

**MATTHEW:  
THE GOSPEL  
OF THE KINGDOM**

## **A Wise Reprover and a Listening Ear**

Proverbs 25:11-12

### **Introduction to Proverbs**

1. Proverbs is fundamentally *Wisdom Literature*. Concrete, observational, general.
2. We are being *re-parented* in the family of God by our Father, with Jesus as our elder Brother.
3. This is not an issue of how to live to be made right with God...but having received the grace of Christ, *what does a wise and flourishing life in reverential love for God look like?*
4. Wisdom is a *cultivated skill* forged in life experiences of crisis and difficulty.

### **A word fitly spoken**

is like *apples of gold in a setting of silver*.

Like a *gold ring* or an *ornament of gold*

is a **wise reprover** to a **listening ear**. (ESV)

the right word at the right time (MSG)

timely advice (NLT)

a word spoken at the right time (CSB)

a word skillfully spoken (NET)

a word spoken in right circumstances (NASB)

a ruling rightly given...the rebuke of a wise judge (NIV)

a receptive ear (CSB)

to the ear of the one who listens (NET)

one who listens [to] valid criticism (NLT)

### **Observations of Proverbs 25:11-12**

1. What is being described is something of *great beauty and value*.
2. *Words matter*. Not any old words will do.
3. Being a *receptive bearer matters*. More than hearing...truly receiving.
  - What follows is instruction in creating a *culture of wisdom and beauty*.
  - This applies not only to conduct in the church, but between spouses, parents/children, friends, the world.

**What is the importance of reproof/rebuke?** (2 Hebrew words)

1. It is a sign of the Father's (and others') *delight* - 3:12
2. It brings one into *the way of life* - 6:23
3. It is *reciprocated by love* when give to the wise - 9:7-8
4. It is a *demonstration of love for knowledge* - 12:1
5. It brings *honor* - 13:18
6. It cultivates prudence (*skillful living*) - 15:5
7. It is *sought out* by the wise - 15:12
8. It brings one *among the wise* - 15:31
9. It causes one to *gain "heart"* - 15:32
10. It imparts *further knowledge* to the understanding - 19:25
11. It is *praiseworthy* and brings *blessing* to the reprover- 24:25
12. It eventually brings *favor* - 28:23
13. Resistance to it brings *death* - 29:1/15:10

What is your *attitude* toward reproof/rebuke?  
Is it something you *long for* and *invite*?  
If not, what is *at root* of your attitude?  
Explore: how the Gospel can reshape your attitude to love reproof.

**What does it mean to be a "wise reprover"?** (1)

•Your **Approach**

- Humility* is foundational.
- An *advocate* vs. *adversary*.
- Beware of attempting to *discern* motives.
- Be cautious of *self-assessment* of insight, reading body language, etc.
- Be aware of how your own *biases* shape our perspective.
- Realize you don't *fully understand* yourself, much less someone else.
- Give *abundance* of love, mercy, and grace for Christ's sake.
- Remember the difference between *weakness* vs. *sin*.
- Seek to build a *relationship of trust*.
- Take into account the *timing* of your approach.

**What does it mean to be a "wise reprover"?** (2)

•The **Conversation**

- Personal vs. impersonal *modes of communication*.
- Beware of *judicial monologue*: the importance of asking *good questions*. Seek *more information* (often badly or partially informed, or at worse mis-informed).
- Beware of *sarcasm, derogatory, mocking, and snark*.
- Beware of *universal statements* and claims of *association*.
- Give *suggestions*: "What do you think...what if you...?"
- Invite their assessment: "Do you think I'm right in...? Can you see how....?"

**What does it mean to be a "wise reprover"?** (3)

•Their **Response**

- Treat them with *dignity* as a little one of the Father.
- When response is given, don't assume they are necessarily *defensive* or *self-justifying*, but that they are revealing thoughts and heart.
- When they are silent, don't *assume guilt* (catch 22).
- In hearing their response, become yourself a *listening ear*.
- Affirm *gratitude* for their hearing you out.
- Give *room* for them to process and pray.
- Remember, ultimately they are in the Father's hand and His responsibility.

### What does it mean to be a “listening ear”? (1)

#### • Your Approach

- *Humility* is foundational.
- Do you really *desire* wisdom and correction?
- Be *prayerfully* prepared not just to hear, but *listen*.
- Realize *others see you* in ways you have difficulty seeing yourself.
- Remember that *the Father* may very well be behind this, even if the do it badly. (vs. process disqualification)

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### What does it mean to be a “listening ear”? (2)

#### • Your Immediate Response

- Acknowledge their *feelings* even if not your intention.
- Seek to not be *defensive, self-justifying, or counter attack*.
- Ask if they are interested in a *response* now or later?
- Ask questions: “How, what, when, would...?” “How would you suggest...?”
- Give a *soft answer*, which will either turn away anger or stir it deeper.
- Give place to their *personality*.
- Affirm *gratitude* for engaging you and not holding in, for loving you enough to speak to you personally and not to others.

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### What does it mean to be a “listening ear”? (3)

#### • Your Ongoing Response

- Genuinely take what they have said to *consider, pray, and ask the Lord for wisdom*.
- Genuinely *seek input* from others. Consider *similar feedback* given by others: is there a general theme?
- *Acknowledge*: (1) what was right (2) what was partially right (3) what was wrong.
- *Request* follow-up.
- *Give* abundant love, mercy, and grace.
- This may be a time for them to *learn wisdom* as well by your example.

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### Conclusion/Application

- The necessary *fruit of the Spirit* - LOVE!
- We must cry out to the Lord for His help.
- These are *general suggestions* of regular encounters. There are exceptions to the rule.
- This is a *difficult* and *delicate* work.
- Ornaments and jewelry come by digging, purifying fire, hammering, and buffing.
- May God make our church, our families, our relationships beautiful through the process.
- Illustration: a jewelry case of God’s wise-work.

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