

# Dealing With Fights



---

## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Proverbs 17, 1 Cor. 13:5–7, John 8:1–11, Proverbs 18, 19, Deut. 24:10–22.*

**Memory Text:** “Better is a dry morsel with quietness, than a house full of feasting with strife” (*Proverbs 17:1, NKJV*).

**P**roverbs again denounces the deception of appearances. We may seem to have everything the world offers—wealth, power, pleasure, fame—yet, behind the facade, tension and misery flourish. It's even possible that the cause of this tension and misery is precisely the wealth and pleasure that people strive so hard for. As an Egyptian proverb notes: “Better is bread with a happy heart than wealth with vexation.”—Miriam Lichtheim, *The New Kingdom*, vol. 2 of *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006), p. 156. According to the book of Proverbs, the first step to solve this problem is to recognize what our priorities are: peaceful relationships are more important than wealth (*Prov. 17:1*). What counts is not so much what we have, but who we are within ourselves. The advice that follows will help in restoring this priority and lead us toward an inner peace (*shalom* in the Hebrew) that will add to our happiness.

\* Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, February 14.

## Sin and Friends

**Read** Proverbs 17:9, 19:11. What crucial point is being made in these texts? How should we deal with others who fall?

---



---



---

When someone messes up, it's so tempting to spread the story, to tell others, *Have you heard about what so-and-so did?* Though we might act as if we are appalled by the action, we still like telling others about what happened. In short, we are gossiping, and that's what we're being warned against, because this behavior will generate contention, even between close friends. After all, if a friend of yours messes up, what kind of friend are you if you go around telling others about it?

We are advised instead to “cover” the mistake. This is not, however, to imply that we have to hide the sin, to act as if it never happened, as if the person never did wrong. The sin that is covered is still present, even though hidden. In fact, the Hebrew word for “cover” in that expression has the specific connotation of “forgiving” (*Ps. 85:2, Neh. 4:5*). Love, not gossip, should be our response to someone else's mistake.

**Read** Proverbs 17:17 and 1 Corinthians 13:5–7. How does love help in coping with a friend's mistake?

---



---



---

One does not love a friend or spouse because he or she is perfect. We love in spite of their mistakes and flaws. Only through love do we learn not to judge others, because with our own faults and shortcomings we could be just as guilty. Instead, we can mourn with them over what they have done, and seek in whatever way we can to help them work through it. After all, what are friends for if not for this?

**Think about a time you messed up badly and you were forgiven, ministered to, and comforted. What does that tell you about how, if possible, you should do the same for others?**

---



---

## Be Just!

True love is not blind. That we “cover” someone’s mistake through love does not mean that we do not see the sin and do not recognize it as such. Love and justice go together. The Hebrew word for “justice,” *zedeq*, also means “love,” “charity.” We cannot have real compassion if we are not just, and we cannot be just if we do not have compassion and love. The two concepts must be together.

For example, the exercise of charity toward the poor should not be done at the expense of justice; hence the recommendation not to favor the poor in court (*Exod. 23:3*). If love obliges us to help the poor, it would be unjust to favor them when they are wrong, simply because they are poor. Justice and truth should therefore go along with love and compassion. It is this wise balance that characterizes the torah, the law of God, and which is taught and promoted in the book of Proverbs.

**Read Proverbs 17:10, 19:25. What do they say about the need for rebuke and confrontation?**

---

---

---

The fact that Proverbs 17:10 immediately follows the call to cover the mistake through love (*vs. 9*) is not an accident. This mention of “reproof” in connection with “love” places love in the right perspective. The text implies a strong rebuke.

**Read John 8:1–11. How do we see Jesus dealing with open sin?**

---

---

---

“In His act of pardoning this woman and encouraging her to live a better life, the character of Jesus shines forth in the beauty of perfect righteousness. While He does not palliate sin, nor lessen the sense of guilt, He seeks not to condemn, but to save. The world had for this erring woman only contempt and scorn; but Jesus speaks words of comfort and hope. The Sinless One pities the weakness of the sinner, and reaches to her a helping hand. While the hypocritical Pharisees denounce, Jesus bids her, ‘Go, and sin no more.’”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 462.

