

Explore the Bible: July 19

By Laura Lee Leathers

Living Wisely • Proverbs 14:8-15



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In the 1939 movie, *The Wizard of Oz*, the Scarecrow wants only one thing – a brain. When the Scarecrow makes his request to the Wizard, the Wizard states anyone can have a brain and says instead Scarecrow needs a diploma. The Wizard then confers upon him the honorary degree of Th.D., which means Doctor of Thinkology.

You, the reader, are hereby granted the honorary degree of Th.D. Why? Because for those of us who are not English majors, we may need this diploma to understand the arrangement of ideas found in the text. “It is a literary device known as a ‘chiasmus.’ This term refers to a method of ideas that are repeated in reverse order” (Lifeway). Notice the verse correlations with each section.

Prudent (Prov. 14:8, 15). To many people, the word prudent means being a killjoy, but someone who is prudent is known for using sound judgment. They are sensible and logical, not gullible. Solomon begins by stating the “prudent is to discern his way” (v. 8 ESV). They do not act until they have prayed, analyzed the situation from a biblical worldview, and think about the future’s impact. Whereas the fool falls into deception, believing anything, and is easily duped by the world’s enticements. What sets the prudent apart from simple? It is the very fact that the wise person knows how to apply God’s Word to every life decision.

In life, we deal with questions that have no immediate answers. The prudent person knows and relies upon the truth of

Scripture and applies it to whatever they are facing. Believers must hold onto a biblical worldview, seek God's counsel, and wait for His guidance (Acts 17:11).

Content (Prov. 14:9, 14)). How many times have parents told their children to "make amends" when there is a disagreement. To make amends (v. 9) means to present a guilt offering. The provision for the guilt offering to which Solomon is referring is found in Leviticus 5:13-6:7 and 7:1-10. The fool mocks the impending judgment of sin and wants no part of restitution and the guilt offering. The contrast is that the wise, the upright, not only present the guilt offering but also do so with goodwill. There is reaching out with a peace offering.

Solomon references the differences between contentment and discontentment (v. 9). "Contentment in Him means that we can be content *in* our circumstances without being content *with* the circumstances" (Lifeway). The Apostle Paul wrote we are to be content in Christ (Philippians 4:10-14). We grow in contentment as we learn, obey, and apply God's Word to every aspect of our lives.

Furthermore, whether an individual is a backslider in heart or a good man, his life will produce bad or good fruit based on the choices made throughout life (v. 14). Jesus also emphasized this in Matthew 7:27. It's a clear principle of sowing and reaping (Gal. 6:7-10).

Joyful (Prov. 14:10, 13). No one knows what a person is experiencing or feeling in their heart; appearances can be deceiving. An individual may appear to be happy but deep inside, they could be wrestling with bitterness or resentment. People wear masks to conceal what is really going on in the depths of their hearts.

Solomon knew genuine joy comes from an abiding relationship with God. Jesus said, "These things I have spoken to you that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be full" (John

15:11). Believers always have joy. Through Christ, it resides within us no matter what we face.

The Doctor of Thinkology diploma is helpful. However, as believers we are to focus on theology and the Holy Spirit is our teacher (John 14:26). If we follow God's wisdom, we will have peace, contentment, and joy. If we follow folly, it only leads to grief and destruction.

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