

# What You Get Is Not What You See



## SABBATH—JANUARY 31

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Proverbs 14; Daniel 7:25; Mark 12:30, 31; Proverbs 15:3; Isaiah 5:20; Proverbs 15; Matthew 20:26–28.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “There is a way that may seem right to a man. But in the end it leads to death” (Proverbs 14:12, NIV).

**AS PAUL HAD SAID, “WE SEE THROUGH A GLASS, DARKLY [DIMLY]” (1 CORINTHIANS 13:12).** We see so little, and what we do see always comes through our own minds. Our eyes and ears give us only a narrow view of what is really out there.

We can be deceived (tricked) about the world and about ourselves too. Our dreams, our thoughts, and our opinions can give us very twisted ideas of what we really are. And of all the lies we believe, that can be the worst.

How can we protect ourselves from being deceived? Proverbs gives us basic advice. We should not trust ourselves, as the fool does. Instead, we should trust the Lord, who controls all events, even when they seem to go wrong. In short, we need to live by faith and not by what we see. This is because what we see can deceive us. What we see shows only a small part of what is real. Even worse, that small part often twists what little it shows us.

## THE FALSE BELIEF OF THE FOOL (Proverbs 14)

**Read Proverbs 14. What does it say about the fool?**



**The blow to the fool's lips means that one day he will be punished for his proud words.**

*The fool speaks proudly* (Proverbs 14:3). The first thing said about the fool is his “proud speech.” The idea of a rod connected with the fool’s lips suggests his need to be punished later. The fool’s proud words have led to a blow on his lips. This result is not the same thing that happens to the lips of the wise, which are protected. (Read also Daniel 7:8.)

*The fool laughs at wisdom* (Proverbs 14:6–9). The fool seems to look for wisdom. But he does not believe in it and doubts it. He will not find it because he thinks there is no wisdom apart from himself. Most frightful is his attitude (feeling) about breaking the law. What could be more serious than laughing at the idea of sin?

*The fool is too quick to believe in lies and is easily fooled* (Proverbs 14:15). Yet, strange as it seems, the fool makes fun of those who still believe in wisdom. But he has lost his ability to think carefully about what he hears. He believes “every word.” This is the main problem with worldly society. Doubters laugh at God and make fun of religion. They claim that these beliefs are for children and old people. But they themselves often believe in some of the most foolish things, such as the idea that life on earth came about by chance alone.

*The fool often acts without thinking* (Proverbs 14:16, 29). This is because the fool believes that he has the truth within himself. He does not take time to think. His actions will be quick, without thinking of what the results will be.

*The fool tries to overrule others* (Proverbs 14:21, 31). Impatience with and failure to listen to people are parts of the fool’s psychology. He is impatient with others and does not respect them. (Read Daniel 7:25; Daniel 8:11, 12.)

**It is easy to see the actions and thinking of a fool in others. But what about in our own selves? What weaknesses do you have that can be changed with God’s help?**

## THE FEAR OF THE WISE (Proverbs 14)

Read Proverbs 14 again. What does it say about the wise?

*The wise speak humbly* (Proverbs 14:3). The wise keep the use of their lips under control. Their quiet thoughts show that they are very humble. The wise give more thought to the idea that the other person may be right. So, the wise will take time to think through and weigh the facts. They are also silent because they are listening, ready to learn from others.

*The wise respect learning and knowledge* (Proverbs 14:6, 18). It is difficult for the fool to learn because it is hard for him to sit at the feet of a teacher. On the other hand, it is easy for the wise to learn because they are humble. They will enjoy the experience of learning and growing. This search for knowledge that they do not have makes them wise.

*The wise are very careful* (Proverbs 14:15). The wise know that sin and evil are all around. So, they will be careful where they walk. They will not trust their feelings and personal opinions. They will check things out and ask for advice. They will always be careful about what other people say to them. They will separate out the good from the bad (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

*The wise are calm* (Proverbs 14:29, 33). The wise can stay quiet because they do not depend on their “own ways.” Instead, they depend on God (Proverbs 14:14, NKJV). It is their faith in God that lets them relax and use self-control (Isaiah 30:15). It is the fear<sup>1</sup> of God that gives them confidence (faith) (Proverbs 14:26).