## Words, Again

**Read** Proverbs 18. Though different themes are presented here, focus on what it has to say about our words. What important concepts are presented here regarding what we do or do not say?

---

---

We are again confronted with the reality and power of words; in this case we see how fools use their mouths to their own undoing. Verse 13 is especially enlightening. How easy it is to speak out before carefully listening and discerning what has been said to us. How many times might we have spared ourselves, and others, undue pain and strife if we had only learned to think through carefully what we had just heard before responding to it. There is indeed a time when silence is the best response.

**Read** Proverbs 18:4. Why are the words of the wise like deep waters?

---

---

The image of “deep waters” is used positively in the book of Proverbs to represent wisdom (*Prov. 20:5*). It conveys the idea of quiet, but also of profundity and riches. The wise are not superficial. They draw their words from the depths of personal reflection and experience. Who hasn’t marveled sometimes at the deep thoughts and insights from those who obviously have wisdom and knowledge?

**Read** Proverbs 18:21. What does it mean?

---

---

Proverbs again tells us what we should already know: our words are powerful, and they can be a force for good or evil, even life and death. How careful we need to be, then, with how we use this powerful tool.

**Think about a time someone’s words hurt you in a terrible way. What should this have taught you about how powerful words are? What should it teach you about how careful you need to be with what you say?**

---

## Two Sides to a Story

**Read** Proverbs 18:2. Why don't fools need time to form their opinions?

---

---

---

Fools are so sure of themselves and so eager to express their own opinions that they are not interested in learning from others. Their closed minds go along with their open mouths. This is a deadly combination. How careful we need to be that we don't find ourselves doing the same thing, especially on a topic that we are convinced we are right about.

After all, haven't we all at some point felt very strongly about a subject only to find, later on, that we were wrong? This doesn't mean that we should be wishy-washy in our views; it means only that we need some humility, in that none of us has all the right answers, and even when our answers are right, truth is often deeper and more nuanced than we can appreciate or understand.

**Read** Proverbs 18:17. What important point is given to us here?

---

---

---

Only God does not need a second opinion, precisely because by His nature He already has it, for His eyes are everywhere (*Prov. 15:3*). God has the capacity to see all sides of any matter. We, by contrast, generally have a very narrow view of everything; a view that tends to get even narrower when we get locked into a position, especially on matters that we think are important.

As we should know by now, however, there are always two or even more sides to any story, and the more information we have, the better we can form the right view of a subject.

**Think of a time you were absolutely convinced of something, maybe a view you have held your whole life, only to find out later that you had been wrong your whole life. What should this tell you about your need to be open to the possibility that you could be wrong about things you are fervent about now?**

## Be Truthful

A king needed to appoint a new minister to the highest office of his kingdom. For this purpose, he organized a special contest on lying: who could utter the biggest lie. All his ministers applied, and each one came and spoke their biggest lie. But the king was not satisfied; their lies seemed lame. The king then asked his closest and most trusted counselor: “Why didn’t you apply?”

The counselor answered, “I am sorry to disappoint you, Majesty, but I cannot apply.”

“Why not?” asked the king.

“Because I never lie,” the counselor replied.

The king decided to appoint him to the position.

As sinners, lying comes to us easier than we think; for this reason, again, how careful we need to be with our words.

**Read Proverbs 19.** Though many themes are presented there, what does it say about lying?

---



---

The book of Proverbs upholds a high ethical standard. It is better to remain poor, or even to lose a promotion, if we have to lie in order to get it, if we have to sacrifice our integrity (*Prov. 19:1*), if we have to cheat, or if it comes at the price of faithfulness (*vs. 22*).

