

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
Proverbs: Topical Applications of Proverbs
III. The Proverbs Themselves, Proverbs 10:1-31:31
K. Gaining Productive Cautiousness

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Wisdom dictates that in view of the dangers we face in life, we need to exercise caution:

(1) We need to exercise caution with regard to the dangerous proliferation of bears in Connecticut: The editorial, “Facing reality on bears” (Republican-American, July 16, 2026, p. A6), reported that recently, “a young bear . . . appeared to be targeting a toddler playing in a residential driveway in Torrington. A husky was in hot pursuit of the bruin, which turned away from the child, ducked under a boat trailer and fled the property . . . Livestock have been killed, property damaged and people injured, the frequency of bear-human conflicts has increased dramatically; yet state leaders apparently have been intimidated by ‘people who think bears are smart, cute and cuddly,’ as we noted in an April 14 editorial. These animal activists ‘have dictated the terms of bear management in the state, while lawmakers who actually want to solve a problem come up short in every legislative session.’”

(2) We need to exercise caution with regard to the status of Social Security: Within seven years, “Social Security’s trust fund is expected to run dry and trigger benefit cuts of 22% . . . for everyone up to and including widows living on survivors’ checks . . . (Unreasonably,) (r)oughly 34% of Social Security dollars go to filers with adjusted gross incomes above \$100,000. Too often, Social Security is . . . a transfer of wealth from the young and unpropertied to the old and comfortable . . . Despite facing large deficits, Social Security now pays the wealthiest couples roughly \$100,000 in annual benefits, more than five times the poverty threshold for a retired household,” and “‘the maximum couples’ benefit has doubled since 1990 and is projected to double again around 2070. By that point, the wealthiest couples will receive \$200,000 in combined benefits’” according to a “March 2026 paper from the Committee for a Responsible Budget.” However, “lots of legislators believe that the political cost of telling voters the unhappy news today exceeds the cost of letting the cuts occur tomorrow.” (Veronique DeRugy, “Your next senator will finally face the Social Security decision point,” op. cit., July 18, 2026, p. A6)

(3) We need to exercise caution with regard to social deterioration in our country: Last month, “a 3-year-old girl . . . was struck by a car and killed while crossing a street in Manchester, apparently unaccompanied, at 4:30 in the morning, 45 minutes before sunrise. The state Department of Children and Families quickly acknowledged that it had been investigating two complaints made a week earlier about a lack of supervision in the child’s home . . . (A) doorbell camera showed the child trying to open a neighbor’s door, presumably for help, without awakening the occupants, and then hurrying back toward the street . . . If, as it seems, DCF is understaffed and suffers debilitating turnover, it . . . is . . . because child neglect is an overwhelming problem, probably the worst facing both the state and the country. Millions of children have only one parent, if that, receive much less parenting than they need, and live in poverty – largely because welfare policy presumes that fathers are no longer needed in their children’s homes and that childbearing outside marriage is so good that it should be subsidized heavily” by the government. (Chris Powell, “Child protection will never fix a society that’s disintegrating,” op. cit., June 18, 2026, p. A8)

Need: *So we ask, “In view of the dangers we face today, what would God advise on exercising caution?”*

- I. God’s “wisdom,” His *hokmah*, or fixed eternal moral order for success and blessing, applies to many issues of human concern, including the issue of being cautious in today’s world.**
- II. We thus view proverbs as translated from the Hebrew Biblical text (Kittel, Biblia Hebraica) in the Book of Proverbs that inform us about God’s advice on being cautious (as follows):**
 - A. God has revealed in His Word that we **do** need to be cautious with regard to the dangers we face in life:
 1. Proverbs 27:12 states, “The prudent see calamity and take refuge, but the naïve keep going and suffer.”
 2. Proverbs 30:15b-16 claims, “There are three things that are never satisfied, four that never say, ‘Enough!’: the grave, the barren womb, land that is never satisfied with water, and fire, that never says, ‘Enough!’”
 - a. The grave and fire destroy life where the barren womb and water are life-giving entities (Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 970), so though some things positively add to our safety, others can perilously destroy it.
 - b. Thus, though we must appreciate those entities that are constructive, we must always be cautious to discern some entities that can be destructive!
 - B. Accordingly, God’s Word also reveals how, where and why we should exercise caution in life (as follows):
 1. We need to be cautious in how we relate to Almighty God Himself:

