

## PROVERBS 12: SELECTED VERSES

<sup>5</sup> The thoughts of the righteous are just;  
the advice of the wicked is treacherous.

<sup>15</sup> Fools think their own way is right,  
but the wise listen to advice.

<sup>20</sup> Deceit is in the mind of those who plan evil,  
but those who counsel peace have joy.

<sup>26</sup> The righteous gives good advice to friends,  
but the way of the wicked leads astray.

1 Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge,  
but those who hate to be rebuked are stupid.

<sup>6</sup> The words of the wicked are a deadly ambush,  
but the speech of the upright delivers them.

<sup>16</sup> Fools show their anger at once,  
but the prudent ignore an insult.

<sup>17</sup> Whoever speaks the truth gives honest evidence,  
but a false witness speaks deceitfully.

<sup>18</sup> Rash words are like sword thrusts,  
but the tongue of the wise brings healing.

<sup>19</sup> Truthful lips endure for ever,  
but a lying tongue lasts only a moment.

<sup>22</sup> Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD,  
but those who act faithfully are God's delight.

<sup>25</sup> Anxiety weighs down the human heart,  
but a good word cheers it up.

<sup>10</sup> The righteous know the needs of their animals,  
but the mercy of the wicked is cruel.

<sup>11</sup> Those who till their land will have plenty of food,  
but those who follow worthless pursuits have no sense.

<sup>12</sup> The wicked covet the proceeds of wickedness,  
but the root of the righteous bears fruit.

These proverbs are all about how we interact with others in a way that is life-giving. How do our thoughts, our words and our actions connect? How do we bring them into better alignment? Not easy... But let's look for some straightforward guidance, practical wisdom and prayerful inspiration... I've grouped them together thematically.

5, 15, 20, 26 – These verses are all about heeding good advice and counsel, while at the same time, rejecting what is bad. Bad advice leads us astray (26) in many ways. One way is deceit and dishonesty (20) or treachery (5) which can cause disquiet, suspicion, mistrust and ultimately conflict rather than peace in a relationship or situation. Finally, (15) how often do we truly

listen to advice that counsels us to an opposite view or direction than what we are thinking or desiring? If we have no source of advice that doesn't contradict us at times and checks our judgements, we should be concerned, for only "fools think their own way is right" to the silencing and ignoring of all other voices. Here's something to think about: what voices in our lives and within our communities have our trust to challenge us to think again about our perspective or what we are inclined to do? We all need good sources of advice and compassionate, yet honest, counsel we can trust. And we need to listen without getting our backs up and just shutting down. Who serves in that capacity for you?

1,6,16-19,22,25 – These verses are all about the power of words for good and for ill, to heal or to tear down. Obviously, though, our words are also connected to our thoughts. What we say and don't say is connected to what we think. Is our thinking inspired by love and care or is it envy, dismissiveness or contempt that is fuelling what we say? Are we open to rebuke (1) as much as we are ready to rebuke another? Are we honest and truthful with our speech or do we seek to entice in order to flatter (for personal gain) or deceive (6,17,19,22)? How often are our words spoken out of rashness and anger or reactivity, and how often are they spoken to calm and lift up (16,18,25)?

10-12 – How we treat animals says a lot about us (10), and how we treat people won't be far off. Kindness, mercy, care and compassion rise up in us from our hearts. If we don't feel it within us it's hard to express it outwardly. We can't pretend with animals, how much less with people. 11-12 reflect the values of honest work versus the profit that comes from wickedness. Sadly in our world people do profit from using and abusing people, deceiving and cheating them and the system, and this affects the innocent and the vulnerable. One has to value and love goodness more than profit and one has to find fulfillment in honest work and heart-felt service that contributes benefit to others rather than a desire to get one over them and gain advantage at their cost.

What proverb(s) in particular speak to you right now in your life when you think of particular situations or relationships?

PRAYER: Thank you, O God, for those with the courage and our trust who speak truth to us and even rebuke us at times. They are your servants even when we resist what is spoken because we don't want to hear it. Thank you for kindling our conscience and awakening our hearts to a richer fullness in serving and caring rather than profiting for money or place. Thank you for the grace and mercy that allows us to start again after angry words or rash actions have burned bridges and caused disruption. May we learn and grow and may we find our way even better as we move forward in our relations and pursuits. Amen.