knife to your throat if you are a man given to appetite. Do not desire his delicacies, for they are deceptive food.”*

These verses warn against lack of restraint, especially in settings where appearances and influence matter. To indulge without discipline is to invite ruin. The imagery of “a knife to the throat” is not literal but a vivid call to self-control.

**Practical Application:** Whether at a business dinner, social gathering, or any setting where you are being observed, remember that your testimony matters more than your appetite. Don’t let food, drink, or any temporary pleasure rule you. Discipline at the table reflects discipline in life.

### Verses 4–5 – The Fleeting Nature of Riches

*“Do not overwork to be rich; because of your own understanding, cease! Will you set your eyes on that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away like an eagle toward heaven.”*

Pursuing wealth as life’s goal is foolish. Riches are temporary and unstable. They come and go like birds in flight. As it has often been said, “You can’t take it with you.” Scripture consistently warns us not to set our hearts on wealth (Psalm 62:10).

**Practical Application:** Work hard, but don’t let the pursuit of money define you. True security comes not from possessions but from the Lord who provides for His children.

### Verses 6–9 – Beware of False Hospitality and Foolish Words

*“Do not eat the bread of a miser... For as he thinks in his heart, so is he. ‘Eat and drink!’ he says to you, but his heart is not with you.”*

Not everyone who offers food and drink does so with sincerity. Some show outward kindness while inwardly resenting the cost. What looks generous may be poisoned by a hidden motive. Likewise, offering wisdom to a fool is wasted effort.

**Practical Application:** Be discerning in relationships. Don’t be deceived by empty gestures of generosity. And don’t waste your breath giving counsel to someone who has already determined to despise it.

### Verses 10–11 – God Defends the Vulnerable

*“Do not remove the ancient landmark, nor enter the fields of the fatherless; for their Redeemer is mighty; He will plead their cause against you.”*

To steal land from the poor and defenseless is to invite the judgment of their Redeemer—God Himself. He takes up the cause of widows, orphans, and the oppressed.

**Practical Application:** Be careful not to take advantage of anyone's weakness—financial, emotional, or social. Remember, God defends the vulnerable and will hold oppressors accountable.

### Verses 12–14 – Discipline and Training

*“Apply your heart to instruction, and your ears to words of knowledge. Do not withhold correction from a child...”*

Parents are called to discipline their children with wisdom and love. Discipline is not the same as punishment. Punishment focuses on inflicting pain or loss for an offense, but discipline is training—a process of guiding a child to live according to what is right. True discipline comes from love, not anger, and it aims to protect children from destructive paths that can harm them in the long run.

God Himself sets the pattern for us. Scripture says, *“For whom the Lord loves He corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights”* (Proverbs 3:12, NKJV). God's discipline is never cruel or careless; it teaches us that our choices carry consequences and that His ways always lead to life.

In the same way, when children misbehave, parents should not threaten punishment but should clearly warn them that discipline will follow if they persist. This sets firm boundaries while also teaching responsibility. At the same time, every child is different. What helps one child learn may not be effective for another. Some respond to a firm word, others to the loss of a privilege, and still others to more direct correction. This means parents must be prayerful, discerning, and patient—seeking God's wisdom in how to guide each child according to their unique temperament.

### Practical Application:

If you are a parent, view discipline as an opportunity to shape your child's heart, not just their behavior. Before reacting, pause to pray for patience and clarity. Ask yourself, *“Will this action train my child toward wisdom, or is it just a release of my frustration?”* Use discipline consistently but also with tenderness, always reinforcing your love and pointing your child toward God's truth. In doing so, you reflect the same loving discipline that your heavenly Father gives you.

### Verses 15–19 – A Father's Joy

*“My son, if your heart is wise, my heart will rejoice...”*

The deepest joy of a godly parent is to see their children walk in wisdom. True success is not wealth or fame, but a heart that reverences the Lord.

**Practical Application:** Parents, seek not just accomplishments for your children but wisdom. And children, know that your choices bring joy—or grief—to those who love you.

### Verses 20–28 – Warnings Against Excess and Immorality

Drunkenness, gluttony, and immorality are repeatedly warned against. These destroy character, reputation, and ultimately life itself. The *“immoral woman”* is pictured as a trap waiting to destroy the unwary.

**Practical Application:** Avoid companions and habits that lead to destruction. Gluttony dulls the spirit, drunkenness blinds the mind, and sexual immorality chains the soul. Walk instead in the reverence of the Lord.

### Verses 29–35 – The Folly of Drunkenness

*“Who has woe? Who has sorrow? ... Those who linger long at the wine... At the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper.”*

Here is one of the clearest pictures of alcoholism in Scripture: broken relationships, endless arguments, senseless wounds, perverse speech, staggering foolishness, and addictive cycles that enslave.

**Practical Application:** Alcohol promises joy but delivers pain. It dulls discernment, lowers restraint, and leads to regret. The believer is called to be filled not with wine but with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18).

### Closing Reflection

Proverbs 23 is a call to self-control, wisdom, and discipline. It reminds us that life is not about indulging desires or chasing riches, but about reverencing the Lord and walking in His ways.

### Personal Challenge:

- At the table—practice restraint.
- At work—pursue diligence, not greed.
- In relationships—be discerning.
- As a parent or mentor—discipline with love.
- In your own walk—avoid destructive habits and live with reverence for the Lord.