*The wise are merciful and sensitive* (Proverbs 14:21, 31). The two commandments, “ ‘You shall love the LORD your God’ ” and “ ‘You shall love your neighbor,’ ” are connected (Mark 12:30, 31, NKJV). We cannot love God and at the same time treat other people poorly. The greatest example of our faith is how we deal with other people, such as those who are poor or are in need.

**“We do not understand how many of us walk by sight [seeing] and not by faith. We believe the things that are seen. But we do not enjoy the promises given us in His Word.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Our High Calling*, page 85. What does it mean to walk by faith and not by sight? How are we supposed to do that?**



**The wise take time to think things through and weigh the facts.**

## DEFINITIONS

1. fear—the word does not necessarily mean that we are afraid of the Lord. Instead, it is more of showing love, serious and deep respect for Him, and obedience to His Word.

**“THE EYES OF THE LORD” (Proverbs 15:3)**

**“The eyes of the LORD are everywhere. They watch those who are evil and those who are good” (Proverbs 15:3, NlrV). How does this verse make you feel, and why?**



**God sees all that we do,  
even if no one else does.**

The mood changes in the next two chapters in Proverbs. These chapters are more about God than the ones before them. The Lord is spoken of more often than in the proverbs before them. We are also told something wonderful about Him: His eyes are in every place (Proverbs 15:3).

This sensitive awareness of the Lord’s nearness is what the Israelites living in Bible times called “the fear of the LORD.” The same message is found in the Psalms: “the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him” (Psalm 33:18, NKJV). Job describes God as the One who looks to the ends of the earth. And He sees all that happens under the heavens (Job 28:24). Because of this, Job thinks that “the fear of the LORD . . . is wisdom” (Job 28:28).

This proverb reminds us of God’s ability to see good and evil. It does not matter where they are. As Solomon understood (1 Kings 3:9), true wisdom is the ability to see the difference between good and evil. This knowledge should help us remember always to do good and never to do evil. This is because God sees all that we do, even if no one else does. We fool ourselves into thinking that because we get away with evil, we really *do* get away with it. In the long run, we never do.

So, let us be careful because “nothing God created is hidden from him. His eyes see everything. He will hold us accountable [responsible] for everything we do” (Hebrews 4:13, NlrV).

**Read Proverbs 15:3; Isaiah 5:20; and Hebrews 5:14. What important message do these verses give us? Today many people say that there is no clear line separating good and evil. What is so wrong with such an idea of good and evil? And why is that so dangerous to believe?**

**THE JOY OF THE LORD (Proverbs 15)****Read Proverbs 15. Why is joy important to humans?**

The Bible does not promise us a life without troubles and suffering. As Jesus Himself said, “ ‘Each day has enough trouble of its own’ ” (Matthew 6:34, NIV). Proverbs 15:15 explains that during evil days, the one who keeps a joyful heart will have a better time of it. Pain, suffering, and troubles will come. And often we cannot control when and how. What we can control is how we choose to deal with problems.

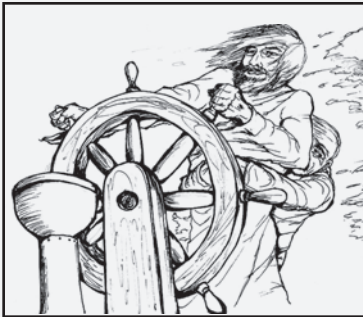
**Read Proverbs 15:14, 23. What is God’s part in this joy?**

The Bible verses do not give a clear reason for the joy. But the thought between verses 13 and 14 suggests that the “merry [joyful] heart” is “the heart of him who has understanding” (NKJV). It is the heart of the one who has faith and sees freedom or “better days” ahead of the trouble. This is why faith in God is so important. This is why it is so important that we know for ourselves that God and His love are real. Then, whatever troubles or sufferings we have, the wise can be patient because they know for themselves God’s love.