**Read Proverbs 19:9.** What is the responsibility of a witness?

---



---

Lying, in and of itself, is bad enough; but doing it in court and under oath is even worse. In many countries perjury is a crime, and a serious one at that. The witness must therefore give a truthful testimony. It is no accident that this verse follows the mention of a “friend to one who gives gifts” (*vs. 6, NKJV*), and of the poor who are hated by their friends and even their brothers (*vs. 7, NKJV*). The point is, witnesses must not be influenced by bribes or by the social status of those they are testifying about.

**Read Deuteronomy 24:10–22.** What important principle is seen here, and how should we apply this to ourselves and to our dealings with those who are needy?

**Further Study:** “The spirit of gossip and talebearing is one of Satan’s special agencies to sow discord and strife, to separate friends, and to undermine the faith of many in the truthfulness of our positions. Brethren and sisters are too ready to talk of the faults and errors that they think exist in others, and especially in those who have borne unflinchingly the messages of reproof and warning given them of God.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 195.

“The children of these complainers listen with open ears and receive the poison of disaffection. Parents are thus blindly closing the avenues through which the hearts of the children might be reached. How many families season their daily meals with doubt and questionings. They dissect the characters of their friends, and serve them up as a dainty dessert. A precious bit of slander is passed around the board to be commented upon, not only by adults, but by children. In this God is dishonored. Jesus said: ‘Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me.’ Therefore Christ is slighted and abused by those who slander His servants.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, page 195.

### Discussion Questions:

- 1 It’s always hard when those you love or care about mess up. And it’s so easy to try to cover up for them. How do we strike the right balance in situations like these? Certainly, we need to show grace, as we have been shown grace for our errors—that goes without saying. But does grace always, or ever, mean that a person can sin with impunity and not face consequences? What then is the right course to take in situations like these?
- 2 As the lesson said this week, most things in life are very complicated and have many facets to them. So, even those things we happen to be right about will usually be more complex than we understand them to be. How can we learn to be open-minded while at the same time not being foolish about it?
- 3 What are some ways we can lie without ever using words?

## “Your Parents Should Be Very Proud of You”

“My dog’s been shot!” Brayden blurted out in tears to his friend Payton. “Would you speak at his funeral?”

Twelve-year-old Payton had never conducted a funeral, but wanting to help his friend, he agreed to do what he could. “I planned the whole thing out,” he said. “The dog is buried in my yard—Brayden and I dug his grave.” After Payton performed the eulogy, the boys added the dog’s dish, collar, and squeaky toy before filling the grave.

When Payton and his family first moved into the neighborhood, Payton befriended Brayden and learned about the struggles he was facing at home. “I told him that I was a Christian and shared my beliefs with him,” says Payton, “and then he told me, ‘I want to try that out!’ ”

Brayden began spending more time at Payton’s house and often spent the night—especially on Fridays, so he could go with Payton and his family to church the next day. Before long, Brayden’s cousin, Hunter, wanted to stay with Payton too, “So I was housing three people in my room,” Payton explains.

While Payton’s bedroom may be small, his heart is big. He befriended another neighbor, Wyatt, whose father committed suicide. Wyatt had been kicked out of several public schools at the age of 13, and his mother didn’t know what to do with him. Payton spent time with Wyatt and invited him to come with him to Pathfinders and to church, along with the other boys, but Wyatt’s mother would not allow her son to join in.

During the next three years, Payton often shared his faith with Wyatt, and one day after hearing that they might be moving, Wyatt handed Payton and his sister, Stormy, a note. The note is so precious that Payton keeps it in the family safe.

“Dear Payton and Stormy,

“Before you move, I want to thank you. When you first came, I had lost my way. I stopped going to church and didn’t plan on coming back. When we became friends, I was trying to act tough, but on the inside, I wanted to be more like you, Payton. When the hard times came and I lost my father, talking to you was a comfort. I learned about God through you. You were and still are a hero, inspiration, and role model to me. Your parents should be very proud of you, knowing that you helped me find Jesus.”

---