- a. Proverbs 21:30 claims, “There is no wisdom, no insight and no plan that can succeed against Yahweh.”
- b. Proverbs 20:25 teaches, “It is a trap for a man to dedicate something rashly (to Yahweh) and only later to consider his vows” (because Yahweh will hold him responsible to keep his vow)!
2. We need to be cautious in how we relate to other people:
 - a. We need to respect the precedents that were established by our forefathers, for Proverbs 22:28 claims, “Do not remove an ancient boundary stone set up by your forefathers.”
 - b. We need to respect human authority figures: (i) Proverbs 30:29-30 teaches, “There are three things that are stately in their stride, four that move with stately bearing: a lion, mighty among beasts, who retreats before nothing; a strutting rooster; a male goat; and a king with his army around him.” (ii) Proverbs 22:3 states, “A sensible man beholds dangerous calamity (ahead for disobeying authority) and takes refuge, but the naïve cross over (violate the authority by continuing to disobey it) and they are punished by being fined!”
 - c. We need to be cautious with people who are under stress: Proverbs 30:21-23 refers to the volatile dangers of circumstances that produce stress for people as it states: “Under three things the earth trembles, under four it cannot bear up: a servant who becomes king, a fool who is full of food, an unloved woman who is married and a maidservant who displaces her mistress.”
 - d. We need to be cautious about our selection of friends: Proverbs 12:26 teaches, “A righteous man does reconnaissance [investigates, the verb *tur* in the intensive Hiphil stem, B. D. B., *A Heb.-Eng. Lex. of the O. T.*, p. 1064) on his friend, but the way of the wicked [who do not investigate] leads them astray.”
3. We must cautiously restrain our own behavior lest what we might carelessly do might backfire to harm us:
 - a. We must be transparently honest: Proverbs 22:5 states, “Barbs (and) snares are in the path of the one who is perverted, but he who guards his life principle (*nepesh*, his physical, emotional, mental and spiritual life, Kittel, *Bib. Heb.*, p. 1181; Robert B. Girdlestone, *Syns. of the O. T.*, 1973, p. 56-59) stays far from them.”
 - b. We must not indulge in lusts: Proverbs 31:3-5 states, “(i) (D)o not give (spend) your strength (on immoral) women, your vigor on those who ruin kings. (ii) It is not for kings . . . to drink wine . . . not for rulers to crave beer, lest they drink and forget what the law decrees, and deprive all the oppressed of their rights.”
 - c. We must be humble: Proverbs 21:29 reveals, “A wicked man puts up a bold front, but an upright man, he gives thought to his ways.”
 - d. We must be careful with our words: (i) We must be cautious if emotions run high as Proverbs 17:27 states, “A man of knowledge uses words with restraint, and a man of understanding is even-tempered.” (ii) We must be careful in what we say about ourselves to others, for Proverbs 30:32-33 adds, “If you have played the fool and exalted yourself, or if you have planned evil, clap your hand over your mouth, for as churning milk produces butter, and as twisting the nose produces blood, so stirring up anger produces strife.”

Lesson: *In view of the dangers we face in life, we must be cautious in relating to God, to others and to ourselves. To achieve this, we must believe on Christ as our personal Savior (Application (1) below) to become indwelt by the Holy Spirit followed by relying on the Spirit for behavior control (Application (2)) to obey the proverbs on caution.*

Application: *(1) May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God's gift of eternal life, John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11. (2) May we rely on the Holy Spirit for the behavior control we need to obey Scripture in living with wise caution (Galatians 5:16, 22-23).*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message and/or provide additional guidance . . .)

Each issue in our introduction can be addressed by heeding Scripture relative to wise caution (as follows):

(1) On dealing with the bear threat, Proverbs 27:12 teaches that if we see trouble ahead we should take refuge to avoid harm. Reports of near tragedies reveal that we must watch out for bears as a way of life.

(2) On dealing with the delay of legislators to address the Social Security need, Proverbs 21:30 states that no wisdom, insight or plan can succeed against the Lord, and the Lord in 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 directs us to rely on our own work for our livelihood that we might not be in any need. Ideally, we should not even rely on Social Security for our livelihood security but obey God in addressing our material needs by way of our own workmanship!

(3) On dealing with the stress people face in a deteriorating society, Proverbs 30:21-23 shows that stressed people make the earth tremble. Thus, if people in society become more stressed and thus more volatile, we must be gentle with everyone to help lessen their volatility. We must also choose our friends well as Proverbs 12:26 directs!

May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God's gift of eternal life. May we rely on the Holy Spirit for the behavior control to heed Scripture on wisely being cautious.