Proverbs 15:23 brings us another important idea. Joy comes more from what we give than from what we receive. It is the good word shared with others that will bring joy to the giver. Who has not experienced the blessings that come from blessing others? As we have already seen in Proverbs, our words are powerful. They can do great good or great evil. And how much better it is when they do great good, both for the one for whom the good is done and for the one who does it.

**How well do you know God’s love? What could help to open up your heart to God’s love? Think how much better life would be if you knew that God’s love is real.**

## THE RULERSHIP OF GOD (Proverbs 16:1)



**Even when one thinks that events are controlled by chance, we can trust that God is still in control.**

We all dream and make plans. But things turn out differently, sometimes for the better, sometimes for the worse. The Bible shows that human responsibility and freedom are important. But the Bible also supports the idea that God has control over events (read Proverbs 20:24; Proverbs 21:31; and Daniel 2 and 7).

**What does Proverbs 16:1 say? How are we to understand this verse?**

We prepare and make plans. But the last word still belongs to God. This does not mean that our preparations are worthless. But in the life of faith, we just give our plans to God, and He will work with them. Then our plans will be directed (Proverbs 16:9) and completed by God (Proverbs 16:3). Even the work of our enemies will be used in our favor (Proverbs 16:4, 7).

These ideas are not simple to understand, especially when we face difficult situations. But they should give us comfort and help us learn to trust God. We should trust God even when things seem to go terribly wrong and when our plans do not turn out as we had hoped. The key point for us is to learn to surrender all to God.

**Read Proverbs 16:18, 19. What place does ambition have in human success?**

As always, the Bible warns against pride. After all, as sinners, what do we have to be proud of? What sin is worse to God than pride, the first sin? (Read Ezekiel 28:17.) Jesus taught about the sin of trying to be great. He encouraged His disciples always to be humble instead (Matthew 20:26–28).

**Read Proverbs 16:33. What place does chance have in human success?**

The Bible makes no room for chance to happen. When others think that events are controlled by chance, we can trust that God is still in control.

**We try to understand why things happen. For example, how does the great controversy<sup>2</sup> help us to work through some difficult ideas about why things happen as they do?**

### DEFINITIONS

2. the great controversy—the war between Christ and Satan.

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** “From the beginning Satan suggested that men could profit by breaking God’s law. He deceived [tricked; fooled] angels. He tempted Adam and Eve to sin. And he is still leading crowds of people away from obeying God. The path of breaking God’s law is made to look attractive. ‘But in the end it leads to death.’ Proverbs 14:12, NIV. Happy [are] they who have learned how bitter the fruits of sin are and turn from it ‘quickly enough.’ ” —Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs [Forefathers and Leaders] and Prophets [Special Messengers]*, page 720.

“Nothing promotes health of body and of soul more than a spirit of thanksgiving and praise. It is a positive duty to avoid sadness, unhappy thoughts, and negative feelings. It is equal to the duty of saying prayers. If we are going to heaven, how can we go as a band of mourners, being sad and complaining all along the way to our Father’s house? Those Christians who are always complaining and who seem to think cheerfulness and happiness a sin do not have true religion.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Ministry [Work Done for God] of Healing*, page 251.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1 Discuss the idea that we have only a limited understanding of how real life is. What does this mean? What things are out there that we know are real, but we just cannot sense them? For example, how many radio waves (cell phone calls; satellite programs; radio programs) are in the air all around you right now, and still you cannot see, hear, or feel them at all? How should knowing about unseen but real things help us to understand how limited our senses are? How should this understanding help us to realize that unseen things such as angels are real?
- 2 Why is it important to understand that human free will and free choice are real and that God is always in control? These ideas (human free choice; God’s rulership) seem to be opposite, but both are taught in the Bible. So, how can we make sense